A FOUCALDIAN READING OF HAROLD PINTER'S OLD TIMES

Yrd. Doç. Dr. İfakat Banu AKÇEŞME*

Abstract

This paper aims to examine the power struggle initiated for dominance, the possession of territory and love between the characters Deeley, Kate and Anna in Harold Pinter's play *Old Times* in the light of Foucault's theory on discourse, power, knowledge and resistance. It explains how the on-going battle is carried out through the production of discourses and counter-discourses, the fabrication of truth and knowledge and the reconstruction and deconstruction of past memories. The characters exert and resist the power by employing various strategies and maneuvers including subjugation, victimization and exploitation. Nevertheless, this is a battle with no ultimate winner and loser since power rapidly keeps changing hand, and the alliances formed by the characters against each other are constantly altering and redesigned.

Key Words: Foucault, Discourse, Power, Knowledge, Resistance, Old Times

HAROLD PINTER'IN ESKİ ZAMANLAR ADLI OYUNUNUN FOUCAULTCU SÖYLEM BAĞLAMINDA İNCELENMESİ

Öz

Bu çalışma Harold Pinter'in *Eski Zamanlar* adlı tiyatro eserinde karakterler Deeley, Kate ve Anna arasındaki sevgi ve mekana sahip olmak ve birbirleri üzerinde hakimiyet kurmak için yürütülen güç mücadelesini Foucault'nun söylem, güç, bilgi ve direnç üzerine olan teorisi ışığında ele almayı amaçlamaktadır. Karakterlerin bu mücadeleyi söylem ve karşı söylem üreterek, bilgi ve gerçeklik imal ederek ve geçmiş hatıraları bozup yeniden inşa ederek nasıl sürdürdükleri tartışılacaktır. Karakterler boyun eğdirme, istismar ve mağdur etmenin de dahil olduğu çeşitli manevralara ve stratejilere başvurarak hem güç uygulamakta hem de güce karşı koymaktadırlar. Ancak yine de karakterler arasındaki bu savaş, kazananı ve kaybedeni olmayan bir mücadeledir çünkü güç, oyunun sonuna kadar sürekli olarak el değiştirmekte ve karakterlerin birbirine karşı kurdukları ittifaklar sürekli değişerek yeniden dizayn edilmektedir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Foucault, Söylem, Güç, Bilgi, Direnç, Eski Zamanlar

^{*} Erciyes Üniversitesi, Edebiyat Fakültesi, İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Bölümü, bakcesme@erciyes.edu.tr.

1. Introduction

Harold Pinter, who is well-known for his comedies of menace, is one of the most accomplished British playwrights. In his works, he mainly deals with alienation, violence, distorted memory, jealousy, fear, anxiety, betrayal, hidden secrets and sexual politics. By inserting comic dialogues and scenes, Pinter blends comedy and tragedy in his works. Moreover, in his plays, not only words that are uttered by the characters are of importance but also silences and pauses create a powerful effect and thus play a significant role in the construction of meaning and understanding of his plays. Pinter's silence serves multiple functions. It may be the expression of power, strength and determination, or it may stand for weakness, passivity, violence, conflict and alienation. As for the setting, Pinter prefers an enclosed interior space, and he humorously and cynically describes people who seem to get entrapped in a single prison-like room. His characters are threatened by the menace, and in return, react to the danger of the invasion of their lives by this threat. The seeming safety of inside is compared with the danger of the outside world where the menace is assumed to dwell. However, Pinter shocks his audience by showing that the menace dwells not necessarily in the external world but can be anywhere, including the inside of the house.

Pinter is consistently preoccupied with the themes of domination, subjugation, victimization, and exploitation in his works. What triggers these themes in his plays is usually a threatening outside from where the menace enters the house under the disguise of a human character who tries to take over both the inhabitants of the house and the house itself. The arrival of the menace initiates the battle for power and the possession of territory and love. Pinter exposes how power is abused in everyday life, and his characters emerge as dramatizations of physical, verbal, emotional and domestic violence and authoritarian forces.

2. Foucault's Theory on Discourse/Power/Knowledge and Resistance

Foucault focuses mainly on discourse, relations of power, domains of knowledge, games of truth, forms of subjectivity and techniques of the self. He is distinguished by his novel understanding of truth, knowledge, power, discourse and subject. Foucault views discourse in relation to power, knowledge and ideology. So, Foucault's accounts of power, domination, resistance and discourse are interconnected.

