

The Teacher, The Doctor, and The Judge: Power and Authorities in Pink Floyd's *The Wall*

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Abstract

The following investigation focuses on power relations in Pink Floyd's *The Wall*. Specifically, this article centers on the images of authorities on the album: the teacher, the physician, and the judge. The literary analysis of these characters supported by notions developed by theorists on the subject of power leads to significant conclusions on the matter.

Key words: power, authorities, Pink Floyd, *The Wall*

Resumen

La siguiente investigación tiene por objetivo analizar las relaciones de poder en *The Wall* de Pink Floyd. El presente artículo se centra en las imágenes de autoridad en el álbum: el profesor, el médico y el juez. El análisis literario de estos personajes con base en preceptos críticos desarrollados por varios especialistas en el campo de la teoría del poder llevará a conclusiones significativas.

Palabras claves: poder, autoridades, Pink Floyd, *The Wall*

The Wall by Pink Floyd represents one of the most significant products of rock history, pop culture, and music of the twentieth century. Its verses depict the story of a subject who builds up a figurative wall. This wall isolates him from the rest of individuals, so the feeling of loneliness, despair, and dehumanization is vast. In this sense, the work of Pink Floyd represents a window to the human soul and to the core of its nature through the eyes of an isolated subject. It portrays existential issues such as life, death, and sanity; socio-political matters as war, order, and wealth, and the repercussions these have in modern life. It also exposes the consequences of living in a society and the repercussions these conditions have in the subject as well as the consequences of power playing a significant role as the glue and lubricant of social relations. The universe of *The Wall* mimics real life in the sense that there are power positions in every type of relation. Moreover, this text serves as a catalog of the different types of power relations, being relations with authorities one of the highlights. The text focuses on three main authorities: the teacher, the physician, and the judge; and on how the interaction with these represses the subject. The analysis of these three characters will point out significant notions in relation to power, to the apparatuses they represent, and to the impact these have on the subject.

For the analysis of these authority figures and the text, it is important to mention that significant authors whose work is devoted to examining the notion of power were taken into consideration. In this sense, this

article makes reference to the works of Michael Foucault, Louis Althusser, John Galbraith, and Bertrand Russell, among others. Furthermore, the text analyzed in this investigation is the printed lyrics of the *The Wall* from booklet of the CD format.

The album has several songs which deal with these authorities. *Authority songs* make a group of five pieces. Two pieces are related to education and the teacher: "The Happiest Days of Our Lives" and "Another Brick in the Wall Part II." Two more songs deal with the doctor: "Another Brick in the Wall Part III" and "Comfortably Numb." And one song shows the figure of the judge and the law he represents, "The Trial." These songs evidence the discursive formation behind the attitude of each authority and the way in which this discourse influences the subject, mostly in a detrimental way.

The Teacher

The Wall, as the epic journey from childhood to maturity, focuses on the image of the teacher as one of the key influences in the early years of the subject. Nevertheless, this influence does not seem to be a positive one. Actually, when the speaker refers to the whole educational systems, he sounds rather bitter and resentful. The clearest example is seen in the first two verses of "Another Brick in the Wall Part II" that read: "we don't need no education / we don't need no thought control" (1-2). The lines are harsh and aggressive. Education equals thought control and the subject claims that *we* do not need it. It seems that education is no longer a means to achieve mental

and moral emancipation but an oppressive system whose only purpose is to keep individuals under control so that they obey the rules of society. In relation to this, the French philosopher Louis Althusser affirms that:

Children at school learn the ‘rules’ of good behaviour, i.e. the attitude that should be observed by every agent in the division of labour, according to the job he is ‘destined’ for: rules of morality, civic and professional conscience, which actually means rules of respect for the socio-economical division of labour and ultimately the rules of other established by class domination. (132)

Although Althusser seems to focus on material production in relation to capitalist notions, he points out some significant traits of the nature of the education apparatus. He believes that education is used to implant “the rules of morality” and “civic and professional conscience” in order to make individuals respect the “rules of socio-economical division of labor and the rules of the established order.” In other words, education has one main purpose: to reproduce the established social order by implanting rules of proper behavior in the mind of subjects, the rules related to moral, civic, and professional ideals. What Althusser is trying to make clear is that education equals thought control, the same issue that Floyd tries to convey in “Another Brick in the Wall Part II.” It seems that education works as a means to spread and implant ideological ideas of the hegemonic groups; these have the only purpose of reproducing the structure of society, in which they are at the top.

Likewise, David Johnston believes that:

Overworked and unconcerned educators may treat their students as mere objects filling seats, which will be filled by an entirely new batch of its next year. Administrators facing community pressure are often concerned merely with the graduation and placement of school’s degree products. The lessons themselves are often designed not to liberate student’s minds but to prepare them to be cogs in the social machinery. (*Pink Floyd and Philosophy* 129)

Johnston shares Althusser’s notion that teachers may be seen as mere tools whose intention is to make students functional within the system in order to fulfill a productive purpose. The album does not hold specific references to the hegemonic groups; however, it is the mechanisms of power in the educational apparatus, the way in which power fluctuates within it, and the way in which the teacher exercises it that we are going to focus on.

The figure of the teacher in the album is deconstructed in the sense that his figure challenges the traditional image of the educator. He is not caring towards his pupils and he certainly does not embody knowledge; this representation is characterized by violence. For example, the speaker states in “The Happiest Days of our Lives”:

When we grew up and went to school
There were certain teachers who would
Hurt the children anyway they could
By pouring their derision
Upon anything we did

Exposing every weakness
 However carefully hidden by the kids
 (1-7).

