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# Violence as a Coercive Tool to Establish State Control in Harold Pinter's One for the Road

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## Abstract

After Harold Pinter became a member of PEN and Amnesty International in the early 1980s, he grew interested in global politics and started to openly speak up against human rights violations present in several countries of the world. Then, in 1984, he published *One for the Road*, which is considered his first overtly political play. Taking place in an unnamed country and historical period to preserve its universality, the play portrays the torture and violence practised by totalitarian regimes against political dissidents. This study examines the use of various forms of violence in the text and analyses their role as the means to establish state control over nonconforming individuals, break their will and coerce them into submission. For this purpose, a socio-political approach is used by employing the Norwegian sociologist Johan Galtung's theory on violence. The detailed analysis of the play reveals that tyrannical systems dehumanise and debase noncomplying citizens using political ideology as an excuse so that imprisoning and torturing them becomes justifiable.

**Keywords:** Pinter, *One for the Road*, violence, state control, Galtung.

## Introduction:

For the first part of his career, the works of the British playwright, screenplay writer and director Harold Pinter occurred on a social plane (Burkman, 1971). His early plays were mostly referred to as *comedies of menace*, a term defined as "a kind of play in which one or more characters feel that they are (or actually are) threatened by some obscure and frightening force, power, personality, etc. The fear and the menace become a source of comedy, albeit laconic, grim or black." (Cuddon et al., 2013, p. 139). After the early 1980s, and under the influence of being a PEN[1] and Amnesty International[2] member, Pinter's works took a new turn. He abandoned his early reserved attitude to global politics and started to outspokenly advocate human rights and condemn all kinds of oppression and violations of freedoms everywhere in the world (Gussow, 1996). The result of this was a number of political plays and sketches: *Precisely* (1983), *One for the Road* (1984), *Mountain Language* (1988), *Party Time* (1991), and *The New World Order* (1992). The current study examines *One for the Road* using Johan Galtung's theory of violence. It argues that establishing state control through violence is a visible theme in this play where non-conforming citizens are coerced into submission to state authority through various forms of violence.

## Galtung and the Concept of Violence:

The Norwegian sociologist Johan Vincent Galtung is recognised worldwide as the founder of peace and conflict studies (Tavares, 2011). His first contribution to the field was an article titled 'Violence, Peace, and Peace Research' published in 1969 where he identified two main types of violence: personal violence, also referred to as direct violence and structural violence. Later, he introduced cultural violence. Galtung states that violence can either be personal when directly committed by a person or persons, or it can be structural when integrated into the structure manifesting as unequal power and subsequently as unequal opportunities (Bufacchi, 2005). To Galtung (1969), violence happens "when human beings are being influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realizations are below their potential realizations." (p. 168) In other words, violence is what interferes with the physical/mental state of humans to the extent that what they achieve is below their potential. However, this only applies when the actual is avoidable, that is, one could avoid that somatic or mental realisation by allowing them better options or receiving better treatment. If the actual realisation cannot be avoided, there is no violence. For example, when someone died of tuberculosis in the eighteenth century when there were no antibiotics, their death was not the result of structural violence while someone dying of

tuberculosis despite the advances in health resources today is the result of the inequality that structural violence produces.

Based on the relationship between the components of violence that he refers to as the terms *subject*, *object*, and *action*, Galtung (1969) lists six dimensions of violence that are based on six distinctions: First, the distinction between physical and psychological violence. He considers physical harm to the extent of killing, and actions that reduce physical capability to below potential or constrain movement, including denying one access to modes of transportation, physical violence while he argues that psychological violence is "lies, brainwashing, indoctrination of various kinds, threats, etc. that serve to decrease mental potentialities" (1969, p. 169). Secondly, there is the distinction between using a negative or both a negative and positive approach, that is, whether the person only avoids punishment when they comply or whether they are also rewarded. The third dimension is based on whether there is a direct object hurt by violence or not, such as breaking things which can be a form of psychological violence if the broken object is used as a replacement for the person threatened with violence or if the object is dear and valuable to the owner. The fourth dimension presents the main difference between personal violence and structural violence where the presence of an actor indicates direct violence and its absence means structural violence. As Galtung (1969) explains, both cases of violence can lead to hurting or killing individuals and both can also manipulate them through reward and punishment methods, but in the case of structural violence, we cannot trace violence back to the actor that committed it because it is built into the system and it manifests as inequality in opportunities, such as inequality in the distribution of income, education, medical services, and resources. The fifth dimension discusses whether violence is intended or not and the sixth dimension addresses the levels of violence, that is, whether violence is manifest or latent and whether it can be observed or it emerges later. Galtung (1969) notes that violence can be characterised by any arrangement of the six dimensions, with the only main distinction of personal and structural violence. In other words, both can have any of the other mentioned qualities, such as being intended or not, having a positive or a negative approach, being manifest or latent…etc.

Galtung (1969) also introduces the means of violence. He argues that direct violence can use means that work on the body, affecting its anatomy. This includes various violent acts directed at the physical body ranging from fist fighting to the use of more advanced methods like nuclear weapons. Additionally, this way of employing violence can be by individuals or groups, crowds, mobs, and even guerrilla and army warfare. In Pinter's *One*

*for the Road*, the torn clothes and the bruises on the bodies of the characters indicate the use of personal physical violence. Personal violence can also work on the body by working on its physiology by either preventing it from having access to resources like food, water, sleep and air or by restricting the body's movement. Pinter's work includes hints at this method of violence as well. Galtung (1969, p. 175), however, finds it hard to separate physical violence from psychological violence since both can have effects on both the mind and the body, for example, psychological violence can restrict movement and physical violence almost always affects one's mental well-being. In Pinter's play, both forms are used against the characters as will be discussed in this paper.

