

## A NEW HISTORICIST APPROACH TO HAROLD PINTER'S *ONE FOR THE ROAD*\*

Ercan KAÇMAZ

English Lecturer, Nevşehir University  
 ercan@nevsehir.edu.tr

### ABSTRACT

Harold Pinter (1930-2008) is one of the most outstanding and important post-war British dramatists. He has written theatre plays, radio plays, screenplays for films, sketches and poems. His plays deal with political matters. Especially his play *One for the Road* (1984) is openly political. Even though Pinter has stated that this play is not about just Turkish state or Turkey itself, quite a large number of critics think that *One for the Road* is about Turkish writers who have no freedom of speech in Turkey. There has been a lack of research on the play in Turkey. Therefore the main concern of this article is to illustrate the ins and outs of this play according to the New Historicist approach and discuss whether it is directly about Turkey or not.

**Keywords:** Theatre, New Historicism, Politics, Playwright, Absurd

## HAROLD PINTER'İN *ONE FOR THE ROAD* ADLI ESERİNE YENİ TARİHSELÇİ BİR YAKLAŞIM

### ÖZET

Harold Pinter (1930-2008), II. Dünya Savaşı sonrası İngiliz tiyatro yazarları arasında en önemli olan ve en fazla göze çarpanlarından biridir. Tiyatro oyunları, radyo oyunları, televizyon için oyunlar, skeçler ve şiirler yazmıştır. Oyunlarının politik boyutları vardır. Özellikle son dönem oyunlarından olan *One for the Road* (*Bir Tek Daha*, 1984) açıkça politiktir. Pinter bu oyunun Türkiye ve Türkiye hükûmetiyle alakalı olmadığını açıklamış olsa da eleştirmenlerin büyük bir kısmı, *One for the Road*'un Türkiye'deki yazarların konuşma özgürlüğünün kısıtlanması hakkında yazılmış bir eser olduğunu düşünmektedir. Bununla birlikte, Türkiye'de bu eser hakkında çok fazla bir araştırma yapılmamıştır. Bundan dolayı, bu makalenin

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ana amacı bu oyunu Yeni Tarihselci bir yaklaşımla çözümleyerek oyunun doğrudan Türkiye hakkında olup olmadığını sorgulamaktır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Tiyatro, Yeni Tarihselcilik, Politika, Oyun Yazarı, Absürt

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Appearing as an alternative approach to textual interpretation, Cultural Poetics—often called the New Historicism in the United States of America and the Cultural Materialism in the Great Britain—states that all history is subjective and cannot be objective, because people’s prejudices and biases affect their interpretation of the past. Thus, history can never give us the truth or a totally exact picture of past events (Bressler, 2003: 181). In some ways the New Historicism and the Cultural Materialism are tangled together, thus they have always been placed alongside each other in anthologies and critical books (Brannigan, 1998: 19-20). To a new historicist or cultural materialist critic, history is not objective enough to explain a literary text. According to them, the aim of the study is not the text and its context, not literature and its history, but rather the literature in history. They think that literature does have powerful effects on history, or vice versa (Brannigan, 1998: 3).

The New Historicism emerged mainly in reaction to the New Criticism and it is a historical approach. It is literary criticism and literary theory based on the principle that a literary work should be considered a product of the time, place, and circumstances of its composition rather than as an isolated creation. It has its roots in a reaction to the “New Criticism” of formal analysis of works of literature. Therefore, the New Criticism is known today as the “old historicism”. In this approach, history serves as a background to literature. The text has the primary importance; the historical background of the text is only secondarily important. There are some basic differences between the new and the old historicism. Peter Barry clearly expounds them as such:

-The practice of giving ‘equal weighting’ to literary and non-literary material is the first and major difference between the ‘new’ and the ‘old’ historicism.

-A second important difference between old and new historicisms is [...] that new historicism is indeed a historicist rather than a historical movement. (1995: 174-175)

The American branch of Cultural Poetics is often called as the New Historicism. Stephen Greenblatt, the founder of the branch, whose book *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: from More to Shakespeare* (1980) is generally

regarded as its beginning, thinks that one's culture pervades both texts and critics. The New Historicists believe that they cannot ignore public and private cultural influences. Less openly political than its British counterpart, New Historicism continues to be refined and redefined by many practitioners, such as Clifford James Geertz, Catherine Gallagher, Jonathan Dollimore and Louis Montrose.