These verses evidence the violent nature of the teacher(s); the behaviors they have towards their students are fairly shocking and demonstrate the way they challenge the image of the “good teacher.” Teachers in *The Wall* “would hurt” the children anyway they could and they “would pour their derision” upon children. The verb “hurt” clearly shows their violent personality. The speaker even affirms that the teachers would hurt the children “anyway they could.” It seems that the purpose of teachers in *The Wall* is not to teach but to torment students. It is as if they are in the class to pay attention to students to see in which way they can attack or offend them. How? By mocking them, by pouring their derision on them. The teacher’s authority and power is based on the humiliation of the weak, of the powerless, of the students. Teachers are more “bullies” (to use an “in” word) than figures of knowledge or wisdom, and students may think that, if they do not speak or move or call the attention, they will not be attacked or humiliated by the teacher in the classroom. Students are also not willing to learn; all their energy inside the class goes to protecting themselves. The speaker affirms that teachers hurt students by exposing the children’s weakness which children “carefully hide.” So, where is education? Is there any trace of conventional education (teachers teaching and students learning)? No, there does not seem to be any. Education in the album is a cruel game between teachers, who hold power, and

students, who are too busy protecting themselves from teachers. In this sense, Denise Winterman affirms that the line “we don’t need no education” from “Another Brick in the Wall Part 2” was “inspired by [Roger Water’s] own schooling in the 1950s. It was a protest against the strict regime that he felt had tried to suppress children, rather than inspire them” (“Just Another Brick in the Wall?”). But not only that, Denise also tells the story of the group of children that sang the famous choir of this song who attended a school down the block from the recording studio. Denise states that the teacher (an unconventional teacher) and the children were discriminated by the institution after the authorities found out what the song was about. The teacher moved to Australia after feeling disillusioned with the British education system; he even declared that “one could see and feel the clouds of conservatism heading towards the school system at the time” (ibid).

In terms of the context when writing the album, Waters may have the influence of the many social revolutions and manifestations all around the world at the end of the 60s in places such as Mexico, USA, France, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia (to name a few). These revolutions were supported by significant amounts of high education students who were opposing political choices and social problems (Hobsbawm 298). In this sense, “we don’t need no education / we don’t need no thought control” is not only a scream against a specific institutions but against the whole social order and its “thought control.” *We*, in these verses, are students opposing and yelling, getting together in order to manifest a collective discomfort.

Returning to our object of study, the education apparatus, as embodied by the teacher, uses hurting and public humiliation as a means to exercise power and to make students part of its game, by that, subduing them as the powerless of the power relation. In addition, the teacher's heartless attitude makes him an "anti-teacher." The song "The Trial" evidences another characteristic of this "anti-teacher." In this song, the teacher gets the opportunity to speak and establishes:

I always said he'd come to no good
In the end your honor
If they'd let me have my way I could
Have flayed him into shape. (8-11)

The first verse demonstrates the lack of faith that the teacher has towards his students. The teacher does not believe in education because he does not believe in students, one of the two main components of the education system. For the teacher, the subject as a student is *no good*, that is, he is bad. In which sense? Perhaps, in every sense since "The Trial" constitutes a metaphorical trial to show the subject's failure in human relations and in social responsibilities, basically in every field in life. Therefore, when the teacher claims that the subject has come to no good, he is establishing his lack of faith in the subject. And what is the possible solution for this, according to the educator? Violence: "If they'd let me have my way I could / Have flayed him into shape" (10-11). In the attitude of the teacher, there is no trace of comprehension or empathy for the student; there is no wish to teach, to enlighten the student. The reaction of the teacher against the student's "no

goodness" is violence as a way to correct (to "flay into shape") and as a form of punishment. In terms of violence and power, John Galbraith establishes that there is a type of power associated to this relationship:

Condign power wins submission by the ability to impose an alternative to the preferences of the individual or group that is sufficiently unpleasant or painful so that these preferences are abandoned, there is an overtone of punishment in the term, and this conveys the appropriate impression. (*Power* 213)

Galbraith believes that condign power is an imposition characterized by pain through punishment or physical correction; this is the case of the Teacher in the album because if he'd have his way, he would have flayed the subject into shape; he would have imposed by means of physical punishment or correction his ideals of proper behavior and morality in order to fix the subject. Is this education? No, students will only learn the basic dos and don'ts, the basis of thought control, no enlightenment, no self-improvement, nor anything. The teacher in *The Wall* represents an authority that does not care for the proper education of his pupils. On the contrary, he is a person whose only purpose seems to punish, humiliate, and to oppress students. He is not the traditional figure of the educator but an anti-teacher that creates a dictatorship-like environment in the classroom.

The case of the teacher evidences another significant trait of power: its fluctuating nature. For the purpose of this investigation, fluctuation denotes the ability, in this case, of power of not

being held just by one individual, as Foucault would put it in *Psychiatric Power*, by a sovereign. The fluctuating nature of power implies that power moves through all the different pieces of the social machinery. Everyone can exercise power, and everyone can be subjected to power. However, no one has the ability to hold it permanently. Foucault explores the subject deeply in *Power/Knowledge*:

(...) power is not to be taken to be a phenomenon of one individual's consolidated and homogenous domination over others, or that of one group or class over others. What, by contrast, should always be kept in mind is that power, if we do not take too distant a view of it, is not that which makes the difference between those who exclusively possess and retain it, and those who do not have it and submit to it. Power must be analysed as something which circulates, or rather as something which only functions in the form of a chain (...) Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organisation. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in the position of undergoing and exercising this power. (98)

The author considers that power fluctuates within the social structure; therefore, it is impossible to have a sovereign-like figure who represents the source of power and who exercises it over the rest of individuals. But it also seems that power does not circulate between individuals, but individuals circulate between the joints and positions that power creates in society. Furthermore, there would be cases of

individuals who are empowered and at the same time are subjected to it, which is the case of the teacher in *The Wall*.

