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**A Foucauldian Analysis of Power, Docile Bodies and Resistance in Rod Lurie's *The Last Castle* (2001)**

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## **Dedications**

*To*

*The memory of my beloved mother*

*My dear father*

*My dear sister and brothers*

*To my niece Melissa*

*My dear mate Lisa*

***Djazia***

*To*

*My dear beloved parents*

*My dear brother and grand mother*

*My dear uncles and aunts*

*My lovely cousins*

*My dear mate Djazia*

*To all our friends*

***Lisa***

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## Abstract

*This dissertation will investigate Rod Lurie's **The Last Castle** (2001) from a Foucauldian perspective. The dialectic of power and knowledge forms the gist of his critical theory that tries to explain how different modern social institutions like prisons aim at controlling individuals. Since some movies reflect the real state of societies to a large extent, **The Last Castle** (2001) will be analyzed from a foucauldian stance to better understand how authorities exert power to produce docile bodies. Indeed, in order to determine the extent to which Rod Lurie's work meets with Foucault ideas. This dissertation will follow Foucault's theory of power as explained in his book *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison* (1991). Foucault's concepts like Discipline, surveillance, panopticon and resistance are to be discussed in this dissertation to explain how the prisoners in *The Castle* are treated badly and aimed to become docile and conformist and how resistance is created from the abuse of power. Throughout our investigation, we have found that *The Last Castle* reflects Foucault's ideas of the omnipresence of power and highlighted the way resistance is created as a response to power.*

**Key words:** *The Last Castle*, Rod Lurie, Michel Foucault, power, discipline, surveillance, resistance.

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## Introduction

Literature, as a corpus of creative and critical works that frequently reflect human issues, has thrown particular light on human incarceration and the potential effects of such a system. Consequently, “prison literature” appeared as a genre that deals with the prisoners experience behind the bars.

Prison is an institution of confinement and discipline where people are detained against their will and denied a range of liberties by the government. Large groups of civilians may be imprisoned in military prisons or prisoners of war camps for a period of time for a crime they have committed. It is commonly held that prison is an institution where criminals are enrolled in rehabilitation programs; however, prisons and jails have a negative impact on those individuals, and things do not go the way they are supposed to. Apparently the issue which prison supposed to deal with is the problem in itself.

The themes of power, imprisonment and punishment attract filmmakers to produce films about prison life. Prison was the center of interests for cinema production starting from the 20<sup>th</sup> century and this can be seen through some films like Franklin J. Schaffner’s *Papillion* (1973), Stuart Rosenberg’s *Brubaker* (1980), and Frank Darabont’s *The ShawShank Redemption* (1994), Rod Lurie’s *The Last Castle* (2001) films that portray prison circumstances.

Despite the fact that literature and cinema are considered to be different artistic modes of expressions, they are intrinsically linked to each other. That is to say approximately each cinematographic production has its roots back in novels. Undoubtedly, by performing literature about prisons, cinema has thus provided an opportunity for a wider audience to discover what is really happening inside the prison.

The United States is one of the most notable countries known both for its huge cinema industry and prisons' construction. Studying the themes of power, imprisonment and punishment in Lurie's *The Last Castle*, therefore, seems to be of great interest to understand the American penal policy to offer a better understanding of prison's system and how docile bodies are made by using different strategies.

## **Review of The Previous Literature**

The themes of imprisonment, punishment and confinement have undoubtedly attracted a significant amount of attention. Many critics have explored these topics from various angles. Following different penal philosophies namely retribution, incapacitation, deterrence and rehabilitation.

Starting with Lee Bernstein, prison according to him is an extension of our communities. Individuals in prisons are obliged to live behind the bars under gunpoint, outside the prisons individuals live in 'what we ordinarily think of as the community'<sup>1</sup>; those individuals are forced to live under a specific rhythm and life style which is imposed by the authorities. In his book *America is the Prison: Arts and Politics in Prison in the 1970*, Bernstein claims that the American authorities use imprisonment and confinement as means to exert and maintain control over the individuals in general and minorities in particular; Bernstein affirms that 'eighty percent of the prison population is black, brown or yellow people'<sup>2</sup>.

In *Crime and Punishment in America*, Elliott Currie highlights the reasons of the falling of the criminal justice system in the United States by showing the issues in The United States' crime and prison system; and tries to give some solutions to prevent more crimes from happening. According to him, the primary factor of this falling is the imprisonment and the overpopulation of the prisons all over the states. Currie believes that punishment is unfair in

the United States, since a significant number of criminals are regularly sentenced for a long period for committing only small infractions, such as schoolyard fights and bar altercations, this causes the increase of the prison population which becomes hard to control. Curry in his book described the courts as being “tougher” towards the offenders; for Currie this is a proof that the United States is a “punishing society”<sup>3</sup>. Moreover, Currie believes that punishment does not work as a form of correction. Locking individuals behind bars is not necessarily a solution to prevent crimes.

According to Jeffrey Murphy, punishment is considered as upholding fair and reciprocal distribution of benefits and costs by preventing criminals from benefiting from their misconduct. Murphy questions the nature of punishment and believes that using punishment is a wrong action in the processes of ameliorating societies and individuals, because by punishing individual we create the feeling of shame and intimidation which will make this person fall into wrong doing instead of making him straight, “history proves with the complete evidence that since Cain, the world has been neither intimidated nor ameliorated by punishment”<sup>4</sup>.

*The Last Castle* is among the movies which are concerned with the themes of prison and confinement but other themes have emerged as well. For Michael J. Fekula, from the University of South Carolina Aiken, and William Sharbroug, from The Citadel, The Military College of South Carolina, leadership can be among the crucial theme of the movie as well. In their work entitled *Demonstrating Disparate Leadership Styles Through the Last Castle*; the movie offers a chance to examine two distinct leadership styles and to analyze a wide variety of “organizational behavior concepts” using examples from both the protagonist and the antagonist<sup>5</sup>.

According to *BBC Film Review*, Rod Lurie's *The Last Castle* is not a serious and bold prison flick, which will make the lovers of danger and edginess feel disappointed. Yet it remains "a good fun" which gives to the audience feeling of joy for two hours time<sup>6</sup>.

From the above review of literature, we can understand that the themes of imprisonment and confinement and the movie, have already been investigated from distinct perspectives. Lurie's movie has been also a subject of analysis and criticism. Yet to our knowledge, no one has already tried to deal with this movie from Foucauldian perspective, to understand how power circulates between the guards and the prisoners so as to produce docile bodies.

### **Issue and Working Hypothesis**

This dissertation studies the themes of power, punishment and confinement in Rod Lurie's *The Last Castle* from a Foucauldian perspective. To accomplish this goal, we examine to what extent Rod Lurie's work vehicles Foucault's understanding of power relations, surveillance, discipline and resistance via characters and story line in *The Last Castle*.

The first attempt of our dissertation is to depict the way power manifests its self in prisons, through several techniques. Also, it analyzes the kind of relations which exist between the prison guards and the inmates and show to what extent prisons are better places where these power relations operate.

The second attempt is to display how resistance can be omnipresent and the way it accompanies power. Since every character in the movie can be used as a symbol of resistance; we analyzed their behavior and attitude in order to show the way they questioned the prison system. In addition, it attempt to demonstrate how can discourse manipulates the inmates and shape them to be conformist.

## Methodological Outline

This dissertation begins with an introduction that states the main points about the prison literature and the selected movie. It includes a literature review where we have cited the different critical attentions on the theme. In the issue and working hypothesis, we have depicted our main purpose by choosing this topic to be analyzed. The method and materials section deals with a short summary of our theory and a definition of some concept according to the Foucauldian understanding. It also includes a summary of the movie. At the end of the introduction we will give our findings in a result section.

The discussion part will consist of two main chapters. The first is entitled '*The Making of Docile Bodies in The Last Castle*'. The first part of this chapter deals with the 'means of correct training' used inside The Castle to produce docile bodies. Hierarchical observation, normalizing judgment and the examination, are the strategies that are followed within this prison practiced by the guards over the prisoners. The second part of the chapter studies panopticon and surveillance. The last section highlights the reformatory functions which are represented in *The Last Castle*, namely the principle of isolation, the principle of obligatory work and the principle of modulation of penalties.