Foucault suggests that discourses structure our sense of reality, and our thoughts and actions are influenced, regulated and controlled by discourses. He is concerned with the way discourses determine the extent to which we can think and act only within the boundaries of certain ideological frameworks at each historical

period. He insists that the real, truth and knowledge, which have great impact on thought and behavior, are constructed through discursive practices.¹

Foucault sees power as a strategy, maneuver, tactic, technique and functioning.² Power cannot be held, possessed or made a property of a dominant state, class or a person. In this regard, it is fluid, flexible and dynamic. Such nature of power can be clearly observed when it is exercised by the three characters in Old Times. None of the characters can ultimately and absolutely possess the power. As a result, the relationship between the characters is based on the constant battle for practicing, resisting and counterattacking the power launched against them. Foucault rejects the kind of power which limits and prohibits. He maintains that power is productive rather than purely negative, restrictive and oppressive: "We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it excludes, it represses, it censors, it abstracts, it masks, it conceals. In fact, power produces: it produces reality: it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth."³ Power only exists when it is exercised, and when it is exercised, it produces knowledge, subjects, social relations and discourse.⁴ In the play, Deeley, Kate and Anna exert power in order not only to produce knowledge and discourse concerning their past and present but also to deconstruct and reconstruct each other's subjectivities by reassigning their positions and roles in their interpersonal relations.

Deeley, Kate and Anna are analyzed as Foucauldian subjects in this study. Foucault uses *subjection* with a double meaning in *Discipline and Punish*: *assujettissement* means not only subjection in the sense of subordination but also becoming an independent subject (26). To Foucault, individuals are constituted as an effect of power/knowledge networks through regulatory practices and normalization but they are not helpless objects only formed and moved by power. On the contrary, they are capable of critical reflection on their own constitutive conditions, and thus they have an opportunity and capacity to resist their imposed subjectivity, refuse the normative practices and alter power relationships.⁵ Such individuals emerge as potentially active agents capable of working on the self to

Foucault, Michel. *The Archeology of Knowledge*. Trans. A. Sheridan Smith. London: Tavistock Publications, 1972, pp.125-147.

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Trans. A. Sheridan. New York: Vintage, 1979, p.26.

³ Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Trans. A. Sheridan. New York: Vintage, 1979, p.194.

⁴ Foucault, Michel. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977.* Ed. Colin Gordon. New York: Pantheon, 1980, p.59.

⁵ Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality*, vol 1. New York: Random House, 1980, p. 128; Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Trans. A. Sheridan. New York: Vintage, 1979, p. 26.

discover "ontologically who they are and what they are capable." In this respect, the characters in *Old Times* cannot be seen only as effects of power and discourses but also as the subjects who are able to practise power to resist the way in which they are produced, categorized and regulated by producing their own counter-discourses. In the light of Foucault's definition of subject, these characters can be described both as constructed and constructing. To put it differently, they are constituted both as subjects and objects of knowledge, power and discourse.

A Foucauldian process of self-constitution involves the exploration of possibilities for new subject positions, new ways of producing the self, new fields of experiences, pleasures and relationships. Foucault describes this process as the "care of the self" or "ethics" which is necessary for liberating the self from oppressive taboos and morality. Care of the self is essential for active participation in the creative process of self-making by changing the constitutive conditions of unwanted subjectivity. It is within this space of possibility, a space of self-creation, self-organization and self-invention that the self may transform himself and attain a different mode of living and thinking. Each of the characters in *Old Times* is constantly and insistently engaged in a process of self-construction to get rid of the identity imposed on him/her by the other two and to create himself/herself in accordance with his/her desires.

Although Deeley, Kate and Anna incessantly try to victimize and dominate one another, all these three characters are free subjects. Foucault argues that where there is power, there is freedom: "power relations are possible only insofar as the subjects are free" since power is exercised only over free subjects because only free subjects can take the responsibility of constituting the self. Foucault maintains that freedom is never outside power relations but occurs when power relations shift through reversal or resistance. Power presupposes freedom in the sense that to be free means that individuals are able to choose from a range of possible ways of acting. Treedom matters to Pinter. His characters struggle not to lose the power of

Foucault, Michel. "The Ethics of the Concern for the Self as a Practice of Freedom." The Essential Works of Foucault. Eds. Paul Rabinow. New York: New Press, 1997, 2003, p. 292.