In "The Happiest Days of Our Lives," the speaker, after exposing the sadistic personality of teachers when treating students, affirms:

But in the town it was well known
When they got home at night, their
fat and
Psychopathic wives would thrash them
Within inches of their lives. (8-11)

These verses demonstrate another facet of the teacher, the one of the husband. They give the impression that his marriage is not a pleasing one. In fact, his wife is qualified as "psychopathic," and the reason for this relies on the fact that she makes his life miserable. But her attitude towards him also exemplifies the way in which power fluctuates within society. First, the teacher ends up not being the personification of power. He is just powerful when he is in the class. Second, he holds power within the four walls of the classroom, not in other places, such as within his house. On the contrary, when he is a husband, he is subdued by his wife, and her power is exactly as his, that is, condign power. His role is inverted; he no longer humiliates, punishes, or oppresses. Now, he is the one being humiliated, punished, and oppressed by the condign power of his wife.

Whether or not Roger Waters alludes to hegemonic groups and the implantation of ideology through education in *The Wall* is up to each person's interpretation. Some readers believe that "we don't need no education

/ we don't need no thought" in "Another Brick on the Wall Part II" does refer to hegemonic groups; others consider that these isolated lines are not enough evidence to state this. However, the teacher, and the educational apparatus that Waters presents in the album really exemplify significant notions related to power. One of them is the way it functions inside the class, condign power. The violent, fascist-like attitude of the teacher demonstrates this. The other is the way power fluctuates through the social threads. The way the teacher is bullied by his wife denotes the way in which power is not held by a single individual and the way in which individuals can exercise and be subjected to power at the same time.

The Doctor

Another significant figure of authority in *The Wall* corresponds to the doctor. The doctor embodies the medical apparatus, another social ideological apparatus which has a notable influence on subjects. Although the doctor does not constitute a vital character in the album, as he has represented in the last three hundred years in society, this figure illustrates some traits connected to power in the text.¹ As a matter of fact, the album includes only two songs which make reference to the medical apparatus. The first song, "Comfortably Numb," portrays the subject after some sort of mental or physical breakdown, and he is being helped to overcome this episode by the doctor. The second song is "Another Brick in the Wall Part III" whose "I don't need no drugs to calm me" (2) represents the only reference

to the medical apparatus in the song. However, as it will be stated below, this verse has a vital function in the explanation of the effects of this apparatus in the subject.

Bertrand Russell affirms that the power of the doctor comes from learning:

A very different type of character comes to the fore where power is achieved through learning or wisdom, real or supposed (...) When I say 'learning' I include, of course, reputed learning, such as that of magicians and medicine men. Twenty years of study are required in order to obtain a Doctor's Degree at the university of Lhasa. (*Power* 24)

The power of the doctor as an authority figure comes from the wisdom that learning and studying imply, from the sacrifices that this character has to go through in order to achieve knowledge, and from the mysticism that this knowledge will give him/her. Russell continues: "to gain a reputation for wisdom a man must seem to have a store of recondite knowledge, a mastery over his passions, and a long experience of the ways of men" (ibid). Now, is this knowledge present in *The Wall*? Explicitly no, but once one starts working with the text, one finds out that the wisdom of the doctor does exist in the album. As stated above, the song "Comfortably Numb" shows how the doctor helps the subject to overcome what seems to be a mental or physical discomfort:

Hello,
Is there anybody in there
Just nod if you can hear me
Is there anybody home
Come on now

I hear you're feeling down
 Well I can ease your pain
 Get you on your feet again
 Relax
 I'll need some information first
 Just the basic facts
 Can you show me where it hurts. (1-12)

The doctor is such a learned man in the sense that he shows confidence in his abilities. He “can ease” the pain of the subject, so he can get him on his feet again. The modal auxiliary “can” implies that it is fairly possible, almost certain that he can cure the subject, without even asking the patient for information in order to identify the problem first, before asking “can you show me where it hurts,” an attitude connected to arrogance, the arrogance of a person that is sure of his knowledge, in this case, of medicine. In this sense, Foucault states that one of the main tactics of doctors (psychiatrists) to treat a patient corresponds to demonstrating an inequality of power: “there is the maneuver of creating an imbalance of power, that is to say, right from the start or, anyway, as quickly as possible, making power flow in one and only one direction, that is to say, from the doctor” (*Psychiatric Power* 146). Why? This author continues and affirms: “Its first objective is to establish a sort of state of docility that is necessary for the treatment: the patient, in fact, must accept the doctor’s prescriptions” (*Psychiatric Power* 147). Creating an imbalance of power on the side of the doctor has represented part of the procedures for treating patients in western society. Docility from the patient is equal to the cure.