The second chapter will be about '*Power Relations and Resistance in the Last Castle*'. In this part we will deal with power relations and resistance shown in the movie by applying the Foucauldian insights. Three sections from the second chapter namely power relations, the counterproductive nature of power and resistance. Our dissertation will end with a general conclusion which aims to restate the key ideas developed through the research paper, and gives possible topics which can be explored by other students in the department.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Lee Bernstein, *America is the Prison: Arts and Prison and Politics in the Prison in the 1970s*, (North Carolina: University of North Carolina pres, 2010),p1.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Elliott Curie, *Crime and Punishment in America*, (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1998), p120.

<sup>4</sup> Jeffry Murphy, *Restitutivism and the states in Punishment*, (New York: American society for political and legal philosophy, 1985), p156.

<sup>5</sup> MichealJ.Fekula & William Sharbrough, *Concepts in Contrast: Leadership Styles through the Last Castle*, *Developments in business simulation and experiential learning*, Vol.43 (2016) Accessed November 13, 2022. URL: <http://www.absel.ojs.ttu.tdl.org>

<sup>6</sup> Nev Pierce, *The Last Castle BBC Review* [Online] Available from: [https://www.bbc.co.uk/films/2001/12/18/the\\_last\\_castle\\_2002\\_review.shtml](https://www.bbc.co.uk/films/2001/12/18/the_last_castle_2002_review.shtml)

## **II. Methods and Materials**

This section of our research paper aims at exploring the methodological elements and materials that will be applied in our study of the strategies of punishment and confinement. It is appropriate to use Michel Foucault works and theoretical perspectives on institutions such as prisons.

### **Methods:**

Michel Foucault was a French historian and philosopher, associated with the structuralist and post-structuralist movements. He had a strong influence on philosophy and also in a wide range of humanistic and social disciplines. He gave a new conceptualization of language, text and discourse. Foucault's theory of power is a philosophical theory that emerged during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. In order to analyze the discursive ways through which power circulates within groups and institutions, he studied clinics, asylums, schools and prisons.

### **Definition of concepts: power, knowledge, discipline, surveillance and resistance.**

#### **1.1. Power:**

The objective of Foucault's work has been to create a history of different modes by which human beings are made subjects, this entails power. Both in his investigations and his theory, Foucault frequently refers to the idea of power. Power is everywhere; it is created constantly and comes from everywhere. According to Foucault, similar to other institutions, prison function inside a web of power relations, disciplinary and surveillance techniques to

produce obedient individuals. Governments use a set of distinct practices to regulate and control every aspect of society.

Foucault challenged the old notions of power which only saw it as oppressive and exclusive, by forging a new path that transformed how individuals perceive power. He therefore arrived with the conclusion that power can be found everywhere in our lives and in our society<sup>1</sup>. As Gaventa claims in *Power after Lukes*:

[Foucault's] work marks a radical departure from previous modes of conceiving power and cannot be easily integrated with previous ideas, as power is diffuse rather than concentrated, embodied and enacted rather than possessed.<sup>2</sup>

In fact, Foucault contested the notion that particular categories hold all the power and asserted that power “can be found everywhere”<sup>3</sup>. That is, power can be exerted by people from all social classes and levels. Additionally, he claims that ‘it is impersonal because it is neither possessed nor exerted by individuals, groups or institutions.’<sup>4</sup> That is, power, in Foucault's view, is a phenomenon that affects everyone, including those who may appear to be marginalized.

## **1.2. Power & Knowledge:**

Foucault believes that power and knowledge are strongly linked; they combine to create a system of control<sup>5</sup> as argued in his book *Discipline and Punish*. Authorities produce knowledge in order to maintain power. This is accomplished by establishing classification systems, which allow them to maintain and control the subjects.

Knowledge is never neutral; it is constantly formed in relationship to power. In fact, it is deployed as an instrument of control and domination. This is why Foucault argued against the old views of power, to be something individuals owned. He considered power as a

creation of individual's interaction. According to Foucault the power/knowledge relationship could be operated in two ways: first, it involves the collection of information about a particular subject. The second way is by creating subjects who behave in accordance with information being provided.

## **2. Discipline:**

According to Paul Rainbow's understanding of Foucault, power is an entity that can also function through discipline. He describes it as "a sort of power [...] including a full range of instruments, tactics, procedures, levels of application, [and] goals."<sup>6</sup>

Discipline can be applied to people in two basic methods, the first of which is 'classification'<sup>7</sup>. To prevent any effort at uprising, people are intentionally divided into groups based on their skills, competences, and capacities in this procedure. The second method of applying discipline is through 'the control of activity'.<sup>8</sup>

## **3. Surveillance:**

In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of The prison*, Foucault gives us a thorough explanation of the panopticon, a type of surveillance system. Jeremy Bentham created this unusual prison building at the end of the eighteenth century. It consists of a tower from which a guard can observe each of the cells that are dispersed throughout the surrounding ring-shaped building.

The first characteristic of this particular building, which will be covered in later chapters, is that its power comes from its central tower, which is intended to keep an eye on every prisoner. Since it 'allows a small number of people to guard a large crowd with the least possible effort'.<sup>9</sup>

A second feature of the panopticon is that it needs an enclosed area in order to do surveillance in a better and more efficient manner. Prisoners begin to assume responsibility

for their own conduct and frequently play both guard and the prisoner roles at once to avoid punishment because they are always visible.

#### **4. Resistance:**

According to Foucault, power ‘must be analyzed as something which circulates, or as something that only functions in the form of a chain’.<sup>10</sup> He believed that power is a system of interconnected relationships in which every action has an impact on every other action in different area of society. He asserts that where power is exercised, there has to be an opposed force that resist and he goes far in his thinking that where there is no resistance it is not a power relation.

Actually, Foucault also claims that the relationship between a slave and his master is not one of power but rather one of oppression because there must be conflicts, deeds, and responses on the part of the various parties in order to be able to call it a relationship of power.<sup>10</sup>

To sum up, it is argued that power, discipline, surveillance and resistance are the concepts that Foucault uses in most of his works in order to portray the notion of power and how it is exerted in institutions by the government.

#### **Materials:**

*The Last Castle* is a 2001 American action movie directed by Rod Lurie; an Israeli-American director, screenwriter, and former film critic. It narrates the story of Irwin, three stars General who is court-martialed and sentenced to military service for disobeying a president’s orders. Irwin’s plan was clearly spending his ten years in the prison and returns to his family, which he neglected because of serving his country for long years. But by meeting the prison warden, Col Winter, Irwin’s journey inside the prison took an unexpected turn.

During Irwin's time in the military prison, he observes Winter's brutal treatment of the inmates. Winter uses harsh strategies of punishment and uses military law to maintain a reign of terror. Inmates are programmed to accept manipulation and humiliation as being their fate. They lead their lives without freedom or self-determination. All these events push Gen Irwin to set against the warden instructions and authority by making the prisoners aware about their situation which leads to resistance and rebellion. The movie ended with Winter carrying his ego out, which resulted in the death of the hero Irwin and Aguilar.

## Endnotes:

- <sup>1</sup>Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Volume I*, (New York: Random House, 1978),p 1.
- <sup>2</sup>John Gaventa, *Power after Lukes*,(Brighton: Institute of development Studies, 2003), p1.
- <sup>3</sup>Ellen Feder, “power/ Knowledge” in *Michel Foucault Key Concepts*,(Ashford: Ashford colour press, 2011), p 56.
- <sup>4</sup>C. G. Prado, *Starting With Foucault: An Introduction to Genealogy*, (Boulder: West View Press, 2000), p 100.
- <sup>5</sup>Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of The Prison*,Trans,Alan Sheridan,(London,Penguin,1991),p197.
- <sup>6</sup> Paul Rainbow, *The Foucault Reader* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), p 206.
- <sup>7</sup>Sümeyye GüllüAslan, *A Foucauldian Reading of Power in Harry Potter Series: Speciesism and Discrimination Based on Blood Status*, Master dissertation, (Middle East Technical University, 2018), p 23.
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>9</sup> Suerre Rafensoe et al., *Michel Foucault: a Research Companion*, (Hampshire: Palgrave Mac million, 2016), p 184.
- <sup>10</sup> Michel Foucault, *Two Lectures in Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews &Other Writings from 1972-1977*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), p 98.
- <sup>11</sup>Claire O’Farrel, *Michel Foucault*,(London : Sage Publications,2005),p99.

### III. Results

This research paper analyzes the themes of imprisonment, punishment and resistance in Rod Lurie's *The Last Castle* from a Foucauldian standpoint. In this work we highlight the varieties of power relations that occur in the prison and how power and its strategies are crucial factors in the production of compliant subjects.