The New Historicism is a method based on the parallel reading of literary and non-literary texts, usually of the same historical period. The American critic Louis Montrose defines it as "the textuality of history, the historicity of texts" (Barry, 1995: 172), which means the New Historicism refuses to separate literary texts from non-literary texts. The New Historicists recognize all texts, whether they are literary or non-literary, as cultural artifacts. Therefore, from the point of view of a New Historicist, it is essential to understand the culture and the society that helped produce the text.

The New Historicism is a method of critical interpretation which privileges power relations as the most significant context for texts of all kinds (Brannigan, 1998: 6). The New Historicists accept the difference between primary and secondary sources. That is to say, the challenge to rebuild the past on the basis of primary source material is deconstructed by the New Historicism demystifying its textuality (Öztürk, 2003: 2).

The term "cultural materialism" was used in 1985 by Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield as the subtitle of their edited collection of essays *Political Shakespeare* (Barry, 1995: 182). Two critics dominate literary studies in 1950s Britain, Raymond Williams and F. R. Leavis. Both Leavis and Williams were the founders of the professionalised discipline of literary studies as we know it today. According to Williams, for instance, literature was not the highest expression of human nature. Actually it was a changing social practice (Brannigan, 1998: 38-39).

## 2. THE PLAY AND ITS POLITICS AND ABUSE OF POWER

There are speculations whether *One for the Road* is mainly about Turkey or not. Harold Pinter himself has rejected the idea quite a lot of times but people are still of the opinion that Pinter is telling some important things about Turkey in the play. With this study we will first try to rediscover whether the play is really about Turkey or not. To do this, we will take non-literary works into consideration. Thus, the New Historicist approach will give way to focus on the context related to the text.

Secondly, this study is an investigation into Pinter's habit of delivering his political thoughts through his plays. Nearly all of Pinter's approximately thirty plays contain political elements. In *One for the Road*,

from the standpoint of the New Historicism, politics and abuse of power are of vital importance, because both these discourses and the play belong to the same epoch. Therefore, we will compare what Pinter declares in his play with what happened in Turkey during the recession. As the New Historicism proposes, we will interpret a literary text in its historical context.

*One for the Road* is a one-act, “overtly-political” play which was written and performed in 1984. Beyond being a play it is a “political booklet” (Esslin, 2000: 207). The play is about the interrogation of three people who have different thoughts and ideas about the state in power. However, there is no definite indication that the interrogees are having an attempt to undo that state power. The play has four short scenes and its performance time is about half an hour, which is pretty short in terms of time, but quite long in terms of its subject matter. There are just four characters. The main character is Nicholas, the interrogator, and we observe him having professional chats with three of his victims: a horribly tortured dissident, Victor; the dissident’s wife Gila who has been subjected to all kinds of cruelty, including gang rape; and their eight-year-old son Nicky whom Nicholas finally has put to death, a fact he declares to the father in the last lines of the play (Gray, 1985: 54). There are other people around the institution, but the names of the soldiers are not revealed.

One of the main characters, Nicolas, has the leading role. He is the only authority to decide on any subject. He serves the regime and thinks that he has connection to the Divine Power: “God speaks through me. I’m referring to the Old Testament God, by the way, although I’m a long way from being Jewish” (Pinter, 1985a: 366). Nicolas’s frequent addresses to God might imply a non-Communist country formation, yet these mentions of the Almighty might also only be ironical mockery (Esslin, 2000: 208). Simon Gray maintains that

we can’t simply revel in this moral monster, if we’re also forced to look at the man he’s had tortured, the woman he’s had violated, their child whose murder he announces in the last line of the play [...] [P]erhaps Harold’s channelling of Nicholas’s malevolent exuberance into merely lethal efficiency was the only possible solution. (1985: 71)

The leader, the ruler, the manager, the boss, above all the torturer Nicolas is having a bit odd conversation with the victims. Not only does he ask silly questions but also he totally abuses the family in all aspects. Victor, on the other hand, is an intellectual, a man of letters, the father of the family, and a silent man. His name does not bring him victory. The ironically named father (Grimes and Teaneck, 2005: 81), Victor is quiet during the play and dumb at the end of it. Because his tongue has been cut out:

NICOLAS

I can't hear you.