Now, the important issue in relation to the doctor and his power is that, due to his wisdom, the doctor has control

over the body of the subject. His knowledge gives him the right to manipulate the body of the powerless. When treating the subject in “Comfortably Numb,” the doctor utters:

O.K.
 Just a little pinprick
 There’ll be no more aaaaaaaah! (23-25)

These verses convey the image of the doctor preparing an injection (O.K. / Just a little pinprick), and proceeding to use it on the subject in order to calm the “aaaaaaaahs” (the pain or the symptoms of the disease). Moreover, the verses also evidence the way in which the doctor, without asking the subject, injects him with a drug that the latter does not know. In other words, the physician, by means of knowledge, has control and influence over the body of the subject and administers a drug for the sake of the patient’s health. In this sense, Bertrand Russell establishes that power can be classified on the kind of influence that the powerful can have over the powerless, and one of these stands for the direct physical power over the body. The author gives the examples of imprisonment and of killing, which are clear forms of having physical power over the body (*Power* 19). However, the way in which the doctor has influence and manipulates the body of the subject in the album represents another type of power Russell is referring to.

A remarkable trait of the doctor in relation to power is his indifference. For the purpose of this investigation, indifference refers to the coldness the doctor demonstrates in his behavior when treating his patients, in this case, the subject of the text. As stated

above, “Comfortably Numb” has two stanzas which stand for the speech of the doctor. These stanzas show his indifference and coldness:

Hello,

Is there anybody in there
Just nod if you can hear me
Is there anybody at home
Come on now
I hear you're feeling down
Well I can ease your pain
Get you on your feet again
Relax
I'll need some information first
Just the basic facts
Can you show me where it hurts
(...)
O.K.
Just a little pinprick
There'll be no more aaaaaaaah!
But you may feel a little sick
Can you stand up?
I do believe it's working, good
That'll keep you going through the show
Come on it's time to go.² (1-12, 23-30)

The stanzas demonstrate the way the doctor works, which is quite dehumanizing. He identifies the problem, treats it, and then he says “ok its time to go, you are ready to work.” This last attitude evidences his indifference because he does not care about the fact that the subject just had an appalling mental or physical breakdown and that he (the subject) must rest after one of these episodes, as anyone should. The doctor does not really care for the patient's health. He just wants to get him (the patient) on his knees so that he will be able to perform the show (the subject is a

musician) and that the patient does what he is supposed to do. The doctor is part of the game of power in society. He fixes the subject so that the latter fulfills his social responsibilities. The physician does not cure for sake of the patient's health; he cures so that the patient is able to fulfill his social purpose. In this sense, the doctor is not humanitarian; actually, he embodies the utilitarian values of culture: you have to be healthy so that you can produce. Foucault is rather clear when dealing with this idea:

... the techniques of power are invented to meet the demands of production... I happen to be dealing with people situated outside the circuits of productive labour: the insane, prisoners, and now children. For them labour, insofar as they have to perform it, has a value which is chiefly disciplinary. (*Power/Knowledge* 161)

If the subject is healthy, he is able to produce. If he is able to produce, according to Foucault, he functions within the system and he properly subdues to power. The physician represents the first phase: he makes sure the subject is healthy (in order for him to perform the show and, consequently, subdue to the will of power).

The album shows another case related to the submission to power and the role of the doctor. In the song “Another Brick in the Wall III” the speaker affirms: “I don't need no drugs to calm me” as a way to show his abhorrence to medicine and control. The rest of the lyrics demonstrate the subject's disgust with other fields in his life:

I don't need no arms around me
 I don't need no drugs to calm me
 I have seen the writing on the wall
 Don't think I need anything at all
 No don't think I need anything at all
 All in All it was all just bricks in the wall
 All in All you were all just bricks in the wall. (1-7)

The lyrics are fairly bitter; the whole song evidences the subject's repulsion and hatred. He needs no people around him, no drugs to calm him, nor anything else. Now, the subject's behavior presents a problem in terms of his relation to society and power. The subject states "don't think I need anything at all"; he is in a position where he does not require anything. He will not compromise his freedom, himself, or his time in exchange for something he may need. But most importantly, he will not subject himself to power in exchange of any considerable good; he is in an ideal position where he does not need anything or anybody. The social problem relies on the fact that if he does not need anything or anybody, he is outside the social regulations and the glue that sticks society together: power. In this regard, Foucault tells the story of a psychiatric patient who did not want to work in the vegetable garden in the asylum he was confined. As a matter of fact, working in the garden was considered therapy. However, the patient said working was unnecessary since money was it too. He was given everything in seclusion (*Psychiatric Power* 152). He was in the exact same position as the subject in *The Wall*, where they do not need anybody or anything. The doctors in the asylum decided to implement a system of needs

applied to patient's residency in the hospital. He was denied food and the only way to get some was in exchange of coins he would earn by working in the garden (*Psychiatric Power* 153). This author affirms that the real cure comes from the implantation of needs and the submission of the patient to reality and its rules:

(...) the reality of an external world, which previously the omnipotence of madness was inclined to deny, takes shape through the asylum lack, and this reality beyond the asylum's walls is increasingly imposed as being inaccessible, but as inaccessible only during the time of madness. (*Psychiatric Power* 155)

Now, is this the case of the subject in the album? No, power in his account is more aggressive. In the shape of the doctor, power waits for the subject to experience a mental or physical breakdown in "Comfortably Numb" and administers the medicine that subdues the subject into this game of needs. From there on, the subject will need the medicine to calm these episodes or breakdowns; therefore, he would have to do what it takes (that is to work, to perform shows, and to depend on others) to get his medicine. The doctor crushes the subject's motto "don't think I need anything at all," does not ask if he would like to be treated with that specific drug, and reinserts him into the game of power and needs of the social system.

