

## Foucault's 'Power Relations' in Alan Ayckbourn's *This Is Where We Came In*

Marina Abd El-Masih Abd El-Sayed Nashed

Master's Degree-Department of English Language and Literature  
Faculty of Women for Arts, Science & Edu-Ain Shams University Egypt

[Marina.Nashed@women.asu.edu.eg](mailto:Marina.Nashed@women.asu.edu.eg)

Dr. Reem Ahmed El-Bardisy

Assistant Professor of English Literature, Department of English Language and Literature

Faculty of Women for Arts, Science & Education-Ain Shams University - Egypt  
[reemelbardisy@gmail.com](mailto:reemelbardisy@gmail.com)

### Abstract

Power is most commonly defined as the ability to do something, or to act in a particular way. Yet, when the word "power" is uttered, what immediately comes to mind is domination, authority, constraint, repression, or control over someone's behaviors or actions. For this reason, power has often been identified as a negative notion, i.e. a thing that only an individual, or a group, possess as an advantage over the rest of the community, using it as a means of accomplishing one's goals and repressing the desires of the rest. This paper introduces power as a positive notion as illustrated by the French philosopher and critic Michel Foucault (1926-1984). It presents the key features of power in the analysis of the British modern dramatist Alan Ayckbourn's play *This Is Where We Came In* (1990). It also examines closely the power relations among the characters of the play to prove their Foucauldian nature. Power is not a thing to be possessed, it is presented as positive relations that are spread everywhere in the society where all the individuals are free subjects acting on their own volition, whether conforming or resisting, yet without existing outside its network. In this study, the researcher addresses Foucault's perspective of power as presented in some of his works, specifically *The History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction* (1978), *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings 1972-1977* (1980).

**Keywords:** power, power relations, storyteller, story performer

## Introduction

The word 'power' is originally derived from the Latin word "posse", which means "to be able" ("English Oxford Living Dictionaries", n.d.). Power is most commonly defined as the ability to do something, to produce an effect or to act in a particular way. However, when the word "power" is uttered, what immediately comes to mind is domination, authority, constraint, repression, or control over someone's behavior or action. For this reason, power has often been identified as a negative notion, i.e. a thing that only an individual, or a group, possess as an advantage over the rest of the community, using it as a means of accomplishing one's goals and repressing the desires of the rest. Contrary to such pejorative connotation of the term, the French philosopher, Michel Foucault (1926-1984), identifies power as a positive notion. The most succinct definition of his ideas about power would be his designation of it as a transformative capacity.

This paper addresses Alan Ayckbourn's play *This Is Where We Came In* (1990). It begins by presenting the playwright, Alan Ayckbourn (1939 - ), giving a brief introduction to the selected play. It also determines the research questions and frame of reference through giving a comprehensive overview of Foucault's concepts of power applied in the study. Then, the paper offers an analysis of the play, which examines how the Foucauldian power relations are depicted through the characters of the selected play.

## Alan Ayckbourn

Sir Alan Ayckbourn (1939 - ) was born in London, and has worked in theatre all his life. Encouraged by his mentor Stephen Joseph, who founded the Stephen Joseph Theatre in Scarborough, Ayckbourn has undertaken various roles like being an actor, writer and director. Almost all of his plays were first performed at this theatre, of which he was the artistic director until his retirement in 2009. Some of his plays were subsequently produced in the West End or at the National Theatre (Gatie, n.d.).

Ayckbourn is a prolific writer. He is one of the world's preeminent dramatists. He has written more than eighty plays (Murgatroyd, n.d.). He has won numerous awards for his plays, which have been translated into thirty-five languages, and performed worldwide on stage and television. Seven of his plays have been performed on Broadway Theatres (Gatie, n.d.). He has received many honorary degrees. For example, in 1986, he was appointed Freeman of the

Borough of Scarborough (Murgatroyd, n.d.), and a Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) in 1987 (Allen, 2004). Further, he was also knighted for his services to theatre in 1997 (Gatie, n.d.).

