



Theatre Academy

Gönderilme Tarihi/Submission Date: 01.09.2023

Kabul Tarihi/Acceptance Date: 12.02.2024

Araştırma Makalesi/Research Article

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.10829685

Politics, Incarceration, and Innocence in Harold Pinter's *One for the Road* and Melih Cevdet Anday's *İçerdekiler*

Harold Pinter'in *One for the Road* ve Melih Cevdet Anday'ın *İçerdekiler*
Adlı Oyunlarında Politika, Hapsedilme ve Masumiyet

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Abstract

This study aims to compare two political plays, Harold Pinter's *One for the Road* (1984) and Melih Cevdet Anday's *İçerdekiler* (1965) with a focus on their thematic presentations of political oppression, incarceration and innocence. Influenced by different turning points in Turkish political history, both plays exhibit striking resemblances in depicting political oppression which includes physical and psychological torture, and the reality of incarceration that is experienced by innocent individuals who merely use their freedom of opinion and speech. Presenting critical reactions against the political injustices leading to the victimisation of innocent people, both plays display how political power is manipulated in the hands of the oppressors. The first part of this study examines both Pinter's and Anday's political views and criticism as well as their motives for writing the plays under discussion. In the second part, this study compares the two plays mainly in terms of their treatment of oppression and acts of cruelty against innocent individuals, concluding that the plays show similarities as both playwrights manage to demonstrate a universally horrifying picture of incarceration.

Keywords: *One for the Road*, *İçerdekiler*, Oppression, Incarceration, Harold Pinter, Melih Cevdet Anday

Cite this article: Gündoğdu, M. (2024). Politics, Incarceration, and Innocence in Harold Pinter's *One for the Road* and Melih Cevdet Anday's *İçerdekiler*. *Theatre Academy*, 2(1), 32-52



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Öz

Bu çalışma, Harold Pinter'in *One for the Road* (1984) ve Melih Cevdet Anday'ın *İçerdekiler* (1965) adlı iki politik oyunu politik baskı, hapsedilme ve masumiyet temalarına odaklanarak karşılaştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Türk siyasi tarihinin farklı dönüm noktalarından etkilenen her iki oyun da fiziksel ve psikolojik işkenceyi içeren siyasi baskıyı ve yalnızca ifade özgürlüğünü kullanan masum bireylerin yaşadığı hapsedilme gerçeğini gösterme konusunda çarpıcı benzerlikler sergilemektedir. Masum insanların mağduriyetine sebep olan siyasi adaletsizliklere karşı eleştirel bir tepki sunan her iki oyun da siyasi gücün zalimlerin elinde nasıl manipüle edildiğini göstermektedir. Bu çalışmanın ilk bölümünde Pinter ve Anday'ın siyasi görüşleri ve eleştirilerinin yanı sıra bu oyunları yazma nedenleri de incelenmektedir. İkinci bölümde, bu çalışma iki oyunu temel olarak masum bireylere yönelik baskı ve zulüm eylemlerini ele alışları açısından karşılaştırmakta ve her iki oyun yazarının da hapsedilmenin evrensel olarak dehşet verici bir tablosunu ortaya koydukları için oyunların benzerlikler gösterdiği sonucuna varmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *One for the Road*, *İçerdekiler*, Siyasi Baskı, Hapsedilme, Harold Pinter, Melih Cevdet Anday

Introduction

“Innocent people, indeed, always suffer.”

– Harold Pinter; *Art, Truth and Politics* (2005)

Harold Pinter's words quoted above point to the unfortunate fact that innocent individuals have persistently been subjected to suffering, often facing the consequences of adverse circumstances that come along with acts of oppression. In line with this perspective, Pinter, one of the most outstanding British playwrights and political activists, delivered through video¹ a groundbreaking speech titled *Art, Truth and Politics* (2005) to be played at the Nobel Prize ceremony in Sweden as he was the recipient of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2005. His speech is an attack on the current state of world affairs, presenting his socio-political critique marked with a keen determination to examine the brutal exercises of oppressive political agendas upon the people whom they victimise. In doing so, Pinter condemned both the Bush-ruled US and its political partner, the UK, ruled at the time by the Blair-led Tory government, denouncing their efforts not only to perform but also to justify the oppression inflicted upon those victimised by their politics. Pinter characterises these politicians as

¹ Since Pinter was hospitalised at the time, he had to videotape his acceptance speech.

oppressors who dominate their authority to practise the maintenance of their power over innocent people. On the basis of this consideration lies his belief that, beyond his identity as an artist, he must ask questions as a citizen about the way oppression exists in politics and how they impact the lives of the innocent.