By studying Rod Lurie's work using the Foucauldian stance, this permitted us to obtain a deep comprehension of the movie in general and its themes in particular. In the movie many Foucauldian concepts are exemplified. Since *The Last Castle* is a prison movie; Imprisonment, power, resistance and punishment are given a great emphasis. Side by side with surveillance, which are portrayed with the appearance of the watching towers.

In the first chapter we can deduce that where power operates it makes docile bodies. This occurs through the use of what Foucault calls "means of correct training" and how punishment is used in the same purpose by three principles called "the reformatory functions". In the second part of the same chapter we found that power relations are exerted everywhere and occur with all the individuals, maybe the "guards/ inmates" is given a great emphasis by the director. Moreover the Foucauldian panopticon appears with the movies, through the watching towers; from which the prisoners are permanently under a continuous surveillance.

The second chapter deals with resistance in *The Last Castle*. The result of this chapter is that resistance is a reflection and reaction to power, not merely a phenomenon linked with it. Resistance is caused by the oppressive discourse of the authorities, the warden of the prison in our case. This is called the "counterproductive nature of power" according to Foucault.

## **IV. Discussion**

This section aims to analyze *The Last Castle* using Foucauldian thoughts of how power can be used to produce docile bodies within different institutions. In Foucault's *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison*, docility can be reached by using three main practices of correct training. It also studies the principles that are used to transform the inmates into docile conformist bodies in institutions. This investigation analyses on the second chapter power relations between guards and inmates in the movie and how resistance was produced.

### **Chapter one: The Making of Docile Bodies in the *Last Castle***

Power, in the Foucauldian understanding, explores the creation of docile people alongside a new focus on discipline by which the body can be controlled. Discipline ensures the obedience of its subjects not with violence but with the threat of violence. It influences the individual's thoughts to take control of his body. Disciplinary power commonly involves the use of certain tactics that are rooted in schemes, maneuvers, and procedures rather than the idea of possession. Since the beginning of the 19th century in Europe, there has been no longer physical punishment for disobedience against power, as mentioned by Foucault in his great work *Discipline and Punishment: The Birth of Prison*<sup>1</sup>. Instead of it, there is a toolbox, which exerts subtle influence on people's bodies and souls. It is described as the practice of monitoring, a method of controlling behavior used to rank, order, and regulate people<sup>2</sup>.

This method defined as the art of correct training through hierarchical observation, normalizing judgment and examination. The following chapter discusses Rod Lurie's *The Last Castle* from Foucauldian perspective using the previous instruments of discipline in order to make the prisoners conformist docile bodies.

## **I. The Practices of Correct Training in *The Last Castle*:**

### **1. Hierarchical Observation In The Castle:**

The widespread use of observation indicates how important it is to modern society and how different institutions like prisons use observation as a strategy of power. The position of eyewitness grants a unique control over the watched and the degree of perception changes from one society to another; and it is regularly modified by modern methods of watching. Observation implies the omnipresence of power which constantly observes anything; this resulted in more dangerous way of controlling people. *In Discipline and Punish* Foucault writes:

The perfect disciplinary apparatus would make it possible for a single gaze to see everything constantly. A central point would be both the source of light illuminating everything, and a locus of convergence for everything that must be known: a perfect eye that nothing would escape and a centre towards which all gazes would be turned.<sup>3</sup>

According to Foucault, the use of surveillance is widespread in society. It is not just used in prisons to control inmates, and not just criminals are subject to disciplinary power. He claims that disciplinary power underwent a significant evolution in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. As a result of having to constantly watch their behavior, inmates ended up punishing themselves by themselves because they were subjected to strict disciplinary practices. That is to say when they are exposed to such observation and surrounded by guards in tower, they ended up by controlling themselves by themselves and avoid any prohibited action, which makes them both prisoners and guards.

The observation of the inmates in *The Last Castle* is one tool by which the government can transform the prisoners into docile bodies. The function of the guards is to

observe the movements and the slightest details of the prisoners. As they have all knowledge and information needed about each prisoner, which gives them more power over the inmates. In the castle, the inmates are subjected to observation and direct visual supervision by Winter and the prison staff. The latter will record physical description, personal details of the inmates. Then there will be presentations about the prison rules and guidelines, what is called an induction process; where Captain Pretz took Gen Irwin at his arrival to his cell and introduces the prison and its rules and what is required of his time in the prison.

Through the movie one can understand that the inmates' time and space is limited relying on the prison rules. As Captain Pretz told Irwin that he should not cross the yellow line while queuing and that he has the right to visit just once on week. The behavior of the inmates is observed and reports are made about the smallest mistake.

In the castle, it is the guards who observe the inmates. This observation takes two aspects; direct and indirect. The direct way of observing the inmates is by placing the guards on the highly elevated towers to command an excellent view and keep an eye on the prisoners on the yard. Because such way of observing can become a regular part of life for those who live under such regimes, commonly speaking the guards' tower in the prison symbolizes the supremacy and the authority of the guards over the prisoners. Therefore, in the movie this tower is used in monitoring and controlling the inmates. Moreover, the director's goal is to make the audience associate the existence of this tower to the prison authority and control.



**Shot 01: (00:01:36) The Guard Zamorro Observing The Inmates.**

A long shot that depicts the guard Zamorro observing the inmates in the

yard from the high elevated tower. The cameramen started filming from the back to make the audience aware how the castle is surrounded by guards like Zamorro for a constant surveillance.

In the movie, guard tower served as sharpshooter once ordered by the warden and Captain Pretz to shoot the inmates as a result of their disobedience. The warden used to observe the inmates almost all the time from his window, even when provoking a fight while playing basket ball, he carries out his observation until he order to punish them. Winter receives report at the end of every day by Captain Pretz and he asked him if everyone is on the place he is supposed to be which means to check if the observation is well done.



**Shot 02 :(00:02:20)Winter Observing The Inmates**

A close-up depicting Winter's face, it is a type of camera angle focusing on the actor's face.

By close-up, filmmakers attract the attention

of the audience and make them establish a mood or develop emotional depth by focusing on the facial features of the actor. In this shot, Rod Lurie tries to create an emotional impact on the audience by moving the camera into Winter's face to depict the malicious character over the prisoners enjoying their fight. This shot shows that Winter is in complete satisfaction about taking control over the situation inside the castle.

This military jail is under the direction of colonel Winter. He personifies the cold season and death, his cruelty pushes him to torture the prisoners with no empathy, much like his name suggests. He is a man with limited skills and he has never been in combat. A sarcastic and cold smile drawn in his face most of the time.

The indirect way of observation is by using some inmates secretly to gather information and record all the details about the other prisoners. This is shown when Winter used the prisoner Yeats to spy on Irwin's plan with the inmates. Also the guards spy the inmates' daily conversations while they are gathered in one cell by standing in the outside of that cell by pretending that the reason of their presence is just to check if everything is fine.

The process of observation in *The Last Castle* is used also during the process of punishment. The warden ordered his guards to punish Aguilar under the rain saluting no one, and he was observed by Captain Pretz and other guards to ensure that the punishment process is done successfully. The observation is both a punishment and a disciplinary instrument. The prisoner Aguilar stands under the rain for a long time raising his hand by fear of another punishment. He knows that he was observed which makes him controlled spiritually before being controlled physically and, thus, becomes docile body by excellence.



**Shot 03: (00:33:32) Aguilar punishment Under The Rain.**

This long shot depicts both Aguilar after a long endured punishment where he cannot raise his hand anymore and Irwin's reaction to such exaggerated punishment. The aim is to attract the audience feeling toward Aguilar situation shivering from the cold he cannot bear. This shot made the audience think about Winter's cruelty making such a decision over Aguilar.

In other words, surveillance makes the prisoners feel that since every action is being observed they cannot enjoy their limited liberty inside the castle. That is, the inmates feel themselves under a constantly gaze which prevent them from the minimal taste of their remind freedom. Thus, they have to behave properly the whole time.

It is shown in the movie that the inmates follow a strict regime of discipline where their time in the castle is controlled and divided. For instance, they get up when the first orange light of the day reaches the roof of the prison, five minutes after a horn sounds the cell doors open and the inmates should step out by bringing their towels and tooth brushes in order to go to the bathroom. Eleven o'clock of the morning is lunch time, where the inmates have the right to small portion of food and when the time reserved to lunch comes to an end, they go to the laundry room for washing their clothes. After having dinner, it's time to go back to the cells and sleep and the light is switched off. This schedule fits what Foucault calls the "time table"<sup>3</sup>. Time table serves as a means to punish the body and the soul of the inmate by reducing their time and limiting their actions and behaviors relying on the prison constructions. Indeed, it is mentioned in the movie that the prisoners learnt the prison rules, as well as Gen Irwin who is forced to adapt with the routine inside the castle.