In *A Companion to Modern British and Irish Drama* (2006), Ayckbourn is described as a modern British dramatist. In 1969, he began his career as a playwright “with comedies of sexual intrigue and misunderstanding”. Then, his comedy darkened as his plays “exposed the cruelties of marriage and the emptiness of the characters’ lives”. In 1981, Ayckbourn’s focus started to shift from domestic themes and issues and broadened to the state of society. However, he still writes some adult plays, in which fantasies turn sinister. The range of his genre expanded to include “futuristic science fiction and the thriller”. He has also written a number of children plays, for which he prefers the term “family plays” since “he wants the whole family to enjoy the play at different levels”. It is important to note that when labels are applied to his work, they tend to “come unglued”. Ayckbourn has formally stated that, in the future, he would simply call his plays just plays, and leave the pigeonholing to others. Therefore, it would be better to focus on his plays themselves rather than trying to label them. (“Companion to Modern British and Irish Drama”, 2006, pp. 269-270).

Ayckbourn constantly challenges himself. *A Companion to Modern British and Irish Drama* continues, he persistently experiments not just with literary genres but also with the basic conditions of theatre itself; that is time, place and action, in the sense of storytelling. In his plays, Ayckbourn is not so concerned with pointing morals, as much as he likes to show situations, play with possibilities, and in the process of writing and presenting his plays, raise the audience’s awareness of the conditions of both theatre and life (p. 277).

### ***This Is Where We Came In* (1990)**

*This Is Where We Came In* is one of the plays that he wrote to children but is considered as a family play that the whole family can enjoy together at different levels. In writing this play, Ayckbourn explains that:

encouraged by the speed of comprehension of the young audiences and their evident willingness to embrace complicated plots and sophisticated characters, the level of complexity was far greater than I had previously attempted.

It was about now that I began to stop concerning myself about what limits I should observe in children's writing and concentrated on how far I could take it. (Ayckbourn, 1998, p. x)

So far, there has been no research published on the selected play that the author of this paper knows of. The researcher intends to fill this gap through this examination of Foucault's concepts of power in Alan Ayckbourn's play *This Is Where We Came In* (1990).

## Research Questions and Frame of Reference

This paper raises and answers two questions. First, what are the major key elements of Foucault's 'power' as identified in Ayckbourn's play *This Is Where We Came In*? Second, how do the Foucauldian 'power relations' reveal themselves among the characters of this play that was originally addressed to an audience that includes children?

The research answers the aforementioned questions by relying on Foucault's *The History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction* (1978), *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings 1972-1977* (1980) as a frame of reference.

## Michel Foucault's Concept of 'power'

Power is often comprehended as a negative notion; as a thing that is possessed by those in power giving them the ability to control the powerless and force them to act against their own volition. Michel Foucault disagrees; according to him, power is not a thing that an individual or a group possesses as an advantage over the rest of society.

In *Power/Knowledge*, Foucault explains that power acts and manifests itself; it is not a thing to be possessed, but rather a strategy, "[p]ower must be analyzed as something which circulates ... Power is employed and exercised through a netlike organization ... Individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application". (Foucault, 1980, p. 98). He portrays power as relations that are dispersed throughout the structures of society in the form of a network, where the exercise of power is allowed and accepted, and the individual is not a mere object for power, but rather an active subject.

In defining 'power', Foucault asserts that he is "not referring to Power with a capital P, dominating and imposing its rationality upon the totality of the social body. In fact, there are power relations" (Foucault, 1988, p. 38). He

identifies power as relations which are diverse and can exist in different forms, whether in family relations, or within institutions, or an administration (Foucault, 1988, p. 38).

Foucault's life centers on the research and the analysis of 'power'. He focuses on the relations of power among individuals in general, and, between them and society, especially institutions, in particular. He emphasizes that when an institution exerts its power on an individual, it is the latter who chooses to affirm their identity and resistance to the effects of such power. Consequently, Foucault does not believe power to be a thing that the institution possesses to oppress the individuals with. In the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault criticizes the notion that power is oppressive. He advocates that even in the extreme cases, oppression does not mean for the individual to be repressed and his actions prohibited. In fact, such an individual would still be productive and cause change (Foucault, 1978, p. 224).

To understand power, there are few aspects to be considered. First, power is always present as a network of relations that includes the whole society and no one can exist outside this network. This opposes the idea of power as "a quantum possessed by people" (Kelly, 2009, pp. 37- 38). Second, individuals are not mere objects of power (Mills, 2003, p. 35); they are constantly subjecting it and being its objects (Foucault, 1977, p. 141). Third, power is not a relation between the oppressed and the oppressor, or master and slave. Foucault states that power can only exist when the concerned individuals are dealing with many possibilities, allowing different ways of behaving (Foucault, 1991, p. 221), which eventually gives rise to the possibility of changing and resistance.