As a citizen, Pinter perceives it as his responsibility to raise a voice against the unethical means and methods adopted in politics, such as the acts of atrocity committed by the United States during their invasion of Iraq in 2003, which resulted in loss of lives, estimated to be around 655,000 (Burnham et al., 2006) or the tragedy around the Nicaraguan Revolution, where the United States interfered in the country's domestic issues by supporting the oppressive Somoza dictatorship. In his speech for the Nobel Prize ceremony, Pinter also claims the US to be the head actor to foster dictatorial regimes in "Indonesia, Greece, Uruguay, Brazil, Paraguay, Haiti, Turkey, the Philippines, Guatemala, El Salvador, and, of course, Chile" (2005, p. 6). Besides being a citizen with concerns about the oppressive political acts not only in the UK but all around the world, he was, perhaps more importantly, an artist producing drama, who believed that "[...] theatre has always been a critical act, looking in a broad sense at the society in which we live and attempting to reflect and dramatize these findings" (Gussow, 1994, p. 123). As a political playwright, he utilised theatre as a medium to openly set forth and criticise the realities of our world.

Therefore, as an artist, Pinter integrated his observations about the injustices or human rights violations around the world into his overtly political theatre. One of the earliest examples of his political drama, *One for the Road* (1984) has been accepted as an outcome of Pinter's concerns about Türkiye despite the absence of any explicit reference to Türkiye in the play. The play possibly draws inspiration from the events that took place in Türkiye following the 1980 coup, during which the military forcefully took control of the government. One of his prompts to write *One for the Road* was, as he asserted in an interview with Nick Hern, the "[...] official torture, subscribed to by so many governments" (Pinter, 1985, p. 12). Assuming Türkiye to be one of these countries, Pinter went there with Arthur Miller "to investigate allegations of the torture and persecution of Turkish writers" (Campaigning against Torture, n.d.). During their visit, he realised something he was "slightly aware of but had no idea of the depths of: that the Turkish prisons, in which there are thousands of political prisoners, really are among the worst in the world" (Pinter, 1985, pp. 12-13). His experiences during this

visit and ultimately his observations on Turkish prisons, which housed thousands of political prisoners, instigated him to write the play.

When they visited Türkiye, Pinter and Miller were hosted at a party in the US Embassy in Ankara where they expressed their strong opposition to the political intervention of the US in global affairs. During the party, Miller attacked the US, asking why “it supported military dictatorships throughout the world, including the country [they] were now in”. Miller further drew attention to the fact that “hundreds of people are in prison for their thoughts” (Campaigning against Torture, n.d.). Being aware of the polemical situation of those who were in prison, Pinter went on writing the explicitly political *One for the Road*, intently portraying totalitarian oppression and its effects on those who are unjustly victimised despite their innocence. Through this play, Pinter presents the suffering endured by innocent individuals who were politically oppressed, highlighting the torture they had to face. He also confronted his audience with the reality of political oppression and raised awareness about the fact that such political torments might happen to any innocent individual.

The political incidents in the first half of the 1980s in Türkiye, including a military coup, provided the backdrop for Pinter to produce *One for the Road*. However, while the Turkish political past possibly influenced Pinter's motivation to write, his initial aim was to highlight the universality of torture as he underscored that “[t]here are at least ninety countries that practise torture now quite commonly - as an accepted routine. With any imprisonment, with any arrest, torture goes with it” (Pinter, 1985, p. 8). Regarding his statement in which he underlines the universality of torture claiming there are decades of countries that use torture as a tool of political oppression, it is no surprise, then, to see *One for the Road* does not only and openly refer to Türkiye and the political incidents taking place there even though Pinter was greatly influenced by them. Pinter mainly sought to depict torture in his play in a more ‘universal’ way. The play's aim of universality can be observed in its setting which is an enclosed room of a building – perhaps a military prison – during an unspecified period of time, underscoring the fact that such cruelty may be experienced by anyone at any given time.

The second playwright under examination in this study is Melih Cevdet Anday, a versatile Turkish author, poet, and translator largely known for his leading role in

establishing Garip (Strange) Movement within Turkish literature. Anday's style of writing breaks with the traditions in terms of its language and style since he pursues to employ a more contemporary literary form. In addition to his contributions to poetry and novel writing, Anday is also a skilled playwright whose theatrical works endeavour to portray the political and societal status quo at his time. Displaying the characters' inner conflicts and their relationships with the outside world in his plays, Anday encourages the audience to think through his political and social criticism. Keeping his concerns on his country's politics and society in mind, Anday's style of playwrighting can be characterised as somewhat political.

Like *One for the Road*, Anday's 1965 play *İçerdekiler*² explores the issue of prisons and the theme of incarceration in a similarly universal manner. Sharing a parallel aim with Pinter, Anday stresses the universality of torture and political oppression as in both plays the actions are set in an uncertain place where the oppressor can easily torture the innocent characters. In addition to that, similar to *One for the Road*, the characters in *İçerdekiler* are not linked to any particular nation and they are even not given a proper name. Both plays, thus, underline the universal nature of torture and oppression that might be experienced by any ordinary person regardless of their nation and status.