The relation between surveillance and discipline is a stimulus-response relation. Therefore, the observation of the convict's body, serves to discipline his mind. As already explained, hierarchical surveillance leads to discipline that is one of docility's instruments. One can easily notice how the inmates adapted with the situation for long time by being too much observed and develop behaviors of docile bodies.

## **2. Normalizing judgment in The castle:**

To set borderlines and instructions, an authority must apply punishment to those who do not conform. Finding fault where there is none is one of many ways an authority

holds power over its people. According to Foucault, institutions must establish a system that not only individualizes and subjugates bodies but also specifies what is deemed appropriate in order to retain disciplinary control. This punishment of even the slightest infraction of the rules is evidence of, among other things, an imbalance of power. In this sense Foucault writes:

But discipline brought with it a specific way of punishing that was not only a small-scale model of the court. What is specific to the disciplinary penalty is non-observance, that which does not measure up to the rule, that departs from it. The whole indefinite domain of the non-conforming is punishable: the soldier commits an "offence" whenever he does not reach the level required; to carry out his tasks.<sup>4</sup>

By using what he refers to as "micro-penalties," Foucault asserts that the authority has some superior status over its subjects and that everything that is being corrected would result in a perfect society. He uses the following institutions as an example of how this approach is used:

The workshop, the school, the army were subject to a whole micro-penalty of time (lateness, absences, interruptions of tasks), of activity (inattention, negligence, lack of zeal), of behavior (impoliteness, disobedience), of speech (idle chatter, indecency).<sup>5</sup>

The process of normalization entails a regular discipline routine that may include physical punishment and humiliations to project the idea that deviating from what was previously regarded normal results in punishment. In this sense Foucault argues: "The regulations for the Prussian infantry ordered that a soldier who had not correctly learnt to handle his rifle should be treated with the greatest severity".<sup>6</sup>

There is a strong correlation between this normalization of the body from Foucault and *the Last Castle*. Col Winter ordered Captain Pretz to set only one basketball which provokes a fight between the prisoners. The warden and his guards were watching and enjoying the fight without any intervention. One can notice from this scene that Winter's goal is to

manipulate the prisoners and creates a fight between them to punish. The fight will be considered as a violation of the prison rules. Once he ordered his guards to whistle blowing, the prisoners must push-up in the ground. The prisoner Thumper refused to conform and to fall to the ground, he said: "I did not do anything". Then the warden ordered to shoot him.



**Shot 04: (00:17:07) Shooting The Prisoner Thumper.**

This shot depicts the prisoner's push-up in the ground, unlike the prisoner

Thumper falls on the ground since he was shouted as the warden orders.

From this passage one can understand that provoking the fight which resulted in firing the prisoner Tambar is a way to normalize the inmates who do not conform and display improper attitudes toward the prison. Despite the fact that Tambar did not do anything, and received violence from the one who attack him and exposed to punishment from the prison authority.

Another case that portrays normalization in the movie is the punishment of the prisoner Aguilar. Winter puts Aguilar under the rain until the morning for being saluting Gen Irwin. A behavior is not accepted and considered as abnormal; Irwin told Aguilar to put his hand down and there is no need for that. He stops the stick used by Captain Pretz and told him that the punishment is over. As a result, Gen Irwin was hit by the guards and other prisoners were ordered to push-up under the rain. Therefore, Winter ordered to punish Irwin by moving stones under a hot weather .The punishment was twice, moving the stones from one side to another.

After ending with moving the stones Irwin faces a second punishment. This time the reason is his soiled uniform. Warden Winter sets a rule which states that the prisoners' uniform is the property of the facility. A soiled or ripped uniform is considered as a violation of the prison manual conduct, inside The Castle a violation always requires a discipline.

Irwin and Aguilar are not the only ones who were punished due to this event, because after punishing them Warden Winter ordered Peretz to put all the prisoners without any exception into a seventy-two hours lockdown even though they did nothing wrong to deserve punishment.



**Shot 05 : (00:39:14) Irwin's Punishment**

This shot depicts Irwin gazing at the doctor who insists on continuing the challenge in moving stones. The focus is rather on Irwin's

face so as to make the audience feel to what extent Gene Irwin can be brave to challenge the warden who punished him under bad circumstances.

From the punishment of Aguilar, Gene Irwin and the other prisoners, it is clear that the smallest faults and mistakes made by inmates in the castle are taken into consideration by the warden and the guards known as a form of normalization. The prison staff sets norms to respect and conform to some behaviors. Therefore, if the inmates cross the yellow line for example or break the prison instructions that might be considered normal, it will result in their punishment.

### **3. Examination in The Last Castle:**

The end result of the combination of hierarchical observation and the standardization of judgment is examination. Examining is a highly ritualized process, according to Foucault, in which systems of observation with established or normalized

judgments can use their knowledge and power to create truths through which they can punish or discipline individuals who come under their scrutiny and deviate from the established norm.<sup>7</sup>

Examination, Foucault says, is the ceremony of power, it objectifies the subject and imposes both knowledge and power relations upon the individual. Foucault argues that infinite examination leads to compulsory objectification. Foucault argues in *Discipline and Punish*:

The examination combines the techniques of an observing hierarchy and those of a normalizing judgment. It is a normalizing gaze, a surveillance that makes it possible to qualify, to classify and to punish. It establishes over individuals a visibility through which one differentiates them and judges them.<sup>8</sup>

Throughout the movie, the audience is exposed to how extensive the observational power is made by the prison staff and how the prisoners are used to live under strict prison circumstances. If the inmates deviate from what is normal or expected, they are open to examination and classification by the warden and the guards. Since they are always under observation, this will be used against them as a proof that they are a threat to the system of the prison.

The warden's ability to punish and discipline through open and hostile examination of their actions that deviate from the accepted norm is due to his superiority over the inmates and his instructions. The prison guards' potential to discipline the prisoners comes from the fact that they know that they are observed. If they disobey; they know what is waiting for them. They will self-discipline themselves to act accordingly or face punishment. Punishment is when the observed prisoners are caught deviating from the established norm or violating the prison rules, using evidence gathered through observation against them.

In the movie, Gen Irwin frequently and intentionally breaks regulations and instructions of the prison. He has taken the identity of a free soldier and chooses to live outside the rules set by the warden in the castle and away from being obedient. He knows about the rules of a military camp more than the other soldiers, which makes him prohibit any exaggerated punishment of the prisoners. As it is seen during the punishment of prisoner Aguilar under the rain, Irwin tells the warden that the prisoner should not be punished until the morning according to the prison laws.

## **II. Panopticon in The Last Castle:**

The prison has a number of conflicting goals, including confining, securing, rehabilitating, or punishing, but regardless of how compassionate its methods, penal architecture is fundamentally harsh. By architecture, individuals are said to be objects of control. That is, the prison architectural design intends to keep prisoners under surveillance which facilitates the process of making them docile bodies.

Architecture is one field that is able to serve the goals of authority. Jeremy Bentham offers an example of institutions' design where all the areas of the institution can be seen from one angle, known as Panopticon. The prefix (pan) means all in Greek and (opticon) refers to observation. Since it addressed the necessity for an inexpensive technique to enhance authority over bigger public rebellion, Bentham's idea gained appeal.

It is in the form of a central observation tower placed within a circle of prison cells. From one tower, a guard can watch every cell and inmate but the latter cannot see into the tower. The inmates will never have information about whether or not they are being watched. In other words, they are watched without being able to see what is in the central building. Foucault writes in this sense:

All that is needed is to place a supervisor in central tower and to shut up in each cell a madman, a patient, a condemned man, a worker or a schoolboy. By the effect of backlighting, one can observe from the tower, standing out precisely against the light, the small captive shadows in the cells of the periphery.<sup>9</sup>

As a tool for discipline, the panopticon monitoring system incorporates soul training, which teaches convicts to consider the intricacies of their actions and behaviors in order to transform themselves.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, the possibility of being observed at all time pushes the prisoners (subject) to control their behavior, because they feel observed even when they are not being watched.

Throughout the movie, we can see the presence of watchtower. Indeed, these towers are a symbol of the prison universe. Initially, the watchtower is the only higher post allowing the guards to have an overview of the castle, while remaining completely away from the inmates. The warden used the watchtowers as fixed surveillance from the top, and these are the last precautions to stop escape attempts or breaking the rules. The watchtower used to observe the prisoners, but it is also a repressive element.