For structural violence, Galtung (1969) asserts that its main tool is inequality in the distribution of many things and "above all in the distribution of power" (p. 175). He suggests that this inequality can be perceived in the context of social structures where violent structures are built and organised in a way that inequality in power distribution creates inequality in the distribution of resources and opportunities to such an extent that both the physical and mental well-being of the objects is severely affected.

However, when it comes to the question of whether personal and structural violence are linked or independent of each other, Galtung (1969) argues that both types of violence are "empirically independent" (p. 178) because even if the structural violence is directly committed by an agent, what concerns us is the "objective consequences, not the subjective intentions." (p. 178) That is, it is not about how the players on both ends of the violent act perceive the violence; it is about whether there is an indirect structural link between them or not, i.e., a system that directs the actor to commit the violent act. Furthermore, Galtung (1969) suggests that both types of violence can change or "shade into" one another, but he emphasises that they are not "empirically connected." (p. 182). In *One for the Road*, Nicolas is a state official who follows the orders of a violent structure, therefore, the violence present in the play is not structural in its raw form. Instead, the state employs cultural violence, which will be explained shortly, to legitimise the use of direct violence by state agents like Nicolas against certain citizens it has deemed unworthy of equal rights and protection. However, there is a reference to structural violence within the system in the last scene of the play.

In his other article, 'Cultural Violence', published in 1990, Galtung introduces cultural violence, defining it as, "any aspect of a culture that can be used to legitimize violence in its direct or structural form" (p. 291). He observes that direct and structural violence can appear right when viewed through the lenses of cultural violence since it uses the

psychological method of internalisation. One of the common ways to do this, according to Galtung (1990. P. 292), is by changing how certain violent acts are morally perceived by changing their notion from wrong to right or at least to acceptable, such as, it is unacceptable to commit murder for personal reasons, but it is acceptable to do it in the name of the state as in the time of war. Furthermore, he suggests that violence can be legitimised by making its reality so unclear that we can no longer recognise it as violence, such as the act of induced abortion.

Galtung (1990) then defines violence in a new light as "avoidable insults to basic human needs, and more generally to life, lowering the real level of needs satisfaction below what is potentially possible" (p. 292). Based on this, he presents a typology of violence where there are four classes of needs: survival needs that when denied, lead to death; well-being needs that when denied, lead to illness and misery; identity needs that when denied, lead to alienation, and freedom needs that when denied, lead to repression. He also suggests a fifth class, which he calls ecological balance. When this one is damaged, it affects the well-being and survival of all living things whether human or non-human.

While killing is the main tool for violating survival needs, for well-being needs, maiming or using sieges, blockades and sanctions are the tools since in the longer term, they cause death by causing malnutrition and illnesses due to lack of access to resources and medical care. Alienation, on the other hand, happens when an aspect of a culture is internalised so that a subject is "desocialized away from own culture and … resocialized into another culture - like the prohibition and imposition of languages." (Galtung, 1990, p. 293) These two practices do not necessarily presuppose one another but as Gultung (1990, p. 293) suggests, this is what happens when denial of identity needs leads to a second-class citizenship kind of violence. In this case, individuals and groups are forced to display the culture that dominates them instead of their own, at least publically. Lastly, freedom needs are violated when repression occurs manifesting as either imprisonment or detention or as expulsion, as in the case of banishment.

Violating the four basic human needs through structural violence, according to Galtung (1990), is mainly through exploitation. Specifically, the interactions that occur within an exploitive structure, as the *top-dogs* gain so many more of their needs compared to the *underdogs*. In these structures, the *underdogs* may be so underprivileged that they starve or die from illnesses, or they may live in constant misery, such as always suffering from malnutrition and illnesses as in developing countries where many individuals face avoidable premature death from certain illnesses. Exploitation can also have psychological

effects that are represented by four elements in the structure. The first two hinder identity needs, which are *penetration* and *segmentation* while the last two affect freedom needs, which are *marginalisation* and *fragmentation*. Galtung (1990) suggests that these elements work by "impeding consciousness formation and mobilization" (p. 294) which are two prerequisites for resisting exploitation. The first term, penetration, means that the *top-dogs* infiltrate the lines of the *underdogs*. Using that element with segmentation, that is, letting the *underdogs* have a very limited view of reality, leads to preventing consciousness from developing. Marginalisation, on the other hand, means that the *underdogs* are kept outside on the margins of society. Combining that with fragmentation that is, keeping the *underdogs* divided and disconnected, results in preventing consciousness mobilisation.

When it comes to the flow of these three types of violence, there is a causal connection between them where for example, cultural violence can make way for structural violence, which may then lead to direct violence. Namely, a culture can promote exploitation using tactics that make it appear normal to us, or it can even prevent us from recognising it in the first place. Later, various means of direct violence are used to either escape that structure or maintain it (Galtung, 1990, p. 295).

Galtung (1990, p. 296) then lists six domains through which cultural violence is practiced: religion and ideology, language and art, and empirical and formal sciences. Only the first two will be explained due to their relevance to the current study.