The doctor constitutes a figure of power whose role in the album is not quite vital as the mother or the father; however, he exemplifies some vital notions that describe the nature

of power and of authorities within the album. First, he embodies the learned man, a person whose power comes from the knowledge he has acquired through education. And he demonstrates this in the way he treats the patient and the confidence he has when speaking to the latter. This confidence also works as a means to establish his power over the subject. Second, the doctor, as a figure of power, is dehumanizing and utilitarian. The song "Comfortably Numb" demonstrates that the physician only wants to cure the subject so that he can fulfill his position in society, that is, to perform the show. Finally, he evidences the way in which society makes individuals carry out the tasks that have been assigned to them; by this, authority figures like the physician introduce them in the social game of needs and subjugation to power. As established, although the physician seems harmless, he actually represents a Machiavellian figure whose purpose is to drug and subdue the subject and to introduce him in the power system that organizes society.

The Judge

The last authority figure that personifies power in *The Wall* is the judge. Although this character appears only in the second-to-last song, he plays a vital role in the resolution of the story. In fact, he comes to embody power itself (if we can say that): omnipotent, distant, unreachable, all-seeing, all-judging, and all-influencing. The judge resembles a god who comes to stand against the subject's insolence, for the sake of power, order, and justice.

"The Trial," the song that tells the encounter between the subject and the judge, portrays the moment when the subject is going through a trial to be proven guilty although his crime or fault is never revealed. On one hand, the subject calls himself crazy; he seems to recognize this as his fault. On the other hand, the judge blames him of making his wife and mother suffer. In this sense, the song also depicts the subject's mother, wife, and teacher, as witnesses in the legal process; all of them testify against him. Another rather interesting character present in the song is what seems to be the district attorney, speaking at the beginning of the song and introducing the subject as the defendant in the prosecution.³ This character utters a different version of the subject's sins and crime:

The prisoner who now stands before
you
Was caught red-handed showing
feelings
Showing feelings of an almost human
nature
This will not do. (3-6)

The song is a polyphonic poem which portrays six characters in a rather credible way and shows how, at the end of the song, the figure of the judge appears and almost crushes the defendant, a defendant who never gets a complete clear reason why he is being prosecuted.

This part of the article will analyze what the trial is really trying to prove in terms of the subject's guilt and the organization of the trial *per se*. Moreover, it will not only focus on the figure of the judge, but will also take into consideration the district attorney and the witnesses in order to create a

broader examination of the concept of the law and of the judicial apparatus and how these relate to power and the subjugation of the subject in *The Wall*.

The first point to clarify in this analysis of the law and the judicial apparatus is the way the trial is organized. The song begins with the sound of a grinding door being opened and, after that, the sound of footsteps and a bell ringing (the bell, as in a funeral, announcing the impending insidious act). Then, the music emerges from the background and the soundscape and fits together with the tempo of the bells.⁴ After this, the district attorney comes and greets the judge, whom he calls “the worm your honor,” and proclaims that the defendant, the subject has arrived. After the words of the attorney, the witnesses come to act, first, the schoolmaster, then, the subject’s wife and his mother. As stated above, all of them testify against the subject. The teacher affirms that he “always said he’d come to no good” when speaking about the subject and utters that “if they’d let [him] have [his] way [he] could / have flayed [the subject] into shape” (10-11), a fairly aggressive and violent statement from a teacher about his student (the teacher’s violent nature is a notion that was discussed previously). In relation to violence, the subject’s wife affirms:

You should have talked to me more often
Than you did, but no you had to
Go your own way. Have you broken any
Homes up lately?
Just five minutes Worm your honor
Him and me alone. (21-26)

Her words demonstrate her frustration in terms of the alleged infidelity

of the subject, frustration that ends up manifested as a will to aggress the subject. The last witness in this legal process is the mother who establishes that “M’lud I never wanted him to / get in any trouble / why’d he ever have to leave me” (30-32). These verses are part of the unclear testimony of the mother that, nevertheless, implies the resentment she feels towards his son for leaving her. After the three testimonies the judge starts to speak (actually, he shouts in a frightening way) and pronounces his verdict: “I sentence you to be exposed before / your peers / tear down the wall” (51-53).

The trial is organized in a conventional fashion, with the attorney presenting the case to the judge followed by the witnesses and, finally, the judge deliberating. However, this mode of organization also reveals a rather significant characteristic of power and the law. According to Bertrand Russell, law depends on people’s consent and support: “The law is almost powerless when it is not supported by public sentiment (...) Law, therefore, as an effective force, depends upon public opinion and sentiment even more than upon the powers of the police” (*Power* 21). The notion that Russell points out is exemplified in the story of *The Wall* because in “The Trial” the witnesses are not only invited to participate to share their experience as spectators of a fault, but they are also included to show that people are irritated and that they support the cause to punish the subject since he has affected the lives of others with his actions. After the law proves that people back its case, the judge enters and attacks the defendant with “the full penalty of law.” Furthermore, when the teacher and the wife state respectively: “if

they'd let me have my way I could / have flayed him into shape (...) let me hammer him today" (10-11,15) and "just five minutes Worm your honor / him and me alone" (25-26), they express their discontent, articulated through these violent and raging statements, and which validate the law to act against the subject. Moreover, at the end of the song the listener can perceive that when the judge utters the verdict "tear down the wall" (53), there is the immediate response of what seems to be a fairly large group of people repeating the decree. This also demonstrates how the judge is backed by public sentiment to correct the improper behavior of the defendant. This correction is so well received by the public that it causes a frenzy.