The guards in the watching towers are always in telephone contact with the central information post which is directed by Captain Pretz. It is from these watchtowers that the armed guards shoot at the detainees who do not respect the orders and who sometimes even kill them like the case of Thumper who was fired with a rubber bullet. The watchtower of observation is managed by the guard Zamorro who fired Aguilar in his head and kills him. In the movie, the guards are above the prisoners; with this height they can establish a relation of domination and submission.

Moreover the prison cells are designed to facilitate the processes of surveillance for the guards. The cells are gathered in one building where a watching tower is in the center. Only one guard can manage the observation of the inmates, since the cells' doors are made of

iron bars only. These doors are made to allow the guard in the tower to see inside each single cell without moving from his place.

As in the Foucauldian panopticon, the guards have the ability to observe and know what the prisoners do in their cells; however, the prisoners have no information about whether they are watched or not or whether the guards are there or not. What makes the guards observers superior over the inmates is knowledge. Foucault argues that, “there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations”.<sup>11</sup>

### **III. The Principles of Transformation into Docile Bodies in The Castle:**

*Discipline and Punish* provides a study about punishment in a social context. Before the 18<sup>th</sup> century, punishment was directed at the human body. A public display of brutal torture, body mutilation, and cruel executions was used to teach a lesson and dissuade future offenders from committing the same acts. However, in what Foucault calls “the classical age”, there were several requests for reform. For Foucault, this reform of punishment is not aimed to create a human, less violent atmosphere for prisoners, but rather to improve punishment and the way power relations worked. Indeed, punishment moved from body to the soul. Modern societies do not only punish the inmate physically but also control his soul.

It is widely seen that prisons existed before the modern era and their function varies according to Foucault. These jails served more than just places of imprisonment with limited freedom. In other words, prisons in modern societies are more than a center of detention but have a reformatory function. The following passage discusses the three principles that are used in prisons to transform the inmates into docile bodies.

## **A. The Principle of Isolation in The Castle:**

One of the procedures that jails used for accomplishing their reformatory work is the segregation of prisoners, or what is called isolation. The inmate should be isolated from the external world imprisoned under strict rules. Isolation has an impact on the mind of the inmate. It pushes him to reflect about what he did for being there. Most of the time, prisons used to isolate the inmates not only from the external world but also from each other. Solitary confinement is used as disciplinary punishment to help prison staff 'manage' the prisoners and make them avoid the contact with others.

It is clearly demonstrated in *The Last Castle* that isolation of the prisoners is one means of punishment. The inmates in the movie were isolated from the external world in a castle with big walls. This is shown from the first minutes of the movie when Irwin (Robert Red Ford) addresses the spectators that the only difference between this castle and others is that this castle is built to keep people in. which means keep people far from the external society. From the beginning, the idea of isolation is stressed by the director. He moves his camera to picture the building of the castle, then to the watchtowers with guards to make the spectator aware of the limits of this castle. He also pictures the yard which is surrounded by the administration building and huge, thick outer walls. That is to say, that escaping from this castle is forbidden and impossible as well.

The prisoners in *The Last Castle* are not only isolated from the external society but they are also isolated from each other's. Irwin was prohibited from any contact with other inmates for a long time. The warden ordered his guards to put Irwin in a solitary confinement, isolated cell. By isolating him, the warden aims at reforming him into docile body, being an example for the other inmates to avoid breaking the rules set by the warden. Being in isolation, the inmate surely will have enough time to think about what he did and when he

breaks the rules. Foucault believed that when placed alone, the convict hates his crime ,and if his soul blunted by evil, it is in isolation that regret will come to assault him.<sup>12</sup>In the movie the warden ordered his guards to isolate some inmates like the doctor, Thumper and Enriquez.

Apart from isolating inmates from the outside world and, in some cases, keeping them away from one another, the most effective way to turn these criminals into submissive individuals is to forcibly instill in them a love of labor. The second premise that prisons employ to reform inmates and produce docile bodies is further shown in what follows.

### **B. The Principle of Obligatory Work in The Castle:**

Obligatory work is the second technique that is used in prison for making inmates forget about the external world. Various forms of forced labor, usually manual labor that convicts are ordered to undertake are collectively referred to as “penal labor”. The prison system used work as providing occupation for convicts and can also be used as punishment.

In the castle, the prisoners are used by the warden to rebuild the old castle wall of 1870 to keep them occupied and forget about their rebellious behavior by making them believe that the wall is their wall and they should build it. As Foucault argues in *Discipline and Punish*, making the convicts occupied, therefore, leads not only to inculcate habits of order and obedience, but also stifle aspirations of freedom and imagination.<sup>13</sup>it is shown in the movie that the prisoners were aware of winter’s goal, that is to keep them occupied and to make them busy to think about their miserable life. But they continue to build the castle wall from fear to be punished.



**Shot 06: (00:48:54) the prisoners' reaction in building the wall.**

This shot portrays the prisoners' happiness in destroying Winter's wall.

Through this shot, the audience is able

to see how Irwin can bring them hope, especially Aguilar's happiness can tell a lot about how proud and happy they are at that moment.

They have submitted to and accepted the prison's circumstances, because they are aware that they will die there, they do not worry about thinking of the outside world. From this point, one can notice that the arrival of Irwin to the castle, made a change over Winter's goals. He tries to convince the prisoners and make them think about the work as their fortress and it is their wall not winter's.

Another scene that depicts hard work as punishment, where Irwin was obliged to remove the stones from one side to another until the warden gives order to stop. Irwin succeeds in moving the stones from one side to another, but Captain Peretz tells him that the punishment did not finish yet until he brings the stones once again. Despite that Irwin did a hard work under a hot weather and he hit his head on rocks, he resist to the punishment and succeed in moving all the stones.

Beside the masonry other obligatory tasks are done by the inmate. Some inmates work on the prison kitchen; they serve food and wash the dishes after every meal. Others including Irwin and the doctor work on the laundry room where they have to wash the other inmate's laundry. The others task opposed to the inmates is delay cleaning; a group of prisoners have to clean the cells and the prison administration building.

In addition to the two previous principles that are used to transform the prisoners into docile bodies, another third principle is used to control whether the previous two principles are respected which is modulation of penalties.

### **C. The Principle of The Modulation of Penalties in The Castle:**

This principle depends on the ability of the prison to reduce or increase the sentence of the prisoner. The duration of penalty must be regulated according to the transformation of the convicts and their conformity. The principle of the modulation of penalties is one strategy through which inmates are made docile bodies.

In the castle, this principle is obvious in an indirect way where the prisoner Yeats is used to reveal Irwin's plan. It is mentioned in the movie that Yeats is incarcerated for four years for being involved in a drug smuggling operation from Wares to El Paso. So, the warden used him to provide information about Irwin's plot in exchange reducing the three years left to three months ,and he said : “ does three months sounds better ?.I need to resolve this situation quickly before someone else gets hurt or killed, and the way I want to do that is information”. Even though it is prohibited and unethical Winter uses this strategy to achieve his goals.

From the above quotation one can understand that the warden reduces the sentence of Yeats to use him for his goals. Therefore, Yeats will be docile body if he accomplishes what is required from him. However, Yeats recognizes the real soldier on him and he decides to join the other prisoners and Gen Irwin. This decision proves that the warden does not succeed in transforming Yeats into docile bodies by using sentence modulation.

As a punishment for not being docile, the warden ordered his guards to put Yeats in a solitary cell. The principle of modulation of penalties aims to examine the inmate and the

extent to which he is docile, Yeats changed his mind and follows his proper way and he gets punished.

The principle of modulation of penalties lies on the idea that it plays a crucial part in ensuring that the goal of turning prisoners into submissive bodies is achieved. This principle would incorporate a variety of tactics designed to change the convict's actions or behavior whenever necessary to ensure transformation.

In other words, the principle of modulation penalties involves punishment and various techniques to control people, reward for adherence to those who conform, and punish those who do not. According to Foucault, this principle takes its shape in three areas. This involves a trial area for prisoners, punishment area and a reward area for those who are engaged on the way of reform.<sup>14</sup>

From the three previous principles, one can understand that punishment of the prisoners, as depicted in *The Last Castle*, takes a precise way to transform the convicts into docile bodies. This is because punishment is not limited to the body of the condemned but also his soul.

## Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup>Michel Foucault,*Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* ,Trans,Alan Sheridan,(London,Penguin,1991), p11 .

<sup>2</sup> Suerre Raffensoe et al., *Michel Foucault: A Research Companion* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), p209.