For religion, Galtung (1990) explains how the idea of transcendentalism in some religions like Judaism and Christianity, which introduce God as outside us, leads to the assumption that some people can be closer to God than others and thus, be higher than them. Consequently, this gives birth to the notion of God's chosen people who will be saved and go to heaven, leaving everyone outside that religion for Satan to suffer in hell. This then leads to a greater issue, which is creating heaven and hell on earth where some groups thrive and prosper on the account of another and "Misery/luxury can be seen as preparations for Hell/Heaven - and social class as the finger of God." (Galtung, 1990, p. 297) In other words, social inequality and exploitation are legitimised through religion, which is used to justify them. Accordingly, the idea of being closer to God or chosen by Him is used to justify direct and structural violence, producing cultural violence. For instance, the idea of a chosen nation leads to imperialism, like Israel's oppression of Palestinians.

The second domain Galtung (1990) examines is ideology. In a secular world, religion is replaced by political ideologies and the modern state assumes the position of God.

Consequently, the idea of the *chosen* and *unchosen* is replaced by the *self* and the *other*. In this domain, the value of the self is inflated and praised at the expense of the other who is devalued and debased to the point where being debased becomes the excuse for exploiting them by structural violence. This exploitation then dehumanises them to the point where they become an *It* and hence, become the subject of all forms of direct violence, including extermination. However, while in the previous domain, the idea of closeness to God was the source of power for the chosen, here it is self-reflection. For example, the white race finds itself more civilised and genetically superior than the non-white races. This, to Galtung (1990), creates a hierarchy where the term "equal opportunity" means "the best are at the top and hence entitled to power and privilege" (p. 298) leading to inequality and exploitation such as speciesism (against animals), sexism, nationalism, imperialism, racism, classism, and meritism, that are all residues from the idea of being chosen.

Galtung's theory on violence and peace is rather complex and involves several valid arguments. Due to the current study's limited scope, it only covered Galtung's most relevant arguments. The coming section will employ Galtung's views to examine Pinter's *One for the Road*. The argument will focus on how the three types of violence are manifest in this work and what role they play in establishing state control over rebellious individuals.

## Violence in *One for the Road:*

In an interview by the drama critic Mel Gussow, published in a collection, Pinter (1996) said that *One for the Road* was written in one night after a conversation he had with two Turkish women at a party. The women lived in England and one of them worked at the Turkish Embassy. Pinter asked about their views on the widespread use of torture in Turkey, to which they replied, "Well, they're probably communists" (p. 87). In an interview with David Hern, which Pinter had in 1985, a year after the first premier of the play, he described the fury he experienced at that moment, "Whereupon instead of strangling [the women], I came back immediately, sat down and… out of rage started to write *One for the Road*" (p. 14, cited in Goodspeed, 2019, p. 48). This rage produced a play that illustrates the methods employed by totalitarian states to torture and punish political nonconformists drain out their will and force them into submission. While analysing the play, we can observe that violence in all the three types that were discussed in the previous section is present; more predominantly, structural violence's use of cultural violence to justify direct violence committed by state agents who serve the state's political agenda.

The title *One for the Road* is generally understood to refer to the many glasses of whisky the central figure, Nicolas, continues to pour to himself in the play. It can, however, indicate the "promise to return for more: the next victim, the next 'other' to be led to death" (Gregory, 1996, p. 331) by the regime because in such systems torture is a routine task. The play consists of one act and four short scenes where Nicolas, who appears to be a high-ranking state official, interrogates the three members of the same family. First, Victor, the father, then, Nicky, his seven-year-old son and after that, Gila, his wife. In the final scene, we see him again with Victor. The setting is Nicolas' office and Nicolas leads the largest part of the dialogue. Pinter, however, does not reveal in what country or political system the action is set. According to Dukore (1988), keeping these details undisclosed, makes the subject universal and distinguishes it from "conventional protest melodrama" (p. 132). Furthermore, there is no direct statement of the crimes for which this family is kept captive and tortured. There is a reference to Victor being an intellectual who has "lots of books" (Pinter, 2006, p. 228). While this is not a crime, it may be seen as an indication of him being a source of threat to a totalitarian regime (Dukore, 1988). When it comes to Nicky, Nicolas is quite angry with him for kicking and spitting at the soldiers who arrested him. Yet, for Gila, her crime seems to be that she fell in love with a man like Victor and raised a son like Nicky. In a civilised culture, none of these should be seen as crimes that one deserves to be tortured for or to be viewed as criminal at all, but as Luckhurst (2006) suggests, in Pinter's plays that depict interrogation scenes, confession is of no relevance; interrogators have no interest in extracting information from victims because their crimes are in who they are not what they allegedly did. Therefore, for *One for the Road*, interrogation is another tool for achieving better state control through personal and political terror. The main offence of the prisoners, hence, is their individuality and independence of thought which under certain circumstances can make one an enemy of the state in a totalitarian system (Silverstein, p. 1991). As Silverstein (1991) argues, these systems aim to erase "difference by constituting the subject in the image of the state" (p. 428). That is, creating citizens that conform to the requirements and standards assigned to them. Accordingly, violence is used to coerce political prisoners into becoming the kind of citizens the state requires them to be.

In the play, two types of direct violence take place, one is physical violence that happens offstage and is visible on the characters and/or is recounted through Nicolas' interrogation, and the other is psychological violence that uses language as its main medium. As the first scene opens, Nicolas is already at his desk, which along with his command, "bring him in" (Pinter, 2006, p. 223) establishes him as a figure of authority. In addition, the command

reveals Victor's lack of free will even before we meet him because he has to be *brought in* instead of *let in*. Once in, Victor's body shows the marks of physical violence and he walks slowly, probably from pain or fatigue due to malnutrition or sleep deprivation or perhaps from fear. Furthermore, the stage directions tell us that he has bruises and "his clothes are torn" (Pinter, 2006, p. 223) which are clear indicators of direct physical violence. While Nicolas orders Victor to sit down, he walks over to him and declares his absolute power over him, "I can do absolutely anything I like" (p. 223) and he starts waving his figure in front of Victor's eyes, his most vulnerable and valuable organ. Nicolas then declares that this gesture would not seem as silly had it been his penis or boot. As Tavassoli (2016, p. 55) suggests, this gesture connects Nicolas' finger to the authority he obtains from the state represented by the images of the boot and the phallus. We may also consider the words *boot* and *penis* as indirect threats of physical and sexual assault, which have the psychological effect of impairing the victim's movement from fear.