⁶ Bernauer, James and David Rasmussen, eds. *The Final Foucault*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987, p. 8.

Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 3. *The Care of the Self*. Trans. Robert Hurley. New York: Vintage, 1988, p.18.

Bernauer, James and David Rasmussen, eds. *The Final Foucault*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987, pp.10-12; O'Grady, Helen. "An Ethics of the Self." *Feminism and the Final Foucault*. Eds. Dianna Taylor and Karen, Vintges. Urbana, Chicago: University of Illinois, 2004, p. 108; Oksala, Johanna. *Foucault on Freedom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 12.

⁹ Bernauer et al., pp. 18-20

¹¹Foucault, Michel. "The Subject and Power." *Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*. Eds. Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982, 1983, pp. 221-226.

choice and freedom. The characters in *Old Times* gain freedom as a result of their recognition that there are alternative ways of constructing their selves and others.

Body is another topic Foucault deals with as one of the sites where power is exercised to regulate and police the desires and practices. It is also the site where the individuals struggle to resist: "Power, after investing itself in the body, finds itself exposed to a counterattack in the same body." The human body has always been caught in a web of power relations. Foucault comes up with a term *biopower* to refer to the production of docile bodies as submissive subjects. Foucault explains the docilization process as follows: "the body is directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold on it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs." Foucault explains that discourses "write" the body, or shape the ways in which bodies are understood and function. As the discourses change across history, so does the body or rather, the way in which we understand and code our bodily functions. ¹⁴

3. A Foucauldian Reading of Old Times

Pinter's biographer, Michael Billington defines "Pinter's vision of human relationships as a quest for dominance and control in which the power balance is capable of reversal." Pinter places his characters in triangulated "dear-enemy" relationships which are characterized by changing and unanticipated alliances. These unstable relationships are based on different forms of power structures. None of the characters have fixed positions in these reversible relationships since power has a shifting status.

In *Old Times* two kinds of relationship, marriage and friendship are introduced, and both are exploited by the characters as a territory where they can exert their power and satisfy their feeling of superiority by assuming the role of leadership in a relationship. Both of these relationships are emotionally and psychologically unhealthy and dysfunctional since the characters demand ownership and possessiveness. To Wright, *Old Times* is about "relationships then and now, in a context of alienation, exile, and cunning – and to some extent, of

Foucault, M. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977.* Ed. Colin Gordon. New York: Pantheon, 1980, p.56.

¹³ Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Trans. A. Sheridan. New York: Vintage 1979, p.25.

Foucault, Michel. Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison. Trans. A. Sheridan. New York: Vintage 1979, pp. 137-138.

Billington, Michael. Billington, Michael. *Harold Pinter*. London: Faber and Faber limited, 2007, p. 56.

Wardle, Irwing. "The Territorial Struggle". A Casebook on Harold Pinter's The Homecoming. Ed. John Lahr. New York: Grove Press, 1971, p.169.

silence." Kate and Deeley are a married couple living in their converted farmhouse away from London. Both the outside and inside of the house create a sense of entrapment and imprisonment where the characters have no possibility other than confronting each other and joining in the ongoing power games by developing strategies and adjusting their maneuvers in the course of their struggle. This play is the dramatization of rivalry, desire for power, invasion, threat and hostility.

When the play opens, Deeley and Kate are expecting a visitor, Anna, Kate's former roommate from 20 years ago. Anna is coming to "celebrate a very old and treasured friendship", that is, to recreate her past friendship with Kate into the present. Anna's expected visit is perceived as a territorial threat by Deeley, who feels uneasy because of the danger of the invasion of their lives by Anna, an intruder. Anna's arrival disturbs the power equation in the wife-husband relationship which is seemingly constructed and rooted within a patriarchal power relation. This threat initiates the power struggle between the characters. The conflict in both relationships of marriage and friendship arises out of the battle for dominance over Kate and the possession of the territory in addition to Kate's affection by her husband and her sole friend, Anna. Savran states that Old Times is centered around on erotic triangle¹⁸. He describes Deeley and Anna as desiring subjects, and Kate as the desired object. Kate gains value since she is desired by the two people who become rivals to each other. Both Deeley and Anna need Kate to fulfill their own desires. This conflict gets complicated when Kate resists and responds to their attempts to possess and dominate her.