<sup>3</sup> Michel Foucault,*Discipline and punish: The Birth of the Prison*,Trans,Alan Sheridan,(London,Penguin,1991),p173.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.p07.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.p178.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.p200

<sup>11</sup>Haggarty,K.D & Ericson,R.V,*The Surveillant assemblage*,British Journal of sociology 51 (4),(2000),p 605-622.

<sup>12</sup> Michel Foucault, *Two Lectures in Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews &Other Writings from 1972-1977*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), p 27.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.p237

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

## **Chapter Two: Power Relation and Resistance**

### **I. Power Relations In The Last Castle :**

The concept behind imprisonment is thought to incarcerate criminals and law breakers from society to protect it. And it is deduced to rehabilitate and correct the criminals' behavior. But deep down authorities use the imprisonment of individuals in order to be able to manipulate and control both the convict's body and mind. By the imprisonment of these individuals the prison authority gathers information about them and keeps them instantly under their gaze to guarantee the submission of these convicts.

#### **1. The prisoners and guards relationship:**

*The Last Castle* deals with the relationship between “inmates” and the prison staff. From the beginning of the movie one can recognize that power relations between the two sides is unfair and oppressive. The prison guards relying on their knowledge about the prisoners to make them accept the inferiority of their status. Therefore, the guards are in the one-up status, the position of power and the prisoners in the one-down position, submissive position.

The prisoner/ guards relation is based on mistrust from both sides. The prisoners choose to not fully trust the prison guards because of the mistreatment they daily receive from them and they are aware that the guards are faithful to the warden so they decided to be polite to the guards to avoid any conflict with them. The prison guards chose also to make boundaries between the inmates and them, the reason is the guards see themselves as being superior to the inmates.

Through the movie, some prisoners like Yeats, express their perception that forming intimate bounds with guards would be considered as a betrayal for their status as

soldier and other prisoners. Despite the fact that guards build on relationship with the prisoner Yeats, using him as a secret agent to convey the plot that Irwin planned in taking over the prison, Yeats used such ties and their confidence as a way to steal the flag from Winter's office. He cannot trust them and betray his team. Even when prisoners come to trust the guards, they are often less trustful of the system that guards mediate.

It seems that Rod Lurie's goal in this movie is to show the audience how the warden is positioned by authority to control the inmates and how he uses cruel methods to punish the prisoners. The warden personifies the 'obscure side' of the American government. He acts without considerable surveillance from the outside world, he has full authority to order his guards against the prisoners by doing whatever he wants, involving corruption.

In the movie, a symbolic fight is led by two groups: powerful and powerless. On the one hand, the prison staff as powerful side and on the other, the prisoners represent the powerless side. At the first sight, the distinction is quite clear, therefore one can understand from the beginning that the movie depicts a social phenomenon, that is to say, one that breaks the rules or commits a crime has to be kept in prison, imprisoned under the supervision of guards, since the prisoner constitutes a danger for society. But by the arrival of Gen Irwin and other prisoners, lots of expectations come to the audience's mind and things started to change.

When Irwin criticizes Winter's much-prized military artifacts collection, Winter's admiration of Irwin fades fast. Due to the lack of experience and self-confidence, he feels the need to exert his power over Irwin and the rest of the prisoners to feel that he becomes powerful.

Power is the ability of an agent to impose his will over the will of the weak and compel them to do things they do not want or wish to do. It is understood as something that those in power own, as a possession. However, according to Foucault, power is not something

that acts and manifests itself in a specific way; it is more of a strategy than a possession.

Foucault claims:

I am not referring to power with capital p dominating and imposing its rationality upon the totality of the social body. In fact there are power relations, they are multiple, they have different forms, they can be in play in family relations, or within an institution or an administration.<sup>15</sup>

From the quotation, one can understand that the state is not mainly something that owns power but rather something which builds a system of relations between individuals. That is to say, power as a strategy and not a possession means to consider it as something that has to be exerted and not simply acquired. It is not used exclusively in some institutions but it is rather a set of relations in society.

It is widely agreed, that at the heart of any prison, there is a relationship of power between staff and prisoners. However, the warden and his guards benefit from their authority over the inmates and treat them as being 'others'.

## **2. Otherness:**

In *The Last Castle*, the fundamental idea that emerges is the notion of otherness. It represents how one group (the guards) views the prisoners as the other. It refers to them by a group as not belonging, as being threatening or as being different. Rod Lurie uses scenes that depict otherness to express society's concerns. The concept of otherness through the movie rests on what is not 'us' is the 'other'.

The prison is based on the principle to keep people away from society, where the prisoners are seen different from other individuals. The inmates for him are a bunch of "animals" so he uses his power to punish and tame them using strict means of control as Winter deprived them from their dignity. The scene where Winter orders to punish the

prisoner Aguilar by standing and doing a salute under the rain for two days shows that Colonel Winter punishes the men by using means which are outside the prison rules.

Another scene that shows how the prisoners receive bad treatment and seen as being 'the other' is when the warden play basketball in the yard while he keeps the inmates inside the prison. He enjoys the game because he has the freedom to play and move all over the yard while the inmates are locked in their cells. Winter did not stop here but his arrogance pushes him away; to satisfy his ego, he never minds to murder the inmates. Winter's post in the prison made him believe that he has impunity from being asked and punished because of his acts so he keeps his authority going beyond every one until it emerges against him.

From the meeting that Winter holds with the prisoners behind the bars, one can notice the degree of Winter's cruelty. As he tells them 'you are no longer soldiers' and they are the shadow and shape of soldiers, he prohibited them from acting in a way like military serviceman. He affirms them that real soldiers, guards are going to guard, contain and stop them and by this way they are treated just like 'other'.

In other words, guards stop prisoners because they are no more than 'the other' of the prison staff, the warden and the position of soldier. One can understand that they are seen just inmates behind the walls who have to be trained and punished; they do not have the right to salute or be saluted even by each other. Gen Irwin was punished harshly after stopping a guard from clubbing a prisoner to show for the other inmates that there is no difference, and he is no longer a General but he is treated like 'other', everyone who do not belong to the prison staff is alienated and treated badly.

On the other hand, some scenes portray the torture exerted on the inmates' injuries. They do not have medical treatment; this is portrayed in the laundry room scene, where one of the inmates get a heart attack. Instead of taking him to the hospital the guards leave him to die

in that room. The one who saved the inmate's life is an inmate; he used to be a doctor. To resuscitate the man, doctor has to use the electric leads of the laundry room.

Rod Lurie used a set of cinematographic techniques which create a sense of exclusion in the spectator's mind. Such scenes are used to describe the inmates suffering by the cruel system inside the castle. As they narrate to Gen Irwin how they endured for long time before his arrival and how many prisoners have been killed for not having medical treatment.

The prisoners "normalize" and internalize their 'otherness' when Gen Irwin starts to build on them a sense of resistance and self confidence using their talent. The relation of prisoners and guards is like a master and slave relationship. The guards are in the position of master who tortures the inmates by rapping and using Rubber bullets to shoot them whenever they do not obey the rules. Such bullets were used during the Vietnam War in the sixties.

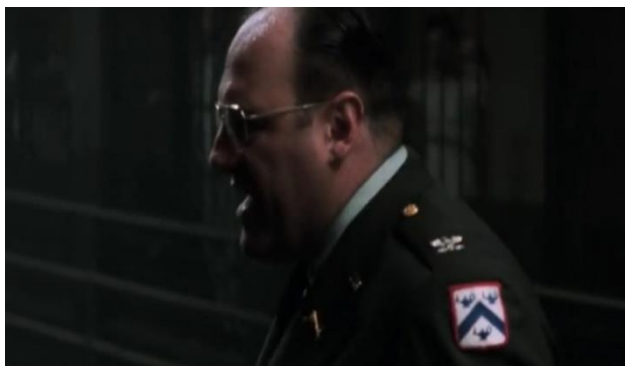
### **3. Power and discourse:**

Winter is the best example of how power can operate through discourse, as seen in the movie. Since he is the warden, he has the authority which gives him the ability to control the inmates. Winter takes control over the prison due to his tyranny and violence toward them. As shown in the movie Winter was spread the idea of his superiority by his discourse. To achieve his goal he uses manipulative and seductive words in order to persuade the inmates and the guards by his authority over them, which will become his truth. He sets fear into the prisoner's souls to make them weak and avoid any type of resistance. Winter uses speeches with convincing words, and every single speech that he gives to the inmates is a form of discourse. This speech has the goal of speeding terror and showing his authority.