After he has established his power and the subject-object relation he shares with Victor, Nicolas starts using verbal threats and psychological torture; the physical torture is done for him by officials lower in rank (Visser, 1996). For example, he mentions how his soldiers kicked Victor's books and "Pissed on the rugs" (Pinter, 2006, p. 228). This is an example of personal violence with no direct object since the damage is not done to Victor himself but to things of value to him. Then, Nicolas distresses and confuses Victor with what appears as casual and aimless questions about his wife Gila and his son Nicky. This is a tactic he continues to use in his interrogations with each member of the family where he becomes their only point of contact with each other as he asks each one about the other two (Goodspeed, 2019). Quigley (2009) argues that this is to turn the family's psychological and emotional bonds into weapons he can use against each of them since raping the wife and murdering the son represents destroying "some of the strongest bonds that hold civilised human beings together." (p. 11). Therefore, Nicolas first sets the menacing mood with his seemingly casual comment on Gila, describing her as "a very good-looking woman" (Pinter, 2006, p. 225) and then he asks Victor about Nicky, "Is your son alright?" (p. 228) which is a far from innocent question since it can be understood as that his son is being harmed or that he is going to be tortured like his father if Victor does not cooperate and answer honestly in his interrogation or if he refuses to follow the orders (Visser 1996). A few aimless questions later, Nicolas jokes about Gila's sexuality using vulgar language, "Does she … fuck?... I'm talking about your wife. Your *wife*." (Pinter, 2006, p. 230) The emphasis on the words *your wife* is no coincidence considering how a man's wife is linked to his honour in many cultures. As Victor remains silent, Nicolas continues to taunt him

saying "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." (p. 231) Here, Nicolas' stress on Gila's sexuality is to remind Victor of her sexual vulnerability and use that to psychologically torture him since he is rendered helpless and cannot do anything to protect her from other men. Gila and Nicky, therefore, become instruments Nicholas uses to "deform and reform" (Tavassoli, 2016, pp. 55-56) Victor in a way that serves the State's interests. In other words, the verbal threats and psychological torture complement the physical torture that took place offstage to completely subdue the victims and make them submit to this totalitarian regime Nicolas serves.

While for the most part, Nicolas' interrogation and menacing language are clear examples of direct violence, the dialogue soon reveals that he is not an independent actor of violence. Galtung argued that structural violence can function by using cultural violence to legitimise the marginalisation and dehumanisation of certain groups and individuals to the point of turning them into an *It* so that they can then use direct violence against them. This takes us back to Pinter's conversation with the two Turkish women; what enraged Pinter the most was the fact that the women's response tried to justify the torture and even death of political prisoners in Turkey (Gussow, 1996). This particularly resonates with Galtung's argument that ideology can be used to justify both direct and structural violence. The people the women labelled as communists were structurally reduced to an *It* under the pretext of carrying an ideology different from that of the state, and thus, their torture became legitimised and even no longer seen as violence by people like those two women. We can argue that the same case is present in *One for the Road* in the way Nicolas views the torture of his victims.

While interrogating Victor, Nicolas refers to the soldiers working under him referring to them as his "boys" who have "responsibilities" (Pinter, 2006, p. 228). Nicolas later tells him that he, Victor, has one "obligation" which is, to be honest. By this, he is particularly citing the words of "the man who runs this country" (Pinter, 2006, p. 232) who asked Nicolas to pass this piece of advice to dissidents on his behalf. As Quigley (2009) argues by quoting the leader of his country, Nicolas regards himself as someone who acts "on behalf of a unified group against a lone dissenter, and the existence of that larger unity suffices to convert the dissenter into a traitor" (p. 10). That is, Nicolas gained his authority from the structure that he serves; even though he and his subordinates directly commit the violence in the play, it is the structure that allows it because he is part of that system. This is shown when he recites the speech of his leader, 'the man who runs this country

announced to the country: We are all patriots, we are as one, we all share a common heritage. Except you, apparently!... I feel a link, you see a bond. I share a commonwealth of interest. I am not alone. I am not alone!" (p. 232). Accordingly, this bond or commonwealth Nicolas refers to gives him the justification for the torture, rape and murder taking place at his institution because Victor and dissidents like him are not part of that bond and therefore, are excluded from both that society and the civil rights its members might have (Quigley, 1996, pp. 10-11). This argument resonates with Galtung's argument that ideology is used as the means for cultural violence to legitimise both structural and direct violence. Here, patriotism seems to be the ideology this totalitarian regime promotes and the standards that qualify one as a patriot are already set out by the system. As a result, failing to meet those standards creates the situation of the *chosen* vs. *unchosen* or *self* vs. *other* discussed in the current paper. Although Victor's rebellious actions or ideas are not revealed, he must be nonconforming enough to be excluded from this group of the *chosen* and hence, his rights are violated. This is further confirmed by Nicolas' question 'Who would you prefer to be? You or me?... I'd go for me if I were you" (Pinter, 2006, p. 232). This question simultaneously creates the *self* vs. *other* argument and excludes Victor from the *self* side that, as Alhasan (2017) argues, he can belong to only by being on the side of the torturer and cancelling himself and reducing him to the same.