Foucault believes that power is "coextensive with resistance; productive, producing positive effects; ubiquitous, being found in every kind of relationship, as a condition of the possibility of any kind of relationship" (Kelly, 2009, p. 38). This means that the actions of resistance always exist along with those of power as their counteraction. The actions of power and their resisting counteractions are always at present and are found at every point in the network of the social body. In fact to coexist is considered a stipulation, as is required, for any kind of relationship to ever have the possibility of being established. As a result, the possibility of changing is always present (386). That being the case, where relations of power are exercised, resistances are "all the more real and effective" (Foucault, 1991, pp. 141-142).

Foucault continues that “resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power” (Foucault, 1978, p. 95). This means that these individuals are in a struggle where continuation influences others to behave or not. This does not mean that such individuals would always be trapped; it only means that they always have the possibility of altering the situation. Such individuals are present in a strategic situation in relation to each other. This strategic nature of power relations is manifested when an individual or a group tries to determine another one's behavior by the use of tactics (Foucault, 1996, p. 410). Foucault establishes this as the exercise of what could be called ‘government’.

Foucault defines ‘government’ as the procedures or the ways of forming and influencing the other's behavior. This does not mean that power emanates from a particular site such as the police. He believes that the political power relations are condemned to failing in achieving their objectives of total domination. He also asserts that power relations are “diffused throughout all social relations rather than being imposed from above ... unstable and in need of constant repetition to maintain” (Mills, 2003, p. 47). Thus, any individual or group could govern another group, a society, a community, a family or a person, as long as they form strategies and use tactics to determine their behavior. It also means that, due to the coexistence of resistance, the power relations between the government and the rest of the social body are unstable, and have a great susceptibility to change, unless the government exerts a great deal of effort and keeps repeating its tactics and strategies to maintain its position in the network of the social body. Even then, the government would still be fragile, as there is no such a thing as total domination. This is due to the positively effective and productive nature of ‘power relations’, which is constant change.

It is significant to note here Foucault's viewpoint on the relationship between power and knowledge. Foucault believes that power and knowledge cannot exist as independent entities. They are inextricably related. He argues that when power is exercised, it always creates knowledge, while knowledge prompts the effects of power. According to him, power is a function of knowledge and knowledge is an exercise of power. Thus, it is impossible to exercise power without knowledge and it is impossible for knowledge not to cause or give rise to power (Foucault, 1980, p. 51-52).

Foucault, in his *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1991), states “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” (Foucault, 1991, p. 27). He argues that not only knowledge is consistently and without fail a form of power, but also produced from power and not prevented by it. Knowledge and power are always connected. Moreover, knowledge aids in the formation of power relations.

To sum up, power is everywhere and comes from everywhere, for it functions as a kind of ‘relation’ between people. It is present between all the points of a social body as a network, which no one can exist outside of. It is productive; it does not suppress, censor, prohibit, subdue and eliminate individuals. Power has a strategic nature. Employing tactics, an individual could govern, or in other words, determine or change, the others’ behavior, their practices and the entire network. Such ‘government’ is not permanent but rather unstable due to the effects of the continuing actions and counteractions caused by the constant change of the ‘power relations’ in the network of the social body. Moreover, for the government to, possibly, maintain its position in the network of power relations, it needs to, constantly, repeat its strategies. Finally, knowledge plays an important role in the formation and maintenance of power relations. There is no power without knowledge.

### **The Theme of ‘power’ and its significant elements in Ayckbourn’s *This Is Where We Came In***

*This Is Where We Came In* (1990) is Alan Ayckbourn’s fortieth play. He originally wrote it in two parts that could be read or watched in any order (*This Is Where We Came In: In Brief*, n.d.). In his review of the play, Michael Schmidt states that it is a “brilliant satire on dramatic art, on the unreliability of story-tellers and the resilience of character over plot” (*This Is Where We Came In: World Premiere Reviews*, n.d.).

The play deals with the theme of power as interpreted through Foucault’s works. Throughout the play, power is not presented only as that of authority or control. It is not a thing or a point of advantage for the *state* to hold over the group, or the social body. It is rather a network of social relations, where all the characters of the play exist. It is also where the action of each character directs the actions of the rest and eventually determine their own fate. This power is identified, in the selected play, through the actions of storytelling, which represents knowledge in Foucault’s terms, and its performance.