Like *One for the Road* which was written and produced subsequent to the 1980 military coup, *İçerdekiler* was first staged several years after the 1960 military coup which was yet another turning point in the Turkish political past. While Pinter's *One for the Road* can be labelled as a literary reaction against the oppression that took place after the 1980 coup, there is a lack of literature to consider *İçerdekiler* as a critical response to the 1960 coup or the other political agendas during the playwright's time. However, it is worth noting that Anday, who is known to have voiced his concerns about the ways oppression manifests itself in the political realm in his time, asserts that "many unjust policies, many unnecessary practices have been seen in the history of states"

² The title of the play, *İçerdekiler*, refers to individuals who are not only physically but also psychologically confined, isolated, and distanced from the outside world by being incarcerated. Several different translations of the title are possible including 'The Insiders' or 'The Prisoners', but neither of these translations fully or correctly represent the actual meaning of the word 'içerdekiler' in the context of the play wherein the prisoner makes frequent references to the distinction between the outside world and the world inside a prison, underlining the contrast between inside and outside.

(Algül, 2015, p. 427).³ Being a playwright who witnessed both the political atmosphere of the 1950s under the controversial Menderes government which was often criticised for its political practises, and the 1960 military coup which resulted for many people in trials followed by detentions, Anday believed that politics consisted of numerous unjust exercises of power. He wrote in his diary in 1976, “in general, politics is opposed to art because the former wants to rule while the latter opposes the rule even without being conscious of it [...]” (Anday, 2008, p. 26). Viewed with regard to Anday’s beliefs on art and unjust practices employed in politics, *İçerdekiler* appears to be an outcome of his politically critical point of view that may be related to Turkish political incidents covering the 1950s and 1960s.

Based on the striking similarities introduced above, this study aims to compare two political plays, Pinter’s *One for the Road* and Anday’s *İçerdekiler* in terms of their thematic representations of political power, incarceration and innocence. Since the writers of both plays were influenced by Türkiye’s political past which includes two military interventions and polemical regimes, this study attempts to comparatively examine the dynamics of political oppression, the experience of imprisonment, and the notion of innocence within the contexts of the two plays, attempting to facilitate a deeper understanding of the ways in which these playwrights tackle and present these themes. By examining the approaches taken by Pinter and Anday in addressing these themes, this comparative study seeks to contribute to the literature on political plays in terms of these playwrights’ ability to represent the link between political dynamics and the human experience. Despite the likelihood that the writers of both plays were influenced by Türkiye’s political past based on the apparent thematic similarities in their works, no evidence of communication or contact between the two authors has been observed during the research.

A Comparative Exploration of Harold Pinter’s *One for the Road* and Melih Cevdet Anday’s *İçerdekiler* as Political Plays

In comparing Harold Pinter’s one-act play *One for the Road* and Melih Cevdet Anday’s two-act play *İçerdekiler*, striking similarities can be detected as both plays embody parallel themes, plots, storylines and socio-political critiques in the particular times the

³ All the citations/quotations from Turkish sources (including the original text of the play *İçerdekiler*) are translated into English by the author of this study.

plays were written. As an overtly political play, *One for the Road* presents themes of political power, torture, cruelty and oppression of the state inflicted upon individuals. Likewise, *İçerdekiler* critically examines the unjust practice of incarceration against an innocent individual, tackling the themes of totalitarianism, cruelty and psychological oppression. Through their shared thematic features, both plays offer thought-provoking insights into the dynamics of power and the consequences of political oppression.

One for the Road and *İçerdekiler*'s similarity is established by their very first lines which provide information on their settings. The setting of the plays is left uncertain, which, as already mentioned, endows universality to the plays. The only information that is offered in the texts is that both plays take place in an enclosed room. *One for the Road* starts with the following information: "A room. Morning." (Pinter, 1985, p. 29) while *İçerdekiler* begins with the line: "[t]he action takes place in a country where the police can detain anyone indefinitely without an arrest warrant" (Anday, 2022, p. 13).³ Anday broadly defines the one and only setting where the play takes place from its beginning to the end: "[t]he room of one of the chief commissars of the political department at the police station" (Anday, 2022, p. 13). Because there is no information about the name of the country wherein the actions take place, the play seems to suggest the idea that such actions may take place in any country. Sharing the same sense of universality, Pinter's *One for the Road*, does not offer detailed information about the setting either; it only indicates that the play begins in a room where Nicolas, the interrogator leans forward at his desk. Also noteworthy with regard to temporal setting is that the action takes place in a single day in both plays. The temporal and spatial setting of the plays is far from specificity and the choices of the playwrights imply that they both strive towards universality.