The characters' use of language foregrounds the postmodernist aspect of language as discourse which functions as a site where power relations are constantly destabilized and restructured. They do not employ referential language to express unchanging and stable reality, fact and truth, which are the concepts called into question in postmodernism. On the contrary, they need language to fabricate fictional realities.

Kate, Deeley and Anna are produced out of a network of discourses and relations, and always liable to change according to the circumstances. Each character tries to set up his/her power system in his/her discursive space where s/he can dominate and exert power on each other. They do this by employing various strategies, methods and tactics including subjugation, victimization, questioning, policing and surveillance. However, because of the dynamic and fluid nature of

Savran, David. "The Girardian Economy of Desire: *Old Times* Recaptured." *Theatre Journal*. 34, 1 (1982), p.44.

Wright, David, G. "Joyce Debt to Pinter." *Journal of Modern Literature*. XIV.4, (Spring, 1982), p. 517.

power, the one who gains power in one situation becomes a victim in another situation as the play progresses.

As Foucault maintains, power relations do not preexist the characters who are inserted in these power relations as inert or target. Power only exists when it is exercised; so, there is no position outside discourse or power-knowledge structure. ¹⁹ In the play, power emerges when Deeley makes inquiries about Anna. Questioning to demand answers and explanation is one of the methods Deeley uses to subjugate Kate. Before Anna comes to their house, Deeley asks Kate a lot of questions in order to learn how important Anna was to Kate, how close their relationship was twenty years ago, and what kind of person Anna was. He acts like a police officer to keep Kate in subjugation: "Was she your best friend?", "Why her", "Can't you remember what you felt", "Are you looking forward to seeing her?", "Why isn't she married?", "What sort of man would she have married?", "Did she have many friends?" He urges and demands her to remember her past so that she can answer all his questions and provide him with every detail about Anna and their past relationship. His forceful and aggressive attitude reduces Kate to the position of a submissive wife. He presumes that the more things he learns about Anna and her relationship with his wife, the more easily he can maintain his control over Kate, and establish dominance over Anna as well. If he becomes powerful in the mutual past shared by Kate and Anna by gaining knowledge of it, he can defeat Anna in the present. Knowledge is power, and with this power, those who can control the past can also control the present, and those who can control the present can control the future. However, Kate's answers to his questions reveal that her past is a mystery to Deeley. When Deeley learns that Kate and Anna lived together before Kate married him, he gets surprised at how little he knows about his wife's past, "I knew you had shared with someone at one time...Pause. But I didn't know it was her."21

Anna's anticipated arrival upsets and bothers Deeley because he fears that Anna and Kate may exclude and eliminate him by forming female bonding and an alliance against him, as his question reveals, "Why isn't she bringing her husband?" Deeley divulges his fear of loss of control over Kate when he warns her as a guarding and commanding husband to be careful when Anna comes, "I shall be interested in you. I will be watching you." When Anna comes, he will fix his eyes on Kate to keep her under constant surveillance. This panopticon gaze whose main aim is to assure the automatic functioning of power is another strategy

Foucault, M. Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977. Ed.Colin Gordon. New York: Pantheon, 1980, p. 98.

Pinter, Harold, pp. 9-11.

Pinter, Harold, p. 17.

Pinter, Harold, p. 13.

Pinter, Harold, p. 11.

Deeley employs to manage Kate. She will be fixed in her place and made obedient and unresisting through Deeley's "unrelenting gaze of surveillance." Deeley's regulatory power targets to produce Kate as a docile body. Foucault explains that individuals who are ceaselessly exposed to the inspecting gaze end up in interiorizing what is dictated by their own overseers. This is the first step of constructing a self-disciplinary and self-surveiling individual. Being visible to the gaze brings about vulnerability and subjection. As a result, each individual exercises this surveillance over himself/herself and others. This means ultimate victory for Deeley over Kate because without any necessity to exercise his control and power, Kate will act in accordance with his expectations and desires.