Alan Ayckbourn himself asserts this fact, without knowing it. In an interview, he was asked if his plays have a message, he replied that they “are

moral in the sense that ... people get what they deserve and behavior [as in their choice and action] is in some way rewarded or punished". He proclaimed that: "[m]ost of his characters have free choice ... there are the heroes who have to choose to do this or do that" (Ayckbourn, 1999). Some may have a "weakness in them that causes them to make the wrong choice and they're set on a path of self-destruction. But there's nearly always a sense in the play that they had that moment of choice" (Ayckbourn, 1999). Ayckbourn continues explaining that things that happen to people not of their own volition do not arouse his interest. He needs his characters to have a moment where they appear as moral; that their choices are morally right, not conveniently right. This is how protagonists are created in his plays. It is significant to have such a character, someone who is noble and has the right ideas. In *This Is Where We Came In*, the noble hero is Flavius, who appears at the beginning of the play as the amnesiac Fred.

The name *Fred* is a significant clue in the play. It is a short form of the name Frederick ("Fred", 2020). Frederick is derived from the Germanic words *frid*, which means "peace" and *ric*, meaning "ruler" or "power" (Campbell, 2019). This indicates that the name means "peaceful ruler", which makes us recall the Foucauldian concept of "transformative capacity". The name could also be a play on the word *freed* which is the past form of the verb *free* meaning "to allow someone to leave a prison or place where they have been kept" (Freed, 2020).

In *This Is Where We Came In*, Ayckbourn portrays the predicament of five story players, who are "lost in a strange abstract landscape" (Ayckbourn, 2001). These players are locked into stories that they are obliged to 'repeat', being bound by three ancient and eccentric storytellers. The domineering elderly, Uncle Erraticus, Uncle Oblivious, and, the most dangerous of them all, Great Aunt Repetitus use tactics and strategies not only to prevent the story players from telling their own stories, but also from knowing the ultimate truth. This truth lies in the fact that the one player, Fred/Flavius could free the rest of the players from the elders' hold on them.

At some point before the beginning of the play, the story players could tell "their own stories, freely, as they wanted to tell them", but a powerful few of them, that is the elderly, "banded together" (Ayckbourn, 1998, p. 194). In time they became the only storytellers and "from then on only they, the Tellers, could tell the stories ... [t]hey controlled the players who lost all their power" (Ayckbourn, 1998, p. 194). However, "there was apparently one player ... who

defied them. He continued to tell his own stories". This player's name was Flavius. The storytellers got angry with him. Consequently, using strategies and tactics, they put him in a story where he was made to vanish ever after somewhere and they gave him the name Fred. They had erased his memories and identity to the point that he forgot his real name. None of the story players was ever meant to remember Flavius and the story ended with them supposedly forgetting about him. However, they have never forgotten him; he became a secret legend among them. On the other hand, the knowledge of who he really was became constrained by the storytellers (Ayckbourn, 1998, pp. 194-195), for he was the only true player who could stand up to them and resist their acts of storytelling. The players disobeyed the storytellers, but it only led to further disenfranchisement. They confronted an organization whose goal was to objectify them.

At the present, at the beginning of Part One, the characters of the story players are introduced. They are Bethany, Talitha, Jenkin, Albert and Nell. Nell plays a significant and influential role in the recovery of Fred's memories. Fred is in a strategic situation in relation to Nell. She always provokes him to react and incites him to talk, which the more he does, the more he actually learns about himself. She helps Fred and makes it easier for him to regain his taken memories and thus recover the knowledge of his identity and his power of storytelling. The rest of the story players do not have the same effect of Nell, but they play their parts, yet not totally conforming to the tellers' ways and their actions of storytelling. The roles of the players are usually set. Bethany plays the role of a terrifying wicked witch, Talitha a mother, Jenkin "does the nobs. Posh folk. Princes and noblemen and Emperors and that". Finally, Albert is "usually a Woodcutter. Sometimes a Shepherd." He also does little tailors and "has a good line in loyal four-legged friends" (Ayckbourn, 1998, p. 152). There is also Kevin on Keyboards: "[h]e (or it) is a strange assemblage of wires and machinery mounted on an apparently self-propelled trolley. This carries a keyboard with accompanying hardware which controls – or maybe is even controlled by – a battered life-size mechanical figure" (Ayckbourn, 1998, p. 156). Kevin is responsible for producing the sound effects to the storytelling. However, "he looks as if he's seen better days" (Ayckbourn, 1998, p. 156). In this play, Kevin is responsible for all the exotic sounds. Ayckbourn uses a lot of live music in his plays. This is represented by his use of synthesizers (Ayckbourn, 1999). Here, Kevin on Keyboards plays that role.