VICTOR

It's my mouth.

NICOLAS

Mouth?

VICTOR

Tongue.

NICOLAS

What's the matter with it?

*Pause.* (Pinter, 1985a: 385-386)

Victor is confronted with brutality in its most cruel form. The reason is that he seems to be an intellectual and he is always critical of the state's values, which a dictatorial regime would regard as a threat to the state's integrity (Yerebakan, 1997: 96). Penelope Prentice insists that "Written in response to his outrage against Turkish academics being detained and tortured for political views, the play dramatizes for the first time in Pinter's work people without choice or defence against such abuse." (1991: 28).

The tortures taking place in the play and the attitudes of the torturers explicitly illustrate a new political emphasis on the use and abuse of authority. For example, Nicolas says "I run the place" (Pinter, 1985a: 366) to mention his authority then adds "I can do absolutely anything I like" (365) to cite his power which is actually abuse of power. Pinter does not imply something which would be deduced by the reader; conversely he abruptly shocks the reader with the sharpness of the actions and the indisputability of the thrilling atmosphere.

Surely, in the play, Pinter demonstrates a disagreement between "power and powerlessness, between voice and voicelessness" (Grimes and Teaneck, 2005: 81). It is understood that Nicolas's soldiers vandalize Victor's home, rape his wife and kill his son. But the location of the play is a conventional business office, nationality of the characters is left blank, and the reason for this torture, from the interrogator's point of view, is that Victor is "on a losing wicket" and he is not "a patriot" (Innes, 2002: 332). With the nationality of the sufferers left plain and with their non-specific multinational names, Pinter may be trying to justify his overall conviction that the world is gradually becoming a police state. Here, the point is that Pinter avoids making any reference to a particular regime or a particular

country. He uses malicious kinds of torture against the people in the play (Yerebakan, 1997: 91).

Yet, for the original country of the play Prentice states that “The forty-five minute play could be set in any one of the ninety countries, documented by the United Nations and Amnesty International, in which torture is routinely practiced during imprisonment” (2000: 273). And for many critics the setting of the play is a matter of debate. It could take in an unspecified country (South Africa? Turkey? Albania? America? England? Almost anywhere in the world) (Gray, 1985: 54). Many writers use “unspecified” for the country but when it comes to the setting of the play they say it is a “police state”.

There have still been discussions about whether the play is about Turkey and Turkish dictatorial regimes or not. We have therefore, using the play as our major source, found out the facts with the help of the sources according to the New Historicist criticism. When the date of the play, the subject matter it reflects and the background of the author are taken into account, military coups, the suppression of the powerful over the powerless, civilian, and civilized people, and the abuse of power have gained great importance.

The alleged reason by the military, headed by General Kenan Evren, for the coup in 1980 in Turkey was to put an end to the social conflicts of the 1970s, as well as parliamentary instability. The US-support of this coup was acknowledged by the CIA Ankara office chief Paul Henze. After the government was overthrown, Henze cabled Washington, saying, “your boys have done it” (Birand, 1985: 286). This has created the impression that the USA stood behind the coup. In his book *12 Eylül Saat: 04:00* (12<sup>th</sup> September, 4 o'clock) Mehmet Ali Birand described how Paul Henze, advisor on Turkey to the National Security Council of the USA, informed President Jimmy Carter about the coup in Turkey (1985: 286). Süleyman Demirel, prime minister at the time, in his interview with Cüneyt Arcayürek supports the idea and tells about the cable to be true (1990: 533).

After the approval by referendum of the new Constitution in June 1982, Kenan Evren organized general elections, held on November 6, 1983. However, the referendum and the elections are not believed to have taken place in a free and competitive setting. Many political leaders of pre-coup era (including Süleyman Demirel, Bülent Ecevit, Alparslan Türkeş and Necmettin Erbakan) had been banned from politics, and all new parties needed to get the approval of the National Security Council in order to participate in the elections. Only 3 parties, two of which were actually established by the ruling military regime were allowed to participate in the elections.