In terms of the witnesses, they are two members of the subject's family and one of his teachers. Now, if the purpose of the trial is to prove that the subject has mistreated his wife and mother or to show that he is mentally ill, what is the teacher doing there? Well, the answer is fascinating since it points out other remarkable traits of the theory of power. It is not by chance that the teacher is called to testify in the subject's trial due to the fact that he is, as stated above, an authority. In *Abnormal*, Michel Foucault establishes that when dealing with the notion of proof and evidence in a trial:

(...) some evidence has in itself an effect of power, a demonstrative value, greater than other evidence and independently of its own rational structure (...) Well, it is due to the status of the subject who presents the evidence. (10)

What Foucault is trying to explain is that, in a legal process, the significance of the evidence relies, not on the facts provided, but on the person presenting these proofs. If an expert presents a piece of evidence, this information will be more substantial than the testimony of a non-expert. Why? George Simmel believes that an authority corresponds to a person who has, "in his more immediate or remote milieu, an overwhelming weight of his opinions, a faith, or a confidence which have the character of objectivity" (*Power* 205). In Western society, these persons are considered to have objective judgments, due to their studies, preparation, or wisdom. Therefore, they are alleged trustworthy witnesses in legal prosecutions. Foucault affirms that the statements pronounced by experts even have presumptions of truth (*Abnormal* 11). They are true because they come from these individuals even though the law does not represent their field of specialization. This is the case of the teacher in *The Wall*, who is called to testify and to give his opinion as evidence in a trial against a former student although his field of expertise does not constitute criminology. So the teacher exemplifies not only the way in which, in Western societies, opinions of authorities have such a significance that they are taken as presumptions of truth in other fields of knowledge, but also the way in which the legal system represents a game of power and truth in which there would be important people arguing against others in a powerless position, in the position of the accused.

What is the consequence of taking into consideration, what Foucault calls, an expert's opinion as evidence in a trial? Well, the philosopher states that:

Expert opinion like this recounts a series of what could be called misdeeds that do not break the law, or faults that are not illegal. In other words, the aim is to show how the individual already resembles his crime before he has committed it. (*Abnormal* 19)

For Foucault, expert opinion is used in trials to show predisposition to crime. He gives the example of psychiatrists giving “a psychological-ethical double of the offense” (*Abnormal* 16) as part of their testimony, which means that a psychological profile of criminals is created in order to prove mental instability and to trace criminal predisposition. In this sense, expert opinion is used to condemn defendants not only for their crimes but also for their corrupted moral and their tendency to corruption. The teacher in “The Trail” gives his expert opinion: “I always said he’d come to no good” (8). His words evidence the inclination of the subject to commit crimes. These words would not mean the same if they were not uttered by an authority; but he was his teacher. He saw the subject’s performance at school and reached the conclusion that there was in the pupil’s heart a predisposition to err (even though the subject’s performance at school does not have anything to do with other fields of his life...). Moreover, the testimony of the teacher also supports the notion of the double offence: the subject is committing a crime but he was morally corrupted since childhood; the judge will have to condemn the subject for his crime *and* for his lack of moral:

What the judge will judge and punish, the point on which he will bring to

bear the punishment, is precisely these irregular forms of conduct that were put forward as the crime’s cause and point of origin and the site at which it took shape, and which were only its psychological and moral double. (*Abnormal* 17)

Now, it seems that having individuals who do not have any level of expertise in law participating in trials jeopardizes objectivity when aiming to distribute justice, even more when one realizes that these individuals are asked to participate in such legal processes just because they have the status of authorities or personalities. In addition, it seems even more incorrect for judges to take into consideration these subjective testimonies as valid evidence. Well, Foucault believes the same and calls this phenomenon grotesque: “I am calling ‘grotesque’ the fact that, by virtue of their status, a discourse or an individual can have effects of power that their intrinsic qualities should disqualify them from having” (*Abnormal* 12). The mere act of having the teacher testify and state that the subject has always been predisposed to err and the judge paying close attention to this testimony makes this account grotesque, unnatural for the rules of justice and objectivity because something grotesque corresponds to something that breaks the rules of harmony and order, in this case, the rules of an objective prosecution. Pink Floyd seems to emphasize the whole grotesque issue by depicting the entire trial as bizarre. The band accomplishes this by the use of musical aspects such as circus-like music and the over accentuated way of singing

by Roger Waters, which gives a sense of a theater performance. The voice of the teacher is a high-pitched voice that implies his anger and frustration when speaking about the subject while the voice of the judge corresponds to a dreadful scream, which evidences the hostility of this character. All these elements contribute to create a sense of charade in the court. Floyd approaches the courtroom in a fantastically cynical way in order to show the grotesqueness of the legal ritual.

In terms of the other two witnesses, the mother and the wife, although they are not authorities (or at least traditional authorities with university degrees), they represent another social institution which has a significant role in this legal process: The family. But before discussing this, it is necessary to clarify the criminal profile of the subject. In *Abnormal*, Michel Foucault explains that there are three types of individuals which break the law: the monster, the individual to be corrected, and the masturbating child. The monster constitutes an entity that transgresses natural laws, such as Siamese twins, a half-animal-half-human creature, a person with two heads, etc. The masturbating child is self-explanatory and corresponds to the legal reaction of social anxiety when dealing with child sexuality.⁵ In the case of the individual to be corrected, Foucault believes that this criminal emerges within “the family and the school, workshop, street, quarter, parish, church, police, and so on” (*Abnormal* 57-58). Moreover, the individual to be corrected is so familiar and close that it is really difficult to define him:

There is a kind of familiar, everyday obviousness that renders him [the individual to be corrected] immediately recognizable; but he is so familiar that we do not have any definite evidence that an individual is this character. Consequently, being unable to provide any proof, we can never really demonstrate that an individual is incorrigible. (ibid)

These theoretical notions help the reader/listener conclude that the subject in the *The Wall* is the individual to be corrected. There is no significant proof to show the subject’s guilt in “The Trial”; in fact, the reader/listener does not even know why the subject is being prosecuted (as stated above, the district attorney blames him for feeling, while the judge accuses him for making his wife and mother suffer; at the same time, the subject censures himself for being crazy). Moreover, the witnesses represent two of the institutions where the individual to be corrected emerges: the school in the case of the teacher, and the family in the case of the wife and mother.