As a dramatist who has a distinctive style of writing, Pinter chooses an enclosed space for the setting, combined with a very short duration of time in the play. Suggesting entrapment within four walls, the enclosed space in *One for the Road* is used to increase the tension which emerges as a result of Nicolas (as well as his soldiers on other floors of the building) torturing Victor and his family. In addition to the spatial setting, the aim of using a single day is another tool for raising the tension, helping the audience/reader to focus solely on the actions rather than grappling with complications presented through different scenes which may ruin the time flow. The enclosed setting also brings out a sense of confinement, which, on the one hand,

elucidates the fact that Victor, Gila and Nicky are confined in a restricted area by the oppressive power, and on the other, cuts off the communication with the outside world, intensifying the emotional and psychological interaction between the characters who are the focus of attention in this enclosed space. Lastly, the enclosed space also presents the fact that the confined characters are neither able to reach freedom nor to escape from the oppressive hands of Nicolas who is the authority figure of that particular space.

Sharing a similar approach with Pinter, Anday deployed an enclosed space as the spatial setting and a single day as the temporal one in *İçerdekiler*. The enclosed setting in the play strengthens the impossibility of communication and separation between those who are confined and the others who are outside. In the case of *İçerdekiler*, the enclosed space has a central importance in understanding the play as a whole because the title of the play also emphasises the condition of being incarcerated, being cut off from the outside world. When this is considered in the light of the play taking place within a single day, Anday seems to imply that for those who are kept incarcerated every new day is the same as the previous one. The play thus makes the point that the lives those incarcerated by the system are kept on hold with no possible development in sight. The fact that Tutuklu is innocent also adds another layer to this sense of stagnation, enhancing the play's overriding message that any system, which has the power to keep an individual in confinement as long as it deems necessary, is based on injustice.

In its portrayal of injustices practised upon innocent individuals, *İçerdekiler* is centred around Tutuklu, an innocent teacher being detained for a long time without any apparent reason, and his conversations in the first act with Komiser who represents the oppressive state authority, and in the second act with Kız who is the sister of his wife. The first act of the play addresses the theme of oppression through the dialogues between Tutuklu and Komiser, wherein the latter oppressively pressures the former to confess the so-called political offenses he has not actually committed. However, Tutuklu consistently rejects giving the answers Komiser seeks and resists against his oppressive advances by talking mostly about his sexual longing for his wife. Aiming to manipulate Tutuklu's vulnerability regarding sexual contact, Komiser deceitfully promises Tutuklu to allow his wife a half-an-hour visit in exchange for his confession. Yet, in the second act, the visit is surprisingly made by Tutuklu's sister-in-law instead

of his wife who is apparently ill. Being triggered by the need for communication which is depicted as a sexual obsession in the character of Tutuklu, he forces Kız to have sex with him. Just as Komiser was the oppressor by his actions towards Tutuklu in the first act, Tutuklu takes on the role of an oppressor and urges Kız to meet his sexual desires. Tutuklu's obsession with sexuality seems to be a consequence of his long-time confinement; however, his problem is all about establishing communication:

TUTUKLU. (*He sits on a chair in front of her*) One's mind works in a different way while one is inside. You've come to understand this quite well today. Because of me only? No... (*He smiles*). Because of yourself too. Today, within half an hour, you've become a prisoner too and started thinking that way. (*He stares at her for a long time, then gets up from his seat, walks around*). You've come in a little bit, and I've come out a little bit. (*He stops, takes a deep breath*). Yes, I went out. I lived outside. That's enough for me for a year. (Anday, 2022, p. 94)

Through Tutuklu's speech above, the play problematises human actions in an enclosed area where the interaction with the outside world is impossible and emphasises the need for communication. Although Tutuklu is yearning for physical contact when he first encounters Kız, he eventually comes to understand that all he needed in the first place was being able to express himself. Therefore, the play shows how oppression impacts the innocent individual's character. Tutuklu practises on Kız the same cruelty he has suffered in the hands of Komiser. However, being able to communicate is the only means that can set Tutuklu free.

While the character of Tutuklu appears to have a strong desire for interaction with others, the issue of communication between Komiser and Tutuklu is on a different level where communication is seemingly absent. About the course and problem of communication between Komiser and Tutuklu which takes place in the first act, Dirlikyapan (2010) notes that the act of establishing communication is not functioned well between Komiser and Tutuklu:

One significant point that should be emphasized in *İçerdekiler* is the refusal of Tutuklu to say what Komiser wants, despite his strong urge for communication. [...] When the act of speaking turns into an act of oppression, it fails to fulfil its function

of catharsis⁴. Hence, Tutuklu responds to all the Komiser's methods of interrogation with silence. (p. 218)

Despite his longing for communication with the outside world, Tutuklu cannot be able to reach the moment of catharsis that only comes with communication because of psychological oppression he experiences while talking to Komiser. A healthy form of communication should be double-sided, including the notions of expression and understanding. However, in the case between Komiser and Tutuklu, it is implied that oppression practised by Komiser hinders the establishment of a healthy communication. Also, by remaining silent, Tutuklu resists and protests against the acts of oppression directed at him. Therefore, the notion that communication cannot be established in a space where one party are verbally intimidated by the other, is underlined in the play.