After all those coups and constitutions one thing gains importance: the violation of human rights issue. 7,000 people were charged with capital punishment, 517 were sentenced to death and 49 of them were executed. 300 people died in a suspicious way, 171 people died of violence, 14 people went on hunger strike and died, 650,000 people were detained on political grounds. In 210 thousand cases 230 thousand people underwent trials. 1,683 people were indexed on cards. 388 people were not allowed to get passports. 30 thousand people were made redundant. 3,854 teachers, 120 university lecturers and 47 judges were dismissed (Tanör, 1997: 91-92).

In the interview with Arcayürek, Demirel replies the questions one by one and clearly explains the ins and outs of the terror and the result of it and the death toll (1990: 450, 454-455). In the same interview, Demirel states that according to one of the reports of the UN in 1985 there are military governments in 56 countries (432). Mostly the military coups happen in underdeveloped countries; but, according to Pinter, there is always a power behind these coups and that power is the USA (Pinter, 2005: 235).

The drive behind *One for the Road* was Pinter's concern for official torture practised by quite a lot of governments. Pinter has dealt with political issues and abuse of power in the countries worldwide. From his early career on, he has been an active person to support the weak countries and the political prisoners. Therefore, he has elaborated upon the brutal side of life in his political work *One for the Road*.

In terms of actual physical cruelty, the play contains murder, torture, verbal abuse, and maltreatment (Yerebakan: 1997: 96). In the play the cruel sides of life are shown and told. Firstly, the descriptions of the people inform us about the physical violence: "VICTOR walks in, slowly. His clothes are torn. He is bruised" (Pinter, 1985a: 365). "GILA standing. Her clothes are torn. She is bruised" (378). Secondly, Nicolas says of Nicky: "He's a little prick" (384). Thirdly, when it comes to rape, even if Gila is "menstruating" (372) Nicolas asks these questions: "Have they been raping you? How many times have you been raped?" (383).

All the harsh realities of life exist in the play with some maltreatment and abuse. What is actually interesting about this play is that it is about the control and power of the torturer. Gray gives us some clues about the thoughts of Harold Pinter while he was writing this play: "It should hardly come as a surprise that Harold is (a) against torture, (b) against totalitarian regimes. What he's making is surely a demand. Look at this—this is what goes on, daily, in this country and that. Look, and see what it really means to be in the power of such people" (1985: 71).

The most bewildering feature of the play, however, is the fact that the interrogator noticeably does not try to obtain either information or a

confession from his victim. While he upsets Victor with clues about the fate of his wife and son, he does not use such threats to blackmail him into any of the significant objectives. What is shown is unalleviated sadism, mental and physical torture and finally the murder of an innocent child. Although there is no concrete clue to accuse Victor of being guilty, he is being interrogated as if the interrogators had some overtly designating clues which are enough to punish (Esslin, 2000: 208-209).

When they start talking about the soldiers, we have the information that Nicky does not mind being a soldier when he grows up. Unfortunately, Nicolas will not forgive Nicky, because he has “kicked” his soldiers and “spat” at them. One poignant question comes from Nicky: “Were they your soldiers?” (Pinter, 1985a: 377). Nicky clearly depicts his disgust and says: “I didn’t like those soldiers” (377). Nicolas would immediately attack with this reply: “They don’t like you either, my darling” (377). This outrage results in loss of life. Finally, Nicolas has Nicky killed, Victor left the place alone and Gila stayed at the police station to serve them.

When abuse of power is concerned, Edward J. Tully explains it step by step focusing on all phases of one’s life. According to him a lot of evidence suggests that when the rules and regulations of a society are severely enforced, the number of people committing serious infractions is considerably reduced. Misconduct, corruption, and abuse of power incidents in law enforcement do not just occur out of the blue. It is fairly rare that one finds a rookie officer involved in a serious trouble of misconduct. Usually it takes a number of years for a small number of law enforcement officers to develop the bad habits that lead to the poor judgment—which is what underlies nearly every case. It goes without saying that the lives of the officers who are found guilty of misconduct, corruption, or abuse of power are totally ruined. Loss of job, career, status, friends, and respect are just a few of the small consequences. Major consequences could involve loss of family or time in jail (Tully, 1998: 1).