Now that it is clear that the subject in the album can be considered the individual to be corrected, let’s go back to the issue of having the mother and the wife as witnesses that represent the family. The family is present in the subject’s trial as a frame of reference of his condition as a criminal:

(...) the individual to be corrected appears to require correction because all the usual techniques, procedures, and attempts at training within the family have failed to correct him. What defines the individual to be corrected is that he is incorrigible. (Foucault, *Abnormal* 58)

The fact that the mother and the wife are testifying the sins of the subject committed within the household constitutes a proof that “all the usual techniques, procedures, and attempts at training within the family have failed” and now they appeal to the power of the law and of the judge to subdue the subject to social regulations. On one hand, the wife blames him for not talking to her more often and for being unfaithful:

You should have talked to me more often
Than you did, but no you had to
Go your own way. Have you broken any
Homes up lately? (21-24)

On the other hand, the mother cries “why’d he ever have to leave me” (32) implying that for the mother leaving her home and leaving her are crimes. Both testimonies also exemplify the nature of the subject as an individual to be corrected since his faults are ordinary, frequent, and obvious in families, and the two women cannot correct these by themselves.

Now, in terms of the reason why the subject is being prosecuted, as already discussed, this reason is not completely clear. The wife states that the subject was a cheater and they had communication problems. The mother suggests that he left her alone. The Teacher even utters that “the bleeding heart and artists / Let him get away with murder” (13-14). Is doing whatever you want a crime? If the teacher and the other antagonists in the narrative believe so, it is a fairly judgmental and irate conviction. However, the subject calls himself crazy in the choruses of the song:

Crazy toys in the attic I am crazy⁶
They must have taken my marbles away
(...)
Crazy over the rainbow I am crazy⁷
Bars in the windows
There must have been a door here in
the wall
When I came in. (16-17,34-37)

Is he guilty of being insane? Probably. He affirms that he is crazy and, therefore, he has bars in the windows as if he were in prison. The speaker implies a relationship between insanity and imprisonment, between being insane and being a criminal. When dealing with the concepts of madness and criminality, Foucault establishes:

You see delinquents as the residues of society, colonized peoples as the residues of history, and the mad as the residues of humanity in general, all included together in the same category, all the individuals —delinquents, peoples to be colonized, or the mad— who can only be reconverted, civilized and subjected to orthopedic treatment if they are offered a family model. (*Psychiatric Power* 109)

The subject, if he is crazy, is part of this group of individuals: people to be colonized, delinquents, and people to be reconverted, civilized and subjected to orthopedic treatment. All these individuals are treated the same, as residues of society. Foucault also believes that the cure for the insane relies on returning to the family model; this is exactly the wish of the mother when she states:

M'lud I never wanted him to
Get in any trouble

Why'd he ever have to leave me
Worm your honor let me take him
home. (30-33)

She wants to take him home, to a place that resembles the panopticon, the architectural model of modern institutions for controlling individuals, including prisons. Insane or not, the subject is treated as a delinquent. There is also the possibility that the subject is appealing to insanity as a way to avoid punishment; nevertheless, it seems that in the micro-world of *The Wall* madness constitutes a type of crime, or at least it is treated as one, so it does not matter if the subject is appealing to insanity as a way to avoid being declared guilty or because he really is insane; he is treated as a criminal.

Now, it is time to consider the figure of the judge. After the speeches of the witnesses and the subject calling himself crazy for the second time, the judge comes onto the scene. He does not speak; he screams dreadfully, suggesting the hostility and intolerance of the law, of authority, and of power when confronting the subject, a subject that has erred or has gone against social standards of normality. He even establishes: "the way you make them suffer / your exquisite wife and mother / fills me with the urge to defecate" (46-48). The judge demonstrates with these bizarre and disturbing verses the fury that the case of the subject is generating on him. The lines also show that if an individual goes against the law, the law will reply with its worst. Now, in terms of punishment, the judge is in charge of imposing it, so he establishes:

[Since] my friend you have revealed your
Deepest fear

I sentence you to be exposed before
Your peers
Tear down the wall¹⁰ (49-53).

Why is the judge punishing the subject? It seems that his fault is revealing his deepest fear. Which is this fear? Well, if one pays close attention to what the subject establishes when he has the chance to speak, one finds out that there is anxiety in his words: "they must have taken my marbles away" and "there must have been a door there in the wall / when in came in" (17,36-37). His anxiety reveals his fear of losing his marbles, going insane, but this madness is caused by the influence of other people, perhaps his family and authorities, and of being lost in a maze fenced by the wall. On one hand, people cause anxiety on the subject to the extent that they can make the subject go insane, or at least, judge the subject so harshly that he concludes that he is insane; he feels as a residue of society, a piece not used in the social machinery. On the other hand, he is afraid of being trapped inside the wall, and what it represents (isolation, lack of communication, or reclusion), and of not finding freedom. What is the verdict? To tear down the wall, to expose him before his equals, before the rest of society, in order to subdue him to the law established by popular consent. The exposure before society represents a mechanism of control: the subject has to behave because he will always be monitored; this mechanism alludes to the panopticon. As the individual secluded in this architectural model has to feel that he/she is being observed so that he/she behaves properly. But is being afraid of the cruelty of others and of

never reaching freedom a real crime that deserves “the full penalty of law” in order to secure justice? No, the whole trial is absurd. There is no real crime behind “The Trial”; it only illustrates that the judicial apparatus and the law embodied by the judge (along with the witnesses and the district attorney) represent an instrument of power, as Foucault believes: “Law is neither the truth of power nor its alibi. It is an instrument of power which is at once complex and partial” (*Power/Knowledge* 141).