One for the Road deals with the issue of establishing communication on a different level. Within the confined space in which the characters are clearly cut off from the outside world, the torturer Nicolas, as the single person other characters can communicate with, holds the position of utmost authority. In their case, the communication between Nicolas and the others seems to be one-sided since Nicolas is the only one who can openly express his opinions to Victor and his family. Victor, Gila and Nicky are not able to make clear and honest statements because of the atmosphere of fear created by Nicolas. Through the menacing language Nicolas uses as a tool of oppression, his control over the others is made clear in the play:

NICOLAS. What do you think this is? It's my finger. And this is my little finger. This is my big finger and this is my little finger. I wave my big finger in front of your eyes. Like this. And now I do the same with my little finger. I can also use both... at the same time. Like this. I can do absolutely anything I like. Do you think I'm mad? My mother did. (Pinter, 1985, p. 33)

Nicolas' use of language here is threatening. Throughout the play, "[a]lthough Nicolas does not use physical violence (others have already done that for him) his verbal violence is just as gruesome or perhaps even more so. His questions are meant to

⁴ Oxford Learner's Dictionary defines the term catharsis as "the process of releasing strong feelings, for example through plays or other artistic activities, as a way of providing relief from anger, suffering, etc." [https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/american_english/catharsis#:~:text=%5Buncountable%2C%20countable%5D%20\(pl,from%20anger%2C%20suffering%2C%20etc.](https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/american_english/catharsis#:~:text=%5Buncountable%2C%20countable%5D%20(pl,from%20anger%2C%20suffering%2C%20etc.) Accessed on 30.07.2023.

confuse and finally break Victor” (Visser, 1996, p. 331). Besides his questions, Nicolas uses his fingers as the symbol of his power. By showing his fingers, he not only scoffs but also psychologically manipulates Victor. By comparing his big and little finger, he conveys the message that he is the superior authority who can do whatever he likes to anyone no matter who they are. Related to this he also says: “I run the place. God speaks through me” (Pinter, 1985, p. 36). Besides holding the power, he justifies his actions by implying that the cruelty he practises is also approved by God, which grants him the ultimate layer of authority.

As an effective tool of oppression, the use of language is similar in both plays in terms of their tone of menace which contributes to the creation of the atmosphere of fear for those who are oppressed. In *One for the Road*, the language of menace is produced only through Nicolas who aims to stress his authority over his victims who, in turn, remain all the way silent or utter very few words, indicating the intimidating pressure over them. With the help of such menacing language, psychological torture is skilfully practised by Nicolas:

NICOLAS. I'm prepared to be frank, as a true friend should, I love death. What about you? (*Pause*) What about you? Do you love death? Not necessarily your own.
Others. The death of others. Do you love the death of others, or at any rate, do you love the death of others as much as I do? (Pinter, 1985, p. 45)

Even though no physical torture is implied in Nicolas' speech above, he aims to target Victor's psychological vulnerability by indirectly threatening him and his family, implying the fact that he can kill them without hesitation since he loves the death of others. Under this threat against the lives of his family members, Victor is not only physically victimised but also psychologically oppressed by his torturer.

Reminding Victor's use of menacing language, Komiser in *İçerdekiler* employs parallel tactics when trying to emotionally oppress Tutuklu. Except one dialogue between Komiser and Tutuklu which implies that Tutuklu is slapped by Komiser when he first arrives at the police station, *İçerdekiler* is mostly centred around psychological oppression. Komiser's way of using language illustrates his psychologically manipulative tactics. He utilises language to address Tutuklu's vulnerability, forcing him to confess to the political offense he has not committed:

KOMİSER. And that's exactly what I am doing, I want you to give the answer I expect. And since you don't give that answer, I am holding you here.

TUTUKLU. What's the answer you want from me?

KOMİSER. Should I say it again? Alright. I'm asking you if you wrote the declaration or not. Just say "I wrote it!"

TUTUKLU. I didn't write it.

KOMİSER. Then, tell me who did! (Anday, 2022, p. 24)

In this dialogue, Komiser's use of language seems to adopt a threatening tone which psychologically exerts pressure on Tutuklu. Komiser insists on getting the answer he expects despite Tutuklu's innocence, hence, denial of writing the declaration. The fact that oppression knows no limits is further underlined by the implication that Komiser can keep Tutuklu incarcerated indefinitely until Tutuklu accepts giving the answer Komiser anticipates. As Komiser employs an intimidating language while talking to Tutuklu, the atmosphere between the two is filled with fear and menace. However, as an innocent individual who endures Komiser's psychological torture in a political system that disregards innocence, Tutuklu tries to remain resistant to the oppression and accusation directed at him.