According to Foucault, discourse is a way of identifying the individual who produce it since it reflects his identity, class and social rank. That is, the person who how gives discourse is the one who possesses the power over the other individuals and the more powerful a person is, the more convincing his discourse gets.

Winter keeps reminding the inmates that they are “Shadows of soldiers” who deserve no grace and respect. Moreover he meets with the inmates on his office to talk about his power and the truth that he is the only one who possess power on the facility. The relationship between power and discourse manifests through the manipulation of the powerless by the powerful by using speech. In the movie one can see that every task is scheduled by winter and prisoners have to follow without complaining. In his book *The Order of Things* Foucault points out:

In every society, the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organized and redistributed by certain number of procedures whose role is to ward off its powers and dangers, to gain mastery over its chance events, to evade ponderous, formidable materiality.<sup>16</sup>



**Shot 07(01:15:00) Winter’s discourse**

This shot depicts Winter’s face full of anger while he was telling the prisoners

behind the bars that they are no more than shadows of Soldiers. This shoot enables the audience to feel the anger Winter expressed on his face.

## II. The Counter Productive Nature Of Power:

Foucault argues that power, besides being a relation rather than a possession, is productive and followed by resistance. He believes that it is incorrect to consider power as something that institutions possess and use oppressively over individuals and groups. In the first volume of *History of Sexuality*, he argues that the idea that power is oppression should be ignored because even oppressive measures are not only repressive and censorious, but also productive causing new behavior to emerge. As the following quotation affirms:

We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it “excludes”, it “represses”, it “censors”, it “obstructs”, it “masks”, it ‘conceals’. In fact, power produces, it produces reality; it produces domain of objects and rituals of truth.<sup>17</sup>

The emphasis on the contemporary exercise of the creative nature of power is the most significant component of Foucault’s theory. His goal is to replace the negative concept with counter-productive nature of power. The latter is not simply saying no and oppresses individuals, instead it is productive.

Relying on the tragic period in the American history namely the sixties that resulted in the death of American soldiers in the Vietnam War, it would be suitable to study the “tragic” event in the movie under the productive nature of power and its counter effects.

In *The Last Castle*, indeed there are scenes that can be used to refer to the productive nature of power; resistance and its counter effects. If power in the prison is used in order to correct the inmates and make them docile and to produce regularity, one can see that the effect is just the opposite. The warden not only fails in his mission but used his position to produce and aggravate the situation inside the castle.

To begin with, the protagonist Gen Irwin declared that he is in the prison to do his time and leave. That is to say that prison meant to correct people behavior for a given set of time. But this castle through the oppressive methods used by the warden seems to produce and proliferate the very problems that are said to be regulated.

If one considers the tragic end of *The Last Castle* evolving around the death of the Gen Irwin, he surely understands how the warden's cruel nature pushes him to break the rules causing the death of many prisoners. In other words, power inside this castle produced resistance by the inmates but it ironically results in the death of some of them.

Aguilar is another prisoner who takes a stand before the bulldozer, insists to resist and stop it from destroying the wall. But Winter ordered a sharpshooter to fire a normally rubber bullet at the prisoner's head and killed him. One can notice that the warden caused the death of the prisoner Aguilar instead of punishing him according to the prison rules. In Aguilar's case it can be considered as a kind of suicide, because he was aware of the consequences that he will face if he chooses to disobey the rules. The oppressive domination of the warden plays a big role in showing the counter effect of the productive nature of power.



**Shot 08: (00:56:16) Aguilar's death.**

This shot depicts Aguilar standing before the bulldozer insisting to stop it. The aim in moving the camera to Aguilar is to show to the audience how much he is brave and ready to die while the other prisoners used to be obedient. He preferred to die instead of being a docile body.

From the examples provided above, it is clear that power in institutions including prison leads not to regulate behavior but to aggravate it using such methods of punishment.

The tragic events that are depicted in the movie have a deeper message to transmit about the social truth of the Americans .Therefore it is personified as a fight between the warden of a military prison, Colonel Winter and General Irwin that has a lot of knowledge about the system and the corruption used inside this castle.

On the other hand, the warden who uses his position to do whatever he wants. He made up his own set of rules which he carried into effect under the supervision of his guards.Despite that he was warned by Wheeler about the potential seriousness of his mission and of the possible danger in the situation he was about to enter, he carries out his ego and set up his rules causing the death of the two prisoners. Winter does not take into consideration Wheeler warnings. During the visit of Wheeler to Irwin in the castle, things go out of Winter's control because of Irwin's plan to overthrow him. When Winter received the letter he take it seriously and act quickly for the purpose of Wheeler's protection. He ordered his guards to surround the inmates with all weapons. Prisoners are bowled over by water cannon while other inmates are shouted from the towers with rubber bullets. This action unable Wheeler to know what weapons Winter has and the manner he uses them.

### **III. Resistance In The Last Castle:**

Unlike the Marxist view which regards power as form of oppression, as we have already said, Foucault is more concerned with the resistance of those oppressed by power.In this sense, there must be something apart from repression which leads people to conform. He offers a different theory in which all social relationships and power structures break down. This enables him to construct an image in which power is exerted and contested, as well as the individual being an active subject not an object of power. He argues:

Power must be analyzed as something which circulates, or as something which only functions in the form of chain....power is employed and exercised through a

netlike organization .... individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application.<sup>18</sup>

A lot of scenes can be used to support this Foucauldian concept in *The Last Castle*. The movie itself highlights the idea of resisting power. As one can understand from its beginning that there is power inside the castle and there should be men to resist behind the big walls. The credibility of this idea can be seen through Irwin's speech in the first minutes of the movie, as the following dialogue affirms:

**Irwin:** [narrating first lines] take a look at a castle. Any castle. Now break down the key elements that make it a castle. They haven't changed in thousand years. One: Location. A site on high ground that commands the territory as far as the eye can see. Two: Protection. Big walls, walls strong enough to withstand a frontal attack. Three: A garrison. Men who are trained and willing to kill. Four: A flag. You tell your men you are soldiers and that's your flag. You tell them nobody takes our flag. And you raise that flag so it flies high where everyone can see it. Now you got yourself a castle. The only difference between this castle and all the rest is that they were built to keep people out. This castle is built to keep people in.<sup>19</sup>

From the above quotation, one can understand that soldiers are motivated to resist against the authority, and they should fight for their flag and never give it. In this sense Foucault states: "where there is power there is resistance"<sup>20</sup>

Other examples of resistance can be mentioned namely Aguilar's resistance. Despite the fact that he is portrayed as being weak in the first scenes in the movie; he showed his brevity and the good soldier on him. Even though he was punished because of saluting, this did not stop him from resisting. Aguilar's resistance is seen through inventing a new way of saluting Gen Irwin and other inmates.

Similarly to the prisoners' case, in the end of the movie the guards show unexpected resistance. They do not obey Winter when he ordered them to shoot down the prisoners in the yard, for the first time they put down their guns instead of shooting.

## 1. Gen Irwin as a leader:

In the beginning, Irwin did not have a goal and he did not want to incite a rebellion among his inmates but the leader on him won. He saw the abuse of power and the mistreatment made by the warden. While he was hesitant, one prisoner convinced him that he is what they need to change the situation. Therefore, as the best example of resistance par excellence, he leads an uprising to take control of the Castle.



### **Shot 09: (01:55:45) Saluting Gen Irwin.**

In This shot Irwin takes control of the situation. As it is depicted, inmates salute Irwin. This shot portrays the respect that

Irwin can have from the inmates and how he can be a good leader in contrast to Winter who oppressed them.

Gen Irwin worked on increasing the prisoners self-esteem by providing a feeling of hope and purpose and winning their hearts and minds. He sees only the good on the inmates and he tries to teach them their real values, he is convinced that all the prisoners are soldiers who made mistakes and they still have the potential to be a good people. The best example is when Irwin succeed in convincing Yates to enjoy him and the other inmates on their mission of taking the prison control, Irwin did this by reminding Yates of his good values and he shows his that he trust him.



**Shot 10: (00:51:54) Irwin Motivation of The prisoners.**

A long shot where the cameraman focuses on both the heroes, Irwin who was gazing on Aguilar encouraging his masonry building skills .In other hand , the cameraman wants the audience to see Aguilar's grateful smile for the last time before his death.

Irwin encourages them to think about the prison as their castle and something to be proud of instead of thinking about it as their jail. He helps the prisoners in building the wall by making them see what have been built one hundred years ago by soldiers like them. Using Aguilar masonry skills to build the wall was one way to show how Irwin motivates the inmates and provoke the best on them by recognizing their talent.