Nicolas also refers to God in more than one place, claiming, "God speaks through [him]" (Pinter, 2006, p. 223). During his outburst with Gila, he says that her father "believed in God" and "died for his God" (p. 240) and he refers to the soldiers as "soldiers of God" (p. 244). Similarly, in the last scene he says that the women at the brothel on the sixth floor of the building "keep the world clean for God" (p. 246). This may indicate that religion is another domain of cultural violence this system apparently twists and manipulates for its advantage and to serve its goals, such as using religion to declare dissidents as the *unchosen* and violate their rights as a result. Furthermore, Nicolas' claim of having God at their side supports Galtung's argument that the modern state in a secular system assumes the place of God while political ideology replaces religion. Hence, we can argue that cultural violence using both ideology and religion is at play here.

One cannot, however, deny that Nicolas internalised this ideology to the extent of actively taking part in this violence and revelling in it. Goodspeed (2019, p. 50) argues that his claim that God speaks through him indicates a kind of superiority complex or obsession with power. Dukore (1988, p. 133) describes Nicolas as a "monster" whose brutal exercise of power is his own belief in being a virtuous man legitimately acting on behalf of the

country the values of which he shares. In other words, his violence is personal, but he gained the legitimacy for it from the state power he represents. This, however, does not refute the claim that the direct violence Nicolas commits is the result of structural violence that has employed cultural violence. As argued in the current paper, what determines whether some violent act is the result of structural violence is whether there is an indirect structural link between the object of violence and the actor that commits the violent act. In the case of Nicolas, although in one place he claims that he knew Gila's father and loved him like a father, there is no other reference that he has any personal links to the family, and he continues to affirm that he is not acting on his own. As Silverstein (1991, p. 428) argues, Nicolas follows a "monologic" that directs any totalitarian system; it is a logic of sameness that produces subjects who lose or misrecognise themselves in the image of the shared commonwealth of interest Nicolas mentions. Nicolas is "interpellated" within the speech of the country's leader as he recognises himself as the subject of that "collective" and merges into "the monolithic Voice of state power" (Silverstein, 1991, p. 428). Hence, it is the ideology promoted by the state and handed down to him by its leader that drives his actions, not a personal grudge toward his prisoners. Pinter himself confirms this by describing Nicolas' actions in his interview with Hern:

> He has all power within those walls. He knows this is the case, he believes that it is right, for him, to possess this power, because, as far as he's concerned, he's acting for his country legitimately and properly. When he refers to the country's values, those are his values. And because of those values, he will kill, allow rape, everything he can think of. And torture. In order to protect the realm, anything is justified. (Pinter, 1985, p. 16-17, cited in Goodspeed, 2019, p. 50)

Based on this, Nicolas does not act alone as an individual with a personal agenda. He is a tool of the system brainwashed with its ideology and values that make him empowered to use violence without any regrets. He genuinely believes that he acts for the greater good.

At the end of the first scene, Victor finally breaks his silence telling Nicolas, "Kill me." (Pinter, 2006, p. 233). Inan (2000) suggests that this indicates that Victor was gradually broken down by the psychological torture he endured throughout the interrogation in this scene, but Luckhurst (2006) interprets it as an act of resistance or defiance to challenge the purpose of Nicolas' interrogation, which is terrorising him. Since the stage directions do not specify in what tone the dialogue should be said, both interpretations can be accepted.

Either way, Nicolas dismisses Victor's request and blames it on hunger or thirst. He then rebukes Victor for his despair saying it is something he needs to "castrate" and "chop the balls off" (Pinter, 2006, p. 233) in what seems yet another verbal threat of castrating Victor himself. Before the scene ends with a blackout, Nicolas demands Victor look him in the eyes and when Victor does, he comments, "Your soul shines out of your eyes" (p. 233). Gregory (1996) comments that Nicolas' request is not to see Victor's soul but to see a "reflection of his own power" (p. 331). If that is true, it could then be to reassert his power over him after his defiant request to be killed, or it could be to further threaten and terrorise Victor the way he did at the beginning when he waved his finger before his eyes.

The second scene shows us Nicolas with Victor's son, Nicky. This time he is standing, probably to tower over Nicky and appear more intimidating. As mentioned earlier, Nicolas uses the other two members of the family to threaten each one, and with Nicky, his casual questions about Nicky's interests lead him to ask him about his parents:

NICOLAS. Do you like your mummy and daddy?

*Pause*.

Do you like your mummy and daddy?

NICKY. Yes.

NICOLAS. Why?

*Pause.*

Why?

*Pause.*

Do you find that a hard question to answer?

*Pause.*

NICKY. Where's mummy?

NICOLAS. You don't like your mummy and daddy?

NICKY. Yes, I do. (Pinter, 2006, pp. 235-236)

Asking a young child, who is isolated from his parents and does not know their whereabouts, whether he likes his parents can sound menacing, especially when the question is made in a negative form. Nicky's asking about his mother proves the threatening effect of Nicolas' questions because children instinctively seek their mother's

protection when they are scared and sense danger. Nicky is silent and reluctant about answering perhaps because he is not sure what consequences his answers are going to have for his parents; as Shammout (2018) argues, the question being in the negative instead of the affirmative can suggest that Nicky has to abandon his parents. This aggressive tone then heightens when Nicolas reminds Nicky that he "spat on [his] soldiers" and "kicked them" (Pinter, 2006, p. 236). When Nicky says that he "didn't like those soldiers" (p. 236), Nicolas uses the menacing response, "They don't like you either, my darling" (p. 236) which is followed by a blackout that ends the scene. Chiasson (2010) suggests that Nicolas' statement and the blackout are an abrupt interruption of a moment that has just intensified leaving an unanswered question about Nicky's fate; it creates a sense of looming danger that implies the violence that is going to take place offstage. This is particularly articulated through Nicolas' use of the present tense "they don't like you either" which leaves us wondering about how those soldiers are going to express this dislike when they meet Nicky again offstage.