The story players appear to be miserable. They have lost their 'power' of storytelling and they must do as they are told. The tellers' strategies and actions of storytelling, which is equivalent to Foucault's knowledge, govern the players' ways of knowing, thinking and being, while their 'government' is represented as the inevitable and there is no escape from it. Therefore, even if the storytellers make mistakes, any 'resistance' on the story players' behalf would result in more hardships for them in their story playing. In their action of storytelling, the three elders demand utmost respect and silence and the players are afraid to express themselves, for their being is threatened. Thus, the story players affirm their own identities and resistance, obeying the tellers, out of fear, for the sake of preserving their existence. Yet, they do try to help Fred regain his memories and the power of storytelling by informing him about the tellers, in secret, so they could all become ultimately free from the elders' control.

By the beginning of Part Two, Flavius, the protagonist who has come to know his real identity and name, intends to free the other players through his inevitable confrontation and resistance to the ancient storytellers, who have made him the object of their 'power'. The protagonist rejects the path of a story player and takes control of the story. Through his counteractions of defiance, he regains his stolen identity and memories, and the knowledge needed to free himself, and the other story players. Thus, he recovers his power of storytelling and endures a dangerous path to help the other players out. He, thus, helps the rest of the group or the social body, through the performance of twisted versions of fairytales. For it is through the actions of telling, i.e. the knowledge of fairytales and their performance, that the power relations are formed, changed or maintained.

Realizing this, Great Aunt Repetitus, promises Uncle Oblivious and Uncle Erraticus that she will tell a story with Fred in it, in which he will disappear and "never be seen again" (Ayckbourn, 1998, p.191). This recalls Foucault's idea of 'government'. Great Aunt Repetitus applies a strategy for determining or governing Fred's and the other players' behavior. It is clear, here, that the actions of power and counteractions of resistance, present of each character, guide the attitude of the rest of them. Moreover, this push and pull through the network of 'power relations' between the players and the tellers, demonstrate that all the involved characters are active subjects and not simple

objects of power. They are free individuals reacting in various ways according to the possibilities they have.

Aunt Repetitus does manage to trap Fred in an original tale of hers called *The Enchanted Farmer's Sons*, written originally by Ayckbourn. With her storytelling's strategies and tactics, making use of her exclusive knowledge of the story, once more, she manages to overcome him using the character of the witch. She takes away all his memories and renames him Fred, thus repeats all her strategies to maintain her position of government in the network of the social body.

Ayckbourn illustrates Great Aunt Repetitus's character, the leader of the storytellers as one that is "scratchy, impatient and bad tempered" (*This Is Where We Came In: Quotes by Alan Ayckbourn*, n.d.). She despises young people, especially Nell. Bethany, the witch, is clearly her favorite. Through storytelling, Aunt Repetitus creates partially autobiographical roles for Bethany to play. Through the witch, Great Aunt Repetitus exerts her power from a distance, without touching anybody, which makes her quite scary, especially when she "kicks in with her stories" (*This Is Where We Came In: Quotes by Alan Ayckbourn*, n.d.). Nell describes her saying "[s]he never usually makes mistakes. She's too clever. Far and away the most dangerous" (Ayckbourn, 1998, p. 200). All the players fear her ability to write and rewrite their lives. During her story *The Enchanted Farmer's Sons*, she threatens Albert, for not being quiet and listening to her intently, saying "[y]ou know what happens to people who don't listen, don't you, Albert? Something awful happens to them" (Ayckbourn, 1998, p. 204). She also, terrorizes Nell, for trying to help Fred, saying "something nasty could well happen to you" (Ayckbourn, 1998, p. 230). She could write any player out of the story at any moment and make them disappear as if they have never existed; she robs them of any memory of their existence, in the same manner she tries to erase Fred's memory. Nell describes this as getting the characters "[o]ut of the stories. Where all the characters go when they've finished with them" (p. 199). Ayckbourn exclaims that even "the sub-villain Uncles are fearful of her" She is ancient and appears to see right into everybody's mind. Physically she appears to be on her last legs but "mentally she's as sharp as a razor and twice as dangerous. A tarantula of a woman" (*This Is Where We Came In: Character Notes by Alan Ayckbourn*, n.d.). Her dangerousness is what drives the courageous Fred and Nell to stand up to her and resist her actions of storytelling. This also leads the rest of the players to try