Since they acknowledge themselves as the utmost authorities, both Nicolas and Komiser vehemently refuse any actions by their victims that may challenge their power. Through their use of language, they consistently remind the victims the power imbalance between them and those whom they oppress. In doing so, Nicolas and Komiser repeatedly use the same phrases, stressing their dominance and superiority over their victims. In *One for the Road*, for instance, Nicolas finds it threatening against his authority when Victor stands up:

VICTOR *stands*.

NICOLAS. Sit down.

VICTOR *sits*. (Pinter, 1985, p. 36)

Also, in *İçerdekiler*, Komiser acts in parallel with Nicolas in his purpose of exerting dominance over his victim. Interestingly, he employs the repetitive use of a similar phrase in his dialogues with Tutuklu, underscoring his position as an ultimate power:

KOMİSER. (*Stands up*) Sit, sit... Speak from where you're sitting. (*Seriously*) I don't like anyone standing up in front of me. Speak now!

TUTUKLU. (*His voice is hoarse*) I was saying... (Anday, 2022, p. 39)

The 'sit down' phrase in the plays symbolises the oppressive authority exercised by Nicolas and Komiser over their victims. This phrase is significant in both plays since the act of sitting down endows an inferior posture as the one who sits is confined to a chair and has less mobility while the other one who stands has more control, mobility and hence, superiority in the space they are located. Identifying the sitting or standing posture as a power struggle between Komiser and Tutuklu, Kemerici (2023) observes that, by standing up, "apart from his authoritative power, Komiser reminds himself his physical power too" (p. 38). Therefore, by their repeated use of this phrase, Nicolas and Komiser enhance their dominance, ensuring their victims are reminded of their inferior position in the space they are tortured.

Although Nicolas asserts his ultimate authority by his use of threatening language, it is quite clear that he is only a spokesperson of the state which he unconditionally respects, represents and enthuses over. At one point in the play, Nicolas says: "Do you know the man who runs this country? No? Well, he's a very nice chap" (Pinter, 1985, p. 47). Ironically, the head of the state whom he addresses as 'nice' is eventually responsible for all the violent acts practised against innocent people, showing how crooked impressions may become under oppressive regimes. Nicolas, nevertheless, accepts and exalts the superiority of the man who runs the country; therefore, "[he] becomes a 'mouthpiece' for a [p]ower that always exceeds him" (Silverstein, 1991, p. 429). As a person adopting the rules of the state he is serving, Nicolas has a "blind attachment to the head of the state" (Özmen Akdoğan, 2020, p. 333). Therefore, Nicolas seems to adhere to authority's rule, admitting himself a loyal subject obeying the totalitarian regime's dictation.

Similarly, in *İçerdekiler*, Komiser asserts himself as a powerholder who is able to decide when Tutuklu can be set free but there appears to be some higher authority Komiser is directly responsible to. This is made clear when Komiser receives a call from an unnamed superior who pressurises him to get Tutuklu to confess:

KOMİSER. Yes... (*Talking to his chief*). Yes, sir... No, we couldn't get Tutuklu to talk yet... You're right, sir... It'd be more accurate to say I couldn't get him to talk... I

couldn't... You're right, sir, it's taking a long time. It's almost been one year, sir. [...]
He doesn't talk, sir... He says he doesn't know... We couldn't fulfil our duty... You're
right, it'd be more accurate to say I couldn't fulfil my duty... I couldn't get him to talk...
One request... Can you give me two more days? Thank you, sir... (Anday, 2022, pp.
13-14)

As Kemerci (2020) notes, Komiser's talk to his superior in this scene is "the first moment his authority is broken" (p. 38). Despite all his arrogance and oppressive behaviours towards Tutuklu, this scene shows Komiser as someone being controlled by the authorities since he unquestioningly accepts what his superior says. Contrary to his position in the rest of the play, he seems powerless during the phone call. He even finds himself guilty of not being able to fulfil his mission of drawing a confession from Tutuklu. The totalitarian regimes in both plays are represented through omnipotent figures whom the audience cannot see but whose presence is felt by both the characters and the audience alike. These authorities hold the unquestionable right to do anything they deem right, reducing those living under such regimes to mere subjects serving the maintenance of the regime.

In both plays, the institution of family is targeted at and damaged by these oppressors. The fact that family is so central to the play's argument can be seen in the way Pinter describes it: "that play is about what happens to a family" (Gussow, 1994, p. 92). Throughout the play, Nicolas systematically destroys the family unit by psychologically and physically torturing its members. Very early on in the play it is implied that Victor is exposed to physical torture since "[h]is clothes are torn" and "[h]e is bruised" when he first appears on the stage (Pinter, 1985, p. 31). Like Victor, his wife Gila is also attacked by the oppressive power but because she is a woman, the way she is violated by the system is consistent with the way the female body has been targeted at through patriarchal oppression. The unrealistic and demeaning way in which rape has been imagined in patriarchal fantasy is channelled through the words of Nicolas:

NICOLAS. I think your wife is. Beginning. She is beginning to fall in love with me. On the brink... of doing so. The trouble is, I have rivals. Because everyone here has fallen in love with your wife. It's her eyes have beguiled them. What's her name? Gila... or something? (Pinter, 1985, pp. 49-50)

As one of the sufferers in the family, Gila is raped by not only Nicolas but also the other soldiers in the building. Within the totalitarian and patriarchal world of the play, “Gila is treated as a plaything that might ‘entertain’ soldiers with multiple rape” (Taylor-Batty, 2014, p. 151) and through rape, her mental stability as well as her emotional commitment to her husband and the possibility to maintain a healthy relationship with him are attacked by the oppressive system. On the other hand, the little Nicky is probably killed at the end of the play as Victor uses past tense when he refers to him: “[h]e was a little prick” (Pinter, 1985, p. 79). Suggesting an alternative interpretation on what the system has chosen to do with Nicky, Özmen Akdoğan (2020) notes that “Nicky might also be forcefully transformed into a conformist” (p. 333), implying the fact that Nicolas may want to train Nicky at his young age to support the system in one way or another. This suggestion seems credible especially when the similarity of their names (Nicolas and Nicky) is taken into consideration. In *One for the Road*, each member of the family is punished at the end even if they are set free after all the torture they have endured. The dynamics of the family are corrupted as the parents have both been psychologically and physically traumatised, and the child is either turned into a pawn in the system or tortured to death, both of which imply that their family, as they have maintained it up to that point, will not survive.

Similarly, in *İçerdekiler*, the family institution is damaged through the dynamics of oppressive power. Tutuklu expects his wife to come and visit him; instead, it is his sister-in-law who actually shows up for the visit. On realising that his wife could not make it for the visit, Tutuklu is quite disappointed at first but after shaking off this initial reaction, he seems, no longer, to mind the identity of the visitor since he is only fixated on having a sexual contact with a woman. The sexual desire he feels is actually a yearning for intimacy; it is, nevertheless, also a feeling which transforms him into an oppressor who forces a woman to have sex with him. Tutuklu’s obsessive mental state is caused by his long detention. As the system does not care about innocence and as he has long been exposed to the dynamics of an oppressive system, he emulates this lack of care with his sister-in-law at the risk of losing her respect for him or severing his bonds with his wife and the family members. The rules of his previous family life are no longer valid; in fact, he himself embodies the mechanism to destroy his family. The political oppression of the existing system thus marks his personal and familial life with its own codes.

Although the attack towards the physical integrity of the female body in *One for the Road* takes place off stage, the play successfully illustrates how political oppression may also be rooted in misogyny as patriarchal ideology is often a component of totalitarian regimes. Aiming to portray the destructive impact of oppression on the play's single female character, Pinter creates an image of a woman targeted through verbal and physical torture as a part of political oppression. Gila is raped by the soldiers, apparently multiple times. During the investigation, Nicolas uses the reality of rape to further traumatise Gila:

NICOLAS. How many times?

Pause

How many times have you been raped?

Pause

How many times?

He stands, goes to her, lifts his finger.

This is my big finger. And this is my little finger. Look. I wave them in front of your eyes. Like this. How many times have you been raped?

GILA. I don't know. (Pinter, 1985, pp. 69-72)

Chiasson (2013) categorises this scene as a portrayal of “double rape” including “the actual rape that has been taking place offstage” and “the psychological rape of Gila that takes place in front of us” (p. 89). By his repeated questions about the number of rapes she has endured, Nicolas aims to destroy Gila's mental stability, reminding her the traumatising incidents she has to go through. It is also notable here that Nicolas' fingers function as phallic images. He stresses the terms 'big' and 'little' when he threateningly waves his fingers in front of her. The threat here seems to be related to rape as the fingers may symbolise the phallus in the moment of erection and otherwise. Therefore, by creating a symbolic similarity between his fingers and the penis, Nicolas refers to their act of raping Gila. Based on this, the play underlines how political oppression can employ sexist and patriarchal values that aim to target the integrity of the female body in a sexual way.

Sharing a similar perspective with Pinter, Anday also discovers how oppressive power views woman as a sexual target. In *İçerdekiler*, although Tutuklu is an educated

man, his exposure to political oppression eventually turns him into a potential torturer who tries to satisfy his sexual needs with a woman. The play displays how psychological oppression that Tutuklu faces in the first act, becomes an unsuccessful attempt of rape in the second act as Tutuklu forces Kız to meet his sexual needs. Therefore, considering Tutuklu's transformation from an oppressed individual to an oppressive one, the play indicates the fact that the dominant system is able to corrupt its individuals by validating acts of cruelty and oppression. This shift clearly shows how male-dominated political power holds sexist views leading to the abuse of the systemic integrity of women.