Although Nicky is only seven years old, Nicholas cannot let what he did to the soldiers go unpunished because, in his view, they are his "country's soldiers" (Pinter, 2006, p. 236) who are "soldiers of honour, soldiers of God" (p. 244), that is, they follow the ideal and values of the regime and their allegiance is to the State (Tavassoli, 2016). Nicolas also partly hates Nicky because they share the same name (Dukore, 1988, p. 133). This makes his treatment of Nicky rather personal, especially considering Nicky's insignificance in the political game. However, this hate is still grounded in his ideology because Nicky is the son Victor raised by his ideals and values making him on the side of the *other* or the *unchosen.* In addition, murdering him, which is declared at the end, can be part of a larger political scheme that wants to eliminate children like him before they grow up to become rebels and enemies of the state (Tavassoli, 2016).

After Nicky, Nicolas interrogates Gila, using language's fullest potential to psychologically break and torment individuals. The scene opens with Nicolas sitting and Gila standing, perhaps to put her on the spot, and the stage directions describe that "Her clothes are torn. She is bruised." (Pinter, 2006, p. 237) Like Victor, her physical state shows the physical violence she experienced offstage which is soon revealed to include sexual violence too. Nicolas opens the interrogation by asking her when she met her husband, followed by a shower of "why"s that are more to exacerbate her than extract valuable information from her. This eventually makes her scream her response at him:

NICOLAS. When did you meet your husband?

GILA. When I was eighteen.

NICOLAS. Why?

GILA. Why?

NICOLAS. Why?

GILA. I just met him.

NICOLAS. Why?

GILA. I didn’t plan it.

NICOLAS. Why not?

…

NICOLAS. When?

GILA. When I was eighteen.

NICOLAS. Why?

GILA. He was in the room.

NICOLAS. Room?

…

GILA. The same room.

NICOLAS. As what?

GILA. As I was.

NICOLAS. As I was?

…

GILA *Screaming*. As I was! (Pinter, 2006, pp. 237-239)

Nicolas, as it appears, has no interest in extracting information from the victims or making them confess. As Grimes (2005) explains, for the system Nicolas represents, having evidence is of no relevance as all the needed information is already gathered by intelligence. Hence, the interrogation is just a tool to terrorise the prisoners and establish state power over them. Therefore, he makes sure that he shatters Gila psychologically to the point of reducing her to a powerless obedient subject. This can be supported by the fact that he makes her change her narrative of where she met Victor after she says that she met

him in her father's room. At mentioning her father's room, Nicolas has an outburst of intense emotions using obscene language, blaming her for trying to defile her father's memory by that story, "Your father? How dare you? Fuckpig… Are you prepared to insult the memory of your father?" (Pinter, 2006, p. 240) After that outburst and a pause, he again asks Gila where she met her husband and this time she responds, "In a street" (p. 241). This proves that the interrogation's main purpose is to force the victims to follow Nicolas' will, which is the state's will, and to make them obey him without showing any resistance (Tavassoli, 2016). In fact, Nicolas continues to attempt to change Gila's narrative; he comments that she was "drunk" or "drugged" or "absconded from" her hospital (p. 242) when she dropped the evening paper and Victor picked it up for her the first time they met. Then, without giving her a break, he leads her to the question about her rape:

NICOLAS. . . . What do we have [upstairs]?

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?

GILA. I don't know.

NICOLAS. And you consider yourself a reliable witness? (Pinter, 2006, p. 243)

What is disturbing about the above dialogue is that Gila may not remember the number of times she was raped because it happened too many times or because she is in a psychological state of shock and trauma that she cannot remember or does not feel comfortable about recounting it. Yet, as Owens (2017) argues, when Nicolas repeats the

question and mentions the act so bluntly, he verbally re-enacts it and makes Gila re-experience that trauma in the present moment. He even symbolically re-enacts the rape where pointing his fingers at Gila's face is suggestive of the "penetrating members of the men 'upstairs.'" (p. 33) Chiasson (2010) refers to this moment as "double rape" which consists of the rape that happened offstage and the psychological rape happening in the now as he forces Gila to "bring into the symbolic order" (p. 115) that unspeakable act which leads to a doubled effect on Gila as the victim. Furthermore, his final remark, "You're a lovely woman. Well, you were" (Pinter, 2006, p. 244) is manipulating language by changing the present tense to the past tense to suggest that her being "lovely" is something that preceded her rape and prompted the rape, but now that she is raped, it has become something of the past (Owen, 2017). That is, not only did she get sexually assaulted, but she also became a spoiled good that is "of no interest to [him]" and whom he may soon let go after she "entertain[s] [them] all a little more" (Pinter, 2006, p. 244). Sexual assault and re-enacting it verbally, hence, are the direct physical and psychological violence used by the state apparatus to subdue female victims like Gila and coerce them into submission.