Police officers have been given great powers by the community in order to properly discharge their responsibilities. This power is made more evident by the uniform and the badge worn by police officers. These powers, like all forms of power, are subject to corruption and abuse particularly by individuals who misjudge the significance of power and underestimate the responsibilities that individuals have. The most serious mistake made by law enforcement officers is that they do not comprehend the limitations of power (Tully, 1998: 1).

Another general mistake occurs when officers with incomplete personalities use their power to increase their personal inadequacies. In other words, they take advantage of the powers they have to supplement themselves at the expense of others. This type of maltreatment may take the



form of obtaining sex, money, or by demeaning others, physically or psychologically, for their own psychological need or satisfaction. Misusing power for individual satisfaction eventually leads to increasing levels of corruption. At some point, this type of person in law enforcement steps across the line and the conduct becomes criminal in nature (Tully, 1998: 1).

From the very beginning of the play we understand that Nicolas, a member of the regime and the officer, is giving orders. The following sentences show the power of 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.

*He laughs.*

Do you think waving fingers in front of people's eyes is silly? I can see your point. You're a man of the highest intelligence. But would you take the same view if it was my boot—or my penis? (Pinter, 1985a: 365)

This last sentence directly gets the reader's attention. During the interrogation Nicolas wants Victor to do and to obey what he orders; accordingly Victor, who has no other choice, just does so:

Stand up.

VICTOR *stands*.

Sit down.

VICTOR *sits*. (Pinter, 1985a: 366-367)

Everyone in the world is seeking for respect as Nicolas is, but with his brutal attitudes it is hard to believe that Victor will respect him. When he asks "You do respect me, I take it?" (Pinter, 1985a: 367), Victor says with a low voice "I don't know you" (367). No matter how low he says the sentence, he will eventually say it aloud that he respects him. Because if he does the opposite Nicolas will think he is "unique" (368). Nicolas has the idea that due to his position everyone is supposed to obey what he says. Otherwise they will be considered as unusual.

The next thing apart from torture what Nicolas and his men do to the family is sexual abuse. He asks questions about the sexual habits of his wife, Gila:

Does she . . . fuck? Or does she . . . ? Or does she . . . like . . . you know . . . what? What does she like? I'm talking about your wife. Your wife.

*Pause.*

You know the old joke? Does she fuck?

*Heavily, in another voice:*

Does she fuck!

*He laughs.*

It's ambiguous, of course. It could mean she fucks like a rabbit or she fucks not at all.

*Pause.*

Well, we're all God's creatures. Even your wife. (Pinter, 1985a: 371)

After directing some bothering questions about their private lives Nicolas looks down on Victor's wife. No matter how much resistant he is to accept them as people like him, he, unwillingly, confirms her being a God's creature. By the way, Pinter uses pauses instead of a reply and does this so often. As the conversation, but one way, goes on we confront that "the captive Victor—whose house has been ransacked, his books rifled, his rugs pissed on" (Esslin, 2000: 208) by some of the boys of Nicolas—is shown unaware of the things going on. He tells that pissing is just a kind of responsibility. We may also notice that Victor does not know what has happened to his seven or so year-old son, Nicky.

And when Nicolas starts talking about Gila, he goes beyond the boundaries. He tells this to Victor: "Your wife and I had a very nice chat but I couldn't help noticing she didn't look her best. She's probably menstruating" (Pinter, 1985a: 372). The most shocking sentence for Victor comes at a later time of their conversation. Nicolas wants to learn if he loves him or not but without waiting for the answer he says: "I think your wife is [...] beginning to fall in love with me" (372). He adds that he has "rivals" (372) because his men are also in love with Gila. "We are all patriots, we are as one, we all share a common heritage. Except you, apparently" (373). "Kill me" is Victor's first spontaneous statement (373), and from that we glimpse the extremity of his anguish and hopelessness (Prentice, 2000: 279).