to support them as much as they could (*This Is Where We Came In: Character Notes* by Alan Ayckbourn, n.d.). All the players promise Fred to do everything they can to help, even though none of them can guarantee it. Furthermore, they warn him not to trust anyone, especially Bethany the witch, as she represents Repetitus's wickedness (Ayckbourn, 1998, p. 202-203).

After Aunt Repetitus's repeated strategy has won over, yet again, Flavius manages, through the prior knowledge of her repeated tactics, to regain his memories with the help of the rest of the story players. This time, finally, by the end of Part Two, the protagonist Flavius overcomes the ancient storytellers, his antagonists, by the act of banishing the villains in creative stories of his that have miserable endings that befit as punishment for their deeds. The tellers do not immediately conform to the effects of Flavius's power of original storytelling; they try to counteract his actions. However, his strategies of governing their behaviors are faster and stronger. Thus, Part Two ends with Flavius in the government position, with the players by his side, because of his winning tactics.

To sum up, Foucault's key 'power' aspects in *This Is Where We Came In* are as follows: Power is not something to be possessed; it is manifested in the actions of storytelling, performing and counteractions. It is present everywhere in the form of relations between the two groups of characters in the play, the storytellers and the story players. This field of relations between the groups of characters and among them is what Foucault calls *the network*. The play starts with the group of the storytellers in the government position of the network and the players as its social body. No character in the play can exist outside this network of relations. On the other hand, there is no total domination and none of them is completely trapped, each character has free will either to affirm to oppressive actions of power or to resist them. Thus, the two groups keep on taking the position of the government from each other with their repetitive use of strategies and tactics. Consequently, the power relations between the characters are constantly changing. This happens through the use of storytelling, depending on the teller's knowledge of fairytales and original stories. This alternation of government that we see in the play is in total agreement with Foucault's positive notion of power and his emphasis on its productive effects.

### **Foucauldian 'Power Relations' in *This Is Where We Came In***

To perceive the Foucauldian nature of the power relations in Ayckbourn's *This Is Where We Came In*, it is significant to note here that the whole play progresses in circles. Ayckbourn justifies this circular nature of his play by saying that he originally wrote the play in two parts that could be read or watched in any order (*This Is Where We Came In: In Brief*, n.d.). He describes it as his "very first circular adventurous comical mystery play" (*This Is Where We Came In: In Brief*, n.d.). This circular nature of the play is significant because it adds to the abstract effect of the play, while also hinting that the players' adventures could be happening anywhere at any time (*This Is Where We Came In: In Brief*, n.d.). Although, reading or watching Part Two before Part One controversially portrays "a slightly bleaker slant on the fate of the players" (*This Is Where We Came In: History*, n.d.), this actually gives rise to the idea that any ending or beginning is possible. It also gives rise to the possibility that either the story players or the storytellers could take the government position or that of the social body. This possibility is in agreement with Foucault's concepts of power relations. There is no such a thing as getting out of the network of power relations. The players are not totally free of the tellers' influence; they are only in a better situation than they used to be at some point. When they manage to control the action of storytelling, they succeed in seizing the position of the government. The same could also be applied to the storytellers' situation; they are not cast out of the network, they are now the social body and they can, through resisting once again, usurp the government position. Since there is no such thing as definite control of power or total domination, therefore the only stable factor here is that the power relations are ever changing.

The circular nature of the play is portrayed through the way Great Aunt Repetitus tells her stories. As her name signifies, her story telling is always repetitive. This is hinted at in Part Two when Albert warns Fred by saying: "[t]hey'll try and set up a pattern" (Ayckbourn, 1998, p. 202). This warning is also pointed out by Talitha when she tells Fred to: "[r]emember her name – Great Aunt Repetitus. That means her stories tend to go round in circles ..." (Ayckbourn, 1998, p. 204). Fred becomes concerned. When he asks the players whether this is good, they reply that it can be, but not always. This conversation signifies that Repetitus's actions of repetition could lead to good or bad effects upon the players, depending on the characters' actions of power and resistance, and on the strategies and tactics they all form, whether individually or collaboratively. This reminds us of Ayckbourn's words, in the interview

mentioned previously, that a character's fate depends on their free will and choices (Ayckbourn, 1999). This also redirects us to Foucault's concept of power relations as unstable and in constant need of repetition to maintain. For, in studying power relations as related to government, Foucault explains