As mentioned earlier, *One for the Road* portrays how totalitarian states use their agents to suppress and break down their citizens into submission through the systematic use of violence and torture. While physical violence in the form of physical assault and sexual assault (for Gila) was used offstage, the mental state of the victims was shattered by Nicolas onstage. Therefore, the last scene is the culmination of all that torture that was essentially to drain the victims out of any will and energy to resist state control. The last scene opens with Nicolas standing and Victor sitting, but this time instead of being bruised and his clothes torn, he is "tidily dressed*"* (Pinter, 2006, p. 244). We cannot help but assume that Victor had to surrender something of value and make a costly compromise to be seen in this improved condition because a tyrannical regime does not suddenly start to treat prisoners kindly. Nicolas asks Victor how he is doing, but Victor's answer is incomprehensible:

NICOLAS. I can't hear you.

VICTOR. It's my mouth.

NICOLAS. Mouth?

VICTOR. Tongue.

NICOLAS. What's the matter with it?

VICTOR. (Pinter, 2006, p. 245)

Though Victor does not answer the question, the situation hints at his tongue being severed or somehow injured. For Pinter, a staunch believer in speaking up against tyrannical regimes and their human rights violations, depriving one of their ability to speak is the most brutal type of torture. As Nicholas' last question remains unanswered, the matter is left undecided whether Victor has been "silenced (unmanned, made useless) for good" (Gregory, 1996, p. 332) and the readers and the audience are left with the unease of an unresolved situation. His condition, however, is also symbolic of permanently silencing and suffocating the political rebel's voice of protest (Travassoli, 2016; Visser, 1996). In other words, Victor's silence may not be due to an actual injury to his tongue, it could be due to trading his voice for his survival.

Nicolas then jokes about how they can offer Victor sexual services from the "first-class brothel upstairs" (Pinter, 2006, p. 246) that we, from the scene with Gila, understand that it is that part of the prison where the female prisoners, including Gila, are raped. Nicolas claims that the women there are all volunteers whose "daddies are in [their] business" which is "to keep the world clean for God" (p. 246). This reveals the height of state corruption and its ideology that makes allegiance to the state above everything else, even the bonds within a family unit (Tavassoli, 2016). It can also show how such corrupt states twist facts and conceal the reality of what happens inside their institutions from the public. Even if that place is a brothel with prostitutes, not female prisoners, this still indicates structural violence in the form of inequality where the *underdogs* are at the service of the *top-dogs*. It is then structural violence legitimised culturally by claims of "keeping the world clean for God", that is, religion. However, considering what Gila went through, her presence there cannot be volunteer work, and it probably did not start like that for the other women too.

As the play nears its closing lines, Nicolas declares that Victor is free to go, and he speaks about meeting again in the future and that they "will always remain friends" (Pinter, 2006, p. 246) which can be interpreted as a threat of being detained again in case of non-compliance or maybe to let him know that his every step will be under surveillance, or that he will have to report back to them regularly. His words to Victor are also in the imperative, "Go out. Enjoy life. Be good. Love your wife." (p. 246), but we do not know what any of that can mean in the case of Victor; what kind of life he is supposed to "enjoy" after this ordeal and what qualifies as being "good" for the state. The answer to the latter may be what Victor complied with offstage which resulted in his being dressed tidily and released.

Nicolas also declares that Gila will join Victor in a week. This may be a way of blackmailing him with her to make sure that he remains obedient to the rules of the regime once he is out because they will still have his wife to harm. For Gila, however, it means that she will continue to endure sexual violence for one more week or more. Nicolas even makes Gila's release conditional, "If she feels up to it" (Pinter, 2006, p. 246), but knowing Nicolas and the state apparatus he works for, her release cannot be dependent on what she wants but on her being used, abused and broken down enough to be safe to let out. However, Nicolas' words leave out Victor's son whose fate kept hanging like an unanswered question since the end of the second scene. Nicolas finally answers that question with one change in the verb tense that has the most heightened effect:

VICTOR. My son.

NICOLAS. Your son? Oh, don't worry about him. He was a little prick.

VICTOR *straightens* and *stares at* NICOLAS.

*Silence.*

*Blackout.* (Pinter, 2006, p. 247)

These last few lines of the play attracted the most critical attention. The first thing to notice is that when Nicolas is interrogating Gila, he says about Nicky, "He's a little prick." (Pinter, 2006, p. 244), but with Victor, the tense is changed to "was" implying that he is killed (Dukore, 1988; Luckhurst 2006). Silverstein (1991) comments on this explaining that since killing Nicky is not dramatized by Pinter, we receive the impression that it is Nicolas' words that have the ability to kill since "harnessed to the language of state power, the simple grammatical ability to shift from present tense to past tense transforms the speaking subject into an executioner." (p. 432). In other words, as Grimes (2005) argues, by mentioning Nicky in the past tense, murder is committed through language. Thus, once those words are uttered, the death of Nicky becomes a reality in the minds of the readers and the audience with all the shock and disturbing effect the idea of murdering a child can produce.

It should be noted, however, that resistance is not absent in this play, particularly, in Victor's actions. As discussed earlier, his request to be killed in the first scene could be interpreted as an act of defiance, but he also shows defiance in other places. Luckhurst (2006) argues that Victor's silences show resistance because he can still refuse to comply by not answering the questions; she even calls silence his "only remaining means of protest" (p. 365). Using silence to challenge Nicolas can be seen in this dialogue:

Nicolas. You do respect me, I take it?

*He stands in front of* VICTOR *and looks down on him.* Victor *looks up.*

I would be right in assuming that?