Sharing a common heritage, commonwealth and being a patriot will solve the problem for Nicolas. To get rid of this despair Nicolas gives a recipe: "Chop the balls off and despair goes out the window" (Pinter, 1985a: 374). Those who are after ranks, positions will be in favour of the rooms, the chairs and even the tables. Therefore Nicolas is in his "only" room giving orders and doing the interrogations.

The following scene shows us that Nicolas and his soldiers are really cruel, barbarian, merciless, rude. Gila enters the room with bruises and torn clothes. The implication is that she has been raped by the men working in the

building (Wandor, 1993: 26). Nicolas gets angry and wants to learn where she thinks she is and asks whether the place is a “hospital” or not and if they have “nuns upstairs”. After all of those nonsense questions, he goes back to reality and tells again of the bad things happened to her “upstairs”:

NICOLAS

[...]

Do you think we have nuns upstairs?

*Pause.*

GILA

No nuns.

NICOLAS

What do we have?

GILA

Men.

NICOLAS

Have they been raping you?

*She stares at him.*

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? (Pinter, 1985a: 383-384).

Another shocking thing for Victor is the fact that his son was killed by the men. Because it is highly understandable that Nicolas says “Your son? Oh, don’t worry about him. He was a little prick” (Pinter, 1985a: 387). He uses past tense here referring that his son was frank and did not obey the rules and has been killed. It reflects that Nicolas’s words hold the power to kill by shifting his speech from present tense to past tense which clearly transforms Nicolas into an executioner or terminator (Yerebakan, 1997: 99). D. Keith Peacock evinces that

*One for the Road* takes the form of a series of economical images. These are concerned with various facets of the nature of power and

powerlessness. Each of these facets is formed around a typically “Pinteresque” tableau made up of various permutations of seated and standing figures. That, after the opening scene, the characters neither enter nor leave the stage produces the effect of shots in a screenplay. In this play the violence remains offstage; its threat and results are, nevertheless, very clearly represented by the physical condition of the detainees, who have evidently undergone torture (1997: 141).

The interesting thing about the murder is that, Nicky is killed although he has not the ability to commit a serious crime as he is just a little boy. On the contrary, it is Nicolas who commits a crime. He is not punished for his action and perhaps is praised by the state since he is thought to be serving the state. Most probably he has the child killed to prevent his educated family from bringing up another potential intellectual who will be a threat to the state in the future (Ergüder, 1998: 112). Susan Hollis Merritt expostulates about the performance she saw: “Several people walked out midway through performances of *One for the Road* that I attended in New York City and Portland, Oregon [...] Apparently, some could not tolerate the physical and verbal abuse on stage” (1990: 142). That the audience could not bear seeing the tortures occurring in the performance illustrates the brutal side of the play.

In the play “[w]hat is dramatised is not the physical torture, murder and rape so frequently referred to in critical discussion, but the processes of self-justification they promote and the differing consequences for the oppressors and the oppressed of their limited persuasiveness” (Quigley, 2001: 10). On the other hand, Gila is of almost no significance to him Nicolas because he keeps Victor under control, under arrest. Nicolas gives a chance to her for Victor’s release and that is to “entertain” the soldiers some more. Pinter’s many other women characters also take the form of mother-whore combination. Sometimes, this combination is further complicated by the role of wife. This grouping has different variants such as wife-mother, wife-whore (Yan, 2003: 174).

People who are under control and who are in power have to have straight faces, but they are also human beings; it is not that they like the position they are in, it is just they are forced to assume it. On the one hand Nicolas is a torturer but on the other hand he likes other things such as “Nature. Trees, things like that. A nice blue sky. Blossom” (Pinter, 1985a: 372).

The play does not have a happy ending like most of Pinter’s political plays. Moreover there is death at the end of the play, which shows the cruel

side of the so-called state and its brutal officer. So far we have focused on the violence and abuse of power in the play and tried to reveal that the play shows the unwanted reality of the misconduct, corruption and abuse of power. We have also dealt with military coup d'état in Turkey especially the one that took place in 1980. With some literary and non-literary texts we have had the chance to compare the play's location, and the relations with Turkey and Turkish society.