The judge constitutes the last authority present in *The Wall*. He is vile, intolerant, and resentful, as the law that he epitomizes. In this sense, the law and judicial apparatus portrayed in “The Trial” correspond to a series of rules and regulations that preserve the common good, but this common good is a façade imposed by the ones in power so, through the law, they manipulate and control individuals. The clearest example in the album stands for the speaker who goes through a legal prosecution that aims to prove that he is guilty (of what? It is still a mystery): the whole process aspires to subdue him to the law and to the rules of proper behavior.

Final Words

This article constitutes a reflection on the notion of authorities, on the apparatus they embody, and on the influence they have on the subject in *The Wall* by Pink Floyd, this, from a power-relation perspective. The album presents three main authorities: the teacher, the physician, and the judge; and how the subject interacts

with the three of them. These images manifest notions related to violence, to fluctuation of power, to control over the body, to indifference, to curing as a form of social control, to authorities as false witnesses, to the consent of people as a form of backing up the powerful, and to punishment. All these manifestations of power affect the subject in a detrimental way. The subject is one of the students hiding their weaknesses from the teacher, becomes an addict to the cure that the doctor gives him as a way to avoid his breakdowns, and is subjected to the punishment the judge dictates. Moreover, the influence that authorities have on the subject through power relations, that drives him to madness, dehumanization, and isolation, is unmistakable.

Furthermore, Pink Floyd’s album not only constitutes an anatomy of power relations, their causes, and their consequences, it also stands for an ode to dehumanization: each and every of its songs may be seen as an account of the different instances which lead individuals to this condition. The album is an epic poem showing the life of a subject, Pink, and the different stages and persons that he relates to throughout this journey, from baby to child, from child to adult, from adult to dehumanized individual trapped in a detrimental society. With amazing music, mesmerizing background sounds which contribute to take the story to a new level of meaning, touching vocal interpretation, and clever lyrics which demonstrate artistic and literary value, *The Wall* shows itself, not just as a fine rock album, but as a multilayer piece of art which deserves academic respect.

Notes

1. Foucault affirms in his book *Power/Knowledge* that the medical apparatus has had such a remarkable role in society that it has had effects on the organization of it. For the sake of collective hygiene, the medical apparatus has had an authoritarian influence in all the social spheres, from the most private circles, such as the family, to the control and organization of public spaces (174-175).
2. "Comfortably Numb" is sung in a remarkable way: Waters sings the parts of the doctor while Gilmour sings the chorus, the voice of the subject/patient. Although the chorus is considered to be the most important part of a (rock) song and Gilmour does an outstanding job in this song, it is the parts of Waters, of the physician, that are rather captivating. He sings with a deep, expressionless, absent voice, which really contributes to the sense of dehumanization in the doctor-patient relation.
3. Some listeners/readers may think of a fairly similar character of a piece of art on another artistic field: the Master of Ceremonies in the 1972 film *Cabaret* performed by Joel Grey. The two characters play the role of the trickster, which in the case of Grey is significantly evident due to his sardonic smile, his makeup, and his facial expressions; however, the way Waters sings the lines of the district attorney also conveys this image.
4. The rhythmic pattern of the emerging music evokes circus-like music, an intriguing fact due to the sarcasm that this implies. This suggests that Pink Floyd wanted to compare a trial and the judicial apparatus with a circus. The whole set of rules governing the court is nothing but a charade, a mere act.
5. These two terms are explored in depth in chapter three of *Abnormal*.
6. "toys in the attic," such a simple and beautiful image to suggest transgression of social parameters of normal behavior. Floyd has done this before in "Brain Damage" (part of the album *The Dark Side of the Moon*) with the verses: "the paper hold their folded faces to the floor / and every day the paper boy brings more." Picking the newspaper from the front door constitutes such an ordinary activity, but if it is not carried out, it can even denote that there is some sort of mental problem in a person.
7. Probably a reference to *The Wizard of Oz* since its soundtrack includes the famous song *Over the Rainbow*. This is not the first time a connection between this iconic movie and their music comes out if one takes into consideration the urban legend of the *The Dark Side of the Rainbow* (the montage of the visual part of *The Wizard of Oz* and the music of *The Dark Side of the Moon*).
8. Foucault devotes a great amount of his writing to analyze the way in which Jeremy Bentham's panopticon works as a spatial mechanism to exercise and subdue to power. The French theorist affirms that in this architectural model power is exercised through isolation, game of light and sight, and the sense of being observed.
9. The act of the judge defecating can also be analyzed from the perspective of the scatological theory and the anal stage of psychoanalysis and how the judge releases, exercises power, and derives pleasure from this.
10. The lyrics included in the booklet of the *The Wall* have the word "but" instead of

“since”: “but my friend you have revealed your deepest fear.” However, I decided to use the lyrics based on the audio of the album, which contain “since.”

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