While Winter forces the prisoners to remove the rocks around the yard, Irwin encourages them to think about it as their castle fortification.He sees them as soldiers who made mistakes and can regain their self-esteem by acting like real soldiers again.

**2. Irwin's relationship with prisoners:**

A special relation binds Irwin with the other prisoners. This relation, unlike the administration's one implies understanding and encouragement of the 'weak' and the 'disable'. Irwin, indeed, is able to understand Aguilar's weakness and his need of recognition; and teaches him the meaning of saluting. Although he was viewed as a sick person by Winter and other prisoners make fun of him, Irwin build on the prisoners a sense of respect for Aguilar by using his masonry skills to build the castle's wall, and after his death they write down his name in the stones. Irwin brings Yeats who cares only about himself to the team and

he recognize his confidence and the good soldier in himself by being able to change his way thanks to Irwin. Gen Irwin influence on the inmates ground and they came to see him as their leader.

### 3. Resistance As a Team:

Irwin made an effort to bring the convicts together by having them construct a "castle wall" out of stones as a result of ongoing witnessing of the jail warden's brutal abuse. Envyng the admiration the prisoners have for Irwin, Winter orders his guards to destroy the wall. Irwin understands that Winter's removal from authority and command will allow the inmates to regain their self-respect and referring to him as a disgrace to the uniform. As the following dialogue states:

**Irwin:** [Winter is trying to compromise with Irwin, while in his cell] No .It's too late, Colonel.

**Winter:** It's too late for what?

**Irwin:** For your offer. The men don't want to salute. They don't want to use rank. They don't want better food, they don't want more TV. They just want your resignation. And so do I.

**Winter:** My resignation?

**Irwin:** You're a disgrace, Colonel. A disgrace to the uniform! You should not be allowed to retain our command.<sup>21</sup>



#### **Shot 11: (00:51:22): The Construction of The Wall.**

This is long shot portrays the inmates in a complete determination to finish the construction of their wall. The director

chooses a rainy day for filming the scene as way to show that the wall has a great importance for them. Since building it symbolizes their resistance as a team.

The wall has a great signification on the movie since it symbolizes the inmates' situation. The wall at first was build in inappropriate way this illustrates the lack of unity among the prisoners, but latter it becomes a perfect wall which is a strong symbol of the team work and the strong links the inmates have.

Moreover, using Irwin as a leader which gives them more power in organizing themselves with code words and gestures, defying Winter. While this pushes Col Winter to use Yeats to inform about Irwin's plan in exchange for reduces sentence from three years to three months. He told him the plan to take over the prison, and then raise the flag upside down, which is a signal of distress. Irwin Organized a plan to take control of the prison and his goal is to show the superior officer that Winter is unfit and should be removed from command. While Winter received a letter of threat ,if he does not resign ,the prisoners will kidnap the officer Wheeler. He puts his men into the yard and ordered them to action; he discovered then, that Irwin used such event just to see the reaction of the guards during an uprising.

The prisoner Yeats succeeds in stealing the US flag from the warden office which pushes Winter to order his guards to be outside in the yard. This was part of the plan. Winter knows that Irwin's intent is to raise the flag. So, he orders his guards to besiege the prisoners preventing them from creating any kind of disturbance. Then, he orders the prisoners to push-up as a form of punishment but they refuse to, and orders them again. While he command the sharpshooter to fire, if they will not obey.

Another example of the prisoners' team resistance is the invention of names; they have substitutes for each rank. General Irwin is called chief, anyone who was captain is called boss, sergeants are sports and privates are pal.

Moreover in order to succeed in their plane of taking control of their prison the inmates work as a team on harmony. To make their weapons; a group of inmates who work in the kitchen slip some metal funnels; others cut an electrical cord off a table of tamps from the prison library. They braid their bed sheets to use them as rope. Other group cut a length of metal off their bed frame and the others turn up loud music in the radio to cover to cover the sounds while the others as cutting.

Another way of resistance is shown in the day of Aguilar's day. After his tragic death over than three hundred inmates formed a hug line in the yard facing Winter's office. They place their hands over their hearts and stat to sing very loud the Marine hymen. And when the lunch horn sound they ignored it instead of going to take lunch the three hundred inmates turn as one as give a salute for Aguilar's spirit. This shows that they are no longer have fear of Winter and they are ready to handle the punishment.

As Foucault affirms in this sense: "If power was never anything but repressive, if it never did anything but say no, do you really believe that we should manage to obey it?"<sup>22</sup> Therefore, as we explained in relation to Irwin, Foucault argues that, power is coextensive with resistance; it causes positive effects being found in any kind of relationship.

In the movie, Irwin orders the prisoners to obey the commandant while he asks to give the flag, but Irwin answers that he is not his flag and continue walking toward the flagpole. Winter tries to stop what Irwin was planning for but he was ignoring him. He then orders his guards to fire but they did not listen neither.

The fundamental idea that can emerge from this part is leadership cannot be by threat or brute force. As Dwight D Eisenhower argues: "You don't lead by hitting people over the head that is assault not leadership". Irwin unified the prisoners to resist the harsh treatment conducted by Winter, achieving the first goal which is to raise the flag. Even the guards don't

listen to the warden orders; they refused to fire Irwin for no good reason. Winter carried out his ego and fired Irwin from his back while he raised the flag at his last breath. Everyone was saluting the flag in front of Winter who prevented that such behavior inside the castle.

## Endnotes:

<sup>15</sup> Sara Mills (2003), *Michel Foucault*, (London: Routledge, 2003) p.38.

<sup>16</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: an Archeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994) p.52.

<sup>17</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth Of the Prison*, trans, Sheridan (Penguin Books:London,1991)p.27.

<sup>18</sup> Michel Foucault, *Power& knowledge 1972-1977*,(London: Harvester press.1980)p.98.

<sup>19</sup> [https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0272020/characters/nm\\_0000602](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0272020/characters/nm_0000602). Accessed on September 04, 2022.

<sup>20</sup> Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality The will to knowledge* (London, Penguin, 1978) p95-96.

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0272020/characters/nm0000602> Accessed on September 04, 2022.

<sup>22</sup> Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: the will to knowledge* (London: Penguin, 1978) p36.

## V. General conclusion

The current study aimed to investigate Rod Lurie's *The Last Castle* from a Foucauldian perspective. This study relays on Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1991) which is the theoretical foundation of this dissertation. It is obvious that *The Last Castle* reflects to large extent Michel Foucault's thoughts about power, resistance and discipline. The foucauldian theory is mirrored in the movie through the storyline, characters and themes.

Analyzing Rod Lurie's movie from a Foucauldian perspective illustrates how prisoners are unable to change their status. The research paper demonstrates how *The Last Castle* emphasizes the ways of the control of the authority over its subjects. And it studies the diverse techniques used by this authority to dominate the body and the mind of its subjects.

The primary focus of this research is to investigate the extent to which prisons are not innocent institutions. We attempted to stress the unfair nature of power relationships that exist within the institution, between convicts and the prison guards. This can be read through the interaction of these two groups on the dialectic of power and knowledge. Indeed, inmates are strictly managed since information about their flaws, issues, and lives is known. This understanding has allowed the prison staff to have control over the prisoners.

This analysis has demonstrated how docility is created among prisoners by concentrating on the establishment of power relations inside the prison. Foucault's idea of power is everywhere is reflected by engagement of every character in the movie in an interconnected process of opposing forces.

In this paper we referred to many Foucauldian concepts. Namely the three strategies of correct training, which are hierarchical observation, normalizing judgment and

examination. More over the three reformatory functions: the principle of isolation, the principle of obligatory work and the principle of modulation of penalties; as well as surveillance. It is clear, then, by the use of different techniques, the inmates are tightly controlled. These strategies include rigid discipline, which lead to control those who are confined inside the prison. Indeed, by discipline the inmates are meant to internalize different social norms namely order and respect of hierarchy.

The architecture is shown as being a mean of the creation of the docile bodies. By establishing the watching towers they make the surveillance easy and more authentic. Since the inmates are under observation they behave themselves correctly in fear of punishment. The amount of observation exercised over inmates is huge. It is concerned with their smallest habits, activities, and lifestyles and seeks to make them feel as if they are continuously being observed in order for them to discipline themselves by themselves.

To conclude, our study helped us to set forward a perspective of analyzing of *The Last Castle* by depicting the possible similarities the movie and some of Michel Foucault's theories and ideas. That is, identifying his ideas of power, resistance, imprisonment, discipline and surveillance. This study, for reasons of methodology and time skips over several of his other Foucault's thoughts.

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