### 3. CONCLUSION

A careful analysis of Harold Pinter's play, *One for the Road*, shows that the political side of Harold Pinter is highly visible in the play. It is therefore easy to see the elements of Pinter's social and cultural background in his early political plays. When he was struggling as an actor he was leading a poor life in cheap first-floor flats with his wife Vivien Merchant. His own situation became the theme of his plays. Pinter grew up in London during the Cold War. He recalls those days by saying "I was terribly disturbed as a young man by the Cold War. And McCarthyism. I smelt that American thing a mile off, actually. And it was very strong [...] 'They' the monsters, 'we' the good. In 1948 the Russian suppression of Eastern Europe was an obvious and brutal fact" (Pinter, 1985b: 9).

In the 1980s as a result of his own experiences and concerns as a social activist Pinter began to write political plays which dealt with national and international public events. Actually, his recent political works are not the result of a sudden political awakening. Pinter has had political awareness so far. As a young man after World War II, for instance, he refused to serve in the army and declared himself as a "conscientious objector" because of the political situations in the country (Pinter, 1985b: 9). However, this was not the only political activity which directly found place in his plays.

He was an active member of the Amnesty International. As the vice president of the English PEN, he visited many countries including Turkey. So, events in the United Kingdom, America, Turkey and elsewhere made him become aware of the urgent need for public commitment. Therefore with these political plays, Pinter shows his protest against injustice, torture, and the abuse of human rights throughout the world.

In his early plays, Pinter employed subject matters which have traditional plot organisations. His characters in his early plays are typical mother or father figures. Later he develops his characters that are much more eloquent. They have more depth than his early characters. In his recent works there are stereotypical characters again and these characters represent all human beings whose rights are being abused by the authorities.

Pinter mostly used inner settings in his plays. For instance, the setting for *One for the Road* is a small room. On the other hand his characters use the language ironically to hide the details about themselves. The language in these plays is also used as a weapon to attack. Since these plays are full of repetitions it may be a tool for comedy.

According to Edward Said there is always a tendency to know something about “the other”. He thinks that “the other” is eccentric for “the self” but at the same time it is conquerable and inferior and easily criticised. (Said, 1991: 14, 71-159). Pinter criticises others by easily taking the role of “the self”. It is always easy to criticise “the other”. It is not very important whether you really like to ask questions for “the other” but you keep asking (questions). It is easy to be good, but to be equal and fair is not that easy. When you are an alien in a particular society you think you have the right to devote your whole time to topics that are crucial for you but mostly you choose these topics from “the other” addressing to your own. You, most of the time, and deliberately, deal with such issues just to show your interest in those topics. If you are a writer or a poet you feel that it is one of your major goals to write on these subjects. You stand by “the self” and stand against “the other”.

Harold Pinter is dealing with universal issues. Conversely, it is still the issue of “the other”. He may find topics concerning his own country. He may criticise his prime minister. He may not like the current system in his country and write about these issues. But when it comes to write something about other countries, it is not the same. Because it means he is writing about “the other”. Therefore, to us, writing for “the self” and for “the other” is totally different, especially if the politics are concerned.

To sum up, it can be said that whatever happens in the play could also be happening at any time, in any place or in any country. Pinter has not mentioned the country of the play on purpose, trying to give us some worldwide messages. Therefore one can say that this play somehow reflects the problems of Turkey. But one should also recognize the fact that the topics Pinter has chosen are not unique to one particular country. One can find places in the world where one might come across similar problems. The study reveals that *One for the Road* does not take place in Turkey. The names of the characters are not Turkish. The country or the location is not mentioned. The religion mentioned in the play is Jewish which is a lot more different from Islam. The torturer, Nicolas, drinks whisky throughout the play, which is not a Turkish custom; especially police officers in Turkey are not allowed to get alcohol when on duty.

Consequently, in this play there is abuse of power, state terrorism, cruelty and torture. The play is about oppressive regimes. These issues are all universal issues. Where there are human beings, there is abuse of power

and this could be true for any country including Turkey. We may notice abuse of power even in our homes, let alone our countries. For this reason the play may have reflections from Turkey, from any country in the world, but it is not directly about Turkey at all.

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