*Silence.* (Pinter, 2006, p. 226)

Here, his silence and looking straight at Nicolas cannot be silence produced by fear, the eye contact shows clear defiance. Similarly, when he receives the news of his son's death, he again straightens and stares at Nicolas in silence, not breaking down or falling into tears. Grimes (2005) argues that Victor's silence and stare at Nicolas in this last scene may be a "token of future subversion, a symbol offering a faint promise of the future possibility of subversion." (p. 97) In other words, perhaps Victor wants to show the mouthpiece of the state that they did not succeed at completely destroying him and breaking his spirit; the fire of rebellion and defiance still burns within him, even if faintly.

## Conclusion:

*One for the Road* shows what lengths totalitarian states are willing to go to subdue defiant members of society. It presents a family unit in the face of the state and its political ideology and agenda. Unconventional to this totalitarian regime; they are a family of intellectuals or people who "think" (Pinter, 2006, p. 244) as Nicolas says, and probably a kind of thinking different from the ideology of the state that is promoted as patriotism. To punish, discipline, and coerce them into adopting the state's ideology, this family endures physical and psychological violence at the hands of the state agent, Nicolas. This direct violence, however, is directed by structural violence, which legitimised the latter through cultural violence, particularly in the domain of ideology. That is, those who are not patriots are debased and dehumanised to the point that it is acceptable to torture, rape and even kill them. As a result, Victor's tongue is brutalised and he is freed only to remain under state surveillance and Gila is kept captive and will be raped for a while to break her will. Their son, Nicky, on the other hand, was eliminated to protect the state from the threat he may pose in the future and because he committed an unforgivable crime in the eyes of the state.

In our analysis that employed Johan Galtung's theory on violence, we highlighted the role of violence as a tool of coercion at the hands of tyrannical totalitarian regimes to eliminate the *other* or bring them into submission. We found that Pinter's work is proof that ideology can be manipulated to legitimise the most heinous crimes against vulnerable individuals and groups. Tyrannical regimes can use ideology to dehumanise victims and make their suffering and their lives of no significance. As a result, while victims are imprisoned, tortured, sexually assaulted and killed, the state celebrates this as another victory over those who threaten its authority. Nevertheless, Pinter's work ends with still some hope for the resilience of the individual's will in the face of tyrannical regimes the way there is always hope for change in any regime.

# تووندوتیژی وەک ئامرازێکی زۆرەملێیانە بۆ چەسپاندنی دەسەڵاتی دەوڵەت لە *دانەیەک بۆ ڕێگای هارۆلد پینتەردا*

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## پوختە:

دوای ئەوەی هارۆڵد پینتەر لە سەرەتای هەشتاکانی سەدەی ڕابردودا بو بە ئەندامی ڕێکخراوی PEN و ڕێکخراوی لێبوردنی نێودەوڵەتی، بایەخی بەرامبەر سیاسەتی جیهانی لەلا دروست بو و ئیدی ئاشکرا دژی پێشێلکارییەکانی مافی مرۆڤ کە لە چەند وڵاتێکی جیهاندا هەن هاتە دەنگ. پاشان ساڵی ١٩٨٤ شانۆنامەی *دانەیەک بۆ ڕێگای* بڵاو کردەوە کە بە یەکەم شانۆنامەی بەئاشکرا سیاسیی پینتەر دادەنرێت. شانۆنامەکە، کە بۆ پاراستنی جیهانگیریی خۆی لە وڵات و قۆناغێکی مێژویی دیارینەکراودا ڕوودەدات، ئەو ئەشکەنجە و تووندوتیژییە نیشان دەدات کە ڕژێمە تۆتالیتارییەکان بەرامبەر بە ناڕازییە سیاسییەکان بەکاریاندەهێنێت. ئەم توێژینەوەیە لە بابەتی بەکارهێنانی جۆرە جیاوازەکانی تووندوتیژی لەناو دەقە شانۆییەکەدا دەکۆڵێتەوە و ڕۆڵی ئەم ئەشکەنجەیە وەک ئامرازی سەپاندنی دەسەڵاتی دەوڵەت بەسەر تاکە پابەندنەبوەکان و شکاندنی ئیرادەیان و ناچارکردنیان بۆ ملکەچبون شیی دەکاتەوە. بۆ ئەم مەبەستەش ڕێبازێکی کۆمەڵایەتی-سیاسی بەکاردەهێنرێت بە سودبینین لە تیۆری تووندوتیژیی لای کۆمەڵناسی نەرویجی یۆهان گاڵتنگ. شیکاری وردی شانۆنامەکە ئەوەمان بۆ دەردەخات کە سیستەمە ستەمکارەکان بە بەکارهێنانی ئایدۆلۆژیای سیاسی وەک بیانوویەک تاکە ملکەچنەبوەکان لە مرۆڤبون ڕادەماڵن و بێبەهایان دەکەن، بۆ ئەوەی زیندانیکردن و ئەشکەنجەدانیان ببێت بە کارێکی ڕەوا.

**کلیلە وشەکان:** پینتەر، *دانەیەک بۆ ڕێگا*، تووندوتیژی، دەسەڵاتی دەوڵەت، گاڵتنگ.

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[1] - PEN International is an international association of writers that “promotes literature and freedom of expression. It is a forum where writers meet freely to discuss their work. It is a voice speaking out for writers silenced in their own countries.” (PEN International, 2022)

[2] - Amnesty International is an international non-governmental human rights organisation with its quarters in the UK. Today, the organisation refers to itself as a “global movement of more than 10 million people in over 150 countries and territories who campaign to end abuses of human rights.” (Amnesty International, 2023)