[i]f power is relational rather than emanating from a particular site such as the government or the police; if it is diffused throughout all social relations rather than being imposed from above; if it is unstable and in need of constant repetition to maintain; if it is productive as well as being repressive, then it is difficult to see power relations as simply negative and as constraining. (Mills, 2003, p. 47)

Eventually, Fred himself asserts this circular and repetitive nature to Great Aunt Repetitus's stories. He takes advantage of it and utilizes it to regain control of the power of storytelling, defying Great Aunt Repetitus. She is utterly astounded when he confronts her saying: "you're the one who tells stories that go in circles. You're the one who kept bringing me back – and back and back ..." (Ayckbourn, 1998, p. 263). This signifies that Flavius, with the understanding of the limits of her knowledge, represented by the repeated stories, succeeds in turning Repetitus's strategies against her, to his own gain, governing her own actions of storytelling and freeing the rest of the players from her eminent danger. As the group of players take the government position in the network, the relations of power prove to have a great susceptibility to change.

## Conclusion

Ayckbourn's *This Is Where We Came In* dramatizes an ongoing chain of actions in a network reminiscent of Foucauldian power relations. During the play, the two groups, the story players and the storytellers, freely enact their own power and resist that of the other players, while forming strategies and tactics. Each group aims to control the storytelling, the knowledge in Foucault's terms, taking the position of the government in order to direct the behavior of the other. There are no happy ever afters or bleak endings to either one of the groups, because there is neither an absolute control of power nor an existence out of its network; there is no end, or as Foucault claims "there is always the possibility of changing" (Foucault, 1980, p. 386). The only "ever after" in this play is its continuity of the power struggle between the characters and their ever-changing power relations.

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## 'علاقات القوة' لفوكو في مسرحية آلان إيكبورن "جاء الآن دورنا"

مارينا عبد المسيح عبد السيد ناشد  
باحث ماجستير-قسم اللغة الإنجليزية  
كلية البنات، جامعة عين شمس، مصر

[Marina.Nashed@women.asu.edu.eg](mailto:Marina.Nashed@women.asu.edu.eg)

د. ريم احمد البرديسي  
كلية البنات، جامعة عين شمس، مصر  
[reemelbardisy@gmail.com](mailto:reemelbardisy@gmail.com)

### المستخلص:

القوة هي كلمة تعني بالأكثر القدرة على فعل شيء ما أو التصرف بطريقة معينة. ولكن بذكر كلمة "القوة" غالبًا ما يخطر بذهن السامع صور من السيطرة، النفوذ، القيود، القمع أو التحكم في تصرفات أو أفعال الأشخاص. ولهذا السبب كثيرًا ما تكون كلمة "القوة" مصحوبة بأفكار سلبية ككونها شيء يستخدمه فرد أو مجموعة معينة لتحقيق أهدافهم وقمع رغبات البقية. تقدم هذه الورقة البحثية القوة كمفهوم إيجابي كما أوضحه الفيلسوف والناقد الفرنسي ميشيل فوكو (1926-1984). فتعرض الملامح الرئيسية للقوة في تحليل مسرحية "جاء الآن دورنا" (1990) للكاتب المسرحي البريطاني آلان إيكبورن (1939 -). كما أنها تفحص عن كثب علاقات القوة بين شخصيات المسرحية لإثبات طبيعتهم الفوكوية. القوة ليست شيئًا يمتلك، فهي ظاهرة في شكل علاقات إيجابية منتشرة في كل مكان في المجتمع حيث يكون جميع الأفراد أحرارًا يتصرفون بمحض إرادتهم، سواء إن كان بالتماشي أو بالمقاومة، ولكن دون الخروج من شبكتها. في هذه الدراسة، يتناول الباحث منظور فوكو للقوة كما تم تقديمه في بعض أعماله، وتحديدًا تاريخ الجنسانية، المجلد الأول: مقدمة (1978)، والمعرفة والسلطة (1980).

الكلمات الدالة: القوة، علاقات القوة، راوي القصص، مؤدي القصص