The figure of woman in *İçerdekiler* is regarded as an object whose body and femininity can be exploited with no hesitation by each of the male characters. In the play, the female body, which is presented by Kız, is seen as a tool by Komiser that may possibly help him in his attempt of making Tutuklu confess his so-called offenses. Komiser offers Tutuklu the body of his wife which Tutuklu can sexually abuse for a short time. Thus, by viewing the female body as something that can be used for sexual purposes, Komiser devalues the integrity of female body, directly relating Kız to the act of sexuality by his plan of letting Tutuklu and Kız have sex. In this situation, Komiser views sexuality as "a low-level male entertainment akin to the majority of men in a male-dominated society" as it is evident in his attitude towards Kız and the sexual needs of Tutuklu (Özmen, 2008, p. 54). Therefore, Komiser becomes a representative of misogynist views through his patriarchal consideration of women as sexual tools.

In both plays, the female body and femininity are devalued, harassed and abused. Female characters are not construed as independent human beings; instead, they are forcefully turned into worthless means that help oppressors reach their designated purposes. In *One for the Road*, this purpose is to present the men's political dominance over women by using Gila as a tool of sexual entertainment for Nicolas and other soldiers while in *İçerdekiler*, the purpose is to make Tutuklu confess his offenses. Although the perspective on women is similar in both plays, the female body in *One for the Road* is subjected to oppression solely by the regime itself, whereas in *İçerdekiler*, the female body is oppressed both by the regime who is represented by Komiser and also, to some extent, by Tutuklu, the victim of regime, who is driven into a state of loneliness both by being confined and alienated through lack of communication.

Consequently, the practice of misogyny in *İçerdekiler* is more prominently emphasised compared to the one in *One for the Road*.

Both plays manage to present a terrifying picture of innocence. In *One for the Road*, despite the oppression of Nicolas, all the members of family refuse to be confessors, which strongly suggests the absence of a crime worthy of confession. In oppressive regimes where democracy does not function as it should, the guilt or innocence of a suspect is inconsequential. Anyone with the potential to be labelled as a threat to the regime becomes a menace that should be punished. Each member of the family in *One for the Road* is persecuted to oppression through torture, rape and killing. These unjust and inhumane ways of torture emphasise the notion of innocence, as no individual deserves punishment through such means. Similarly, in *İçerdekiler*, despite being rewarded with sexuality at a moment of utmost need, Tutuklu refuses to confess. However, after engaging in dialogues with Kız in the second scene, the character regains strength and decides to continue his resistance. The fact that Tutuklu has already been incarcerated for nearly a year and is likely to remain so for a considerable period further reinforces the notion of innocence, given his insistent refusal of becoming a confessor.

Conclusion

Harold Pinter and Melih Cevdet Anday illustrate issues related to incarceration in *One for the Road* and *İçerdekiler*, reacting against the political adversities of their times with regard to the plight of innocent people subjected to suffering. The critical approach of both playwrights runs parallel in their depiction of how political oppression maintains itself through physical and psychological torture upon innocent individuals who are targeted by the cruel political agendas. As a playwright who has concerns about the political state of the world, Pinter locates in his play the cruel practises adopted by so many countries, highlighting the fact that such atrocities are universal. Through a similar critical approach towards the way totalitarian government works, Anday points to the problematic actions of incarcerated individuals who are forbidden to have communication with the outside world. Therefore, both plays pursue a universal aim in their themes and shared messages.

In its discussion, this study scrutinises the similarities between the two plays regarding their thematic representations of political oppression, physical and

psychological torture in totalitarian regimes that, by their very nature, cannot tolerate opinions different from those dictated by them. Both plays revolve around an enclosed setting whose location is intentionally left undefined, providing the plays a more universal tone that addresses political oppression as a worldwide issue. Through enclosed settings, the plays successfully establish a closer contact with the audiences, not distracting their focus with complicated settings and places, helping them focus only on the incidents. The characters in the play have to go through torture, which brings to the fore the idea that oppressive regimes do not hold ethical or democratic ways of punishment; instead, their actions violate basic human rights. Moreover, about the way torture targets the characters, this study reveals that in addition to the torture inflicted upon male characters, the male-dominated regime holds sexist views when punishing women, considering them to be sexual objects.

It can be concluded that oppressive regimes may disregard the possibility of innocence tending rather to punish the individuals for crimes they may or may not have committed. Such regimes use unjust methods of torture in violation of the basic human rights. Even though Victor and Gila are set free in the end, their freedom of speech is destroyed by the oppressors as Victor's tongue is cut, Gila is traumatised by rape and Nicky is silenced to death. Also, even though Tutuklu's release from prison remains uncertain, his freedom to speak has been taken away due to all the oppression he faces. Consequently, the overall aim of oppressive regimes seems to put into silence those whom they label as threatening figures because of their possible questioning. Both plays refrain from offering hope regarding this issue; they are, nevertheless, able to present the fact that even in the oppressive regimes, there are still individuals who can question the pressing issues in the country they live in despite the terrifying consequences they may be forced to endure.

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