Milne states that Pinter's plays are mostly concerned with male-oriented perspectives focusing on struggles based on male bonding and female exclusion²⁶. However, *Old Times* differs from his other plays such as *The Homecoming* and *The Birthday Party* in that women's agency can be strongly felt in *Old Times*. The status of the female characters is not determined as objects of oppression, abuse or sexual objects. Kate and Anna challenge and refuse to yield to Deeley's authoritarianism and patriarchal power.

Cahn argues that women in Pinter's plays are both different from and superior to men.²⁷ Pinter's women have greater awareness not only of their own natures but also of the nature of men, which assures women a strength and capacity for survival which the male characters lack. Pinter's women are generally viewed as victimizers of men whom women make completely dependent on them by fulfilling their needs and creating a womb-like place in the house which is a domestic and so a gendered space. Adler states that in doing so, Pinter's women seek dominance in order to attain personal wholeness and integrity.²⁸ However, Deeley has no intention to lose the ground to Anna and Kate, and let them get what they desire and demand. He does everything possible to prevent both from gaining psychological and emotional wholeness because he sees the gain of either his wife or her friend as wholly his own loss.

Memory games are another tactic the characters make use of in order to define past by producing discourses about their shared past so that they can

Foucault, Michel. Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison. Trans. A. Sheridan. New York: Vintage, 1979, p.176.

Foucault, Michel. Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison. Trans. A. Sheridan. New York: Vintage, 1979, p.138.

Milne, Drew. "Pinter's Sexual Politics." The Cambridge Companion to Harold Pinter. Ed. Peter Raby. Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 202.

Cahn, Victor L. *Gender and Power in the Plays of Harold Pinter*. New York:St. Martin's Press, 1993, p.7.

Adler, Thomas P. "Notes Toward the Archetypal Woman." *Theatre Journal*. 33. 3 (Oct., 1981), p. 377-378.

exercise power and gain control over each other at the present time. Their deliberate manipulations of memory turn into games of truth. Foucault uses the term 'games of truth' to emphasize that institutions and individuals legitimatize and justify their activities by claiming to be speaking the truth. These truth claims are mostly dependent on discursive practices because there is a close relationship between power, truth and discourse. What is known or accepted as true is, in fact, the effect of the play of power and discourse. ²⁹ The characters claim knowledge and truth because they serve to regulate the effects of power.

Foucault argues that every individual has a regime and politics of truth that controls and adjusts the production, distribution, functioning and circulation of discourses around which there exists a struggle concerning the status of truth and the role it plays in the relationships.³⁰ Truth is a combination of two practices, a discursive one called knowledge and a non-discursive one called power. In the play, the characters construct their discourses to give the impression that they represent the true version of reality. As objective and valid truth is unattainable, what Anna, Kate and Deeley do is just to create the effects of truth in their attempt to establish what can be said and what can be counted as truth and knowledge. By doing so, they aim to influence and control the thoughts and actions of the other characters.

The characters' games of truth depend on different versions of their past memories they fabricate to subjugate and victimize the other. They use memory as a weapon to prove that they more clearly remember the past, and thus know the other person better. The battleground is Kate, and she is reduced to an object for the sake of which Deeley and Anna fight to show that they have possessed more of Kate. The first thing Anna does when she comes into stage is to ask Kate "Queuing all night, the rain, do you remember?" It is vital that Kate remember the past because in order for Anna to overpower and repossess Kate, she needs to gain access to Kate's life. She can do this only if she manages to control time to cover up a twenty-year gap and to make the past more alive than the present. For this reason, Anna tries to refresh Kate's memory to verify that she is a part of Kate's past, and they have a history together:

My goodness, the Albert Hall, Covent Garden, what did we eat? To look back, half the night, to do things we loved, we were young...to work in the morning, and to a concert, or the opera, or the ballet, that night, you haven't forgotten?...lunchtimes in Green Park,

Pinter, Harold, p. 17.

²⁹ Kreitzman, Lawrence, ed, Michel Foucault: Politics, Philosophy, Culture, New York, Routledge, 1998, p.117.

Foucault, Michel. Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault, Ed. Martin, L.H. et al, London, Tavistock, 1988, p. 126.

exchanging all our news...goodness knows what excitement in ...London.³²

However, immediately after Anna reminds Kate that they had a great time in Green Parks and London, Deeley counterattacks Anna, "We rarely get to London." He implies that what Kate and Anna did in the past is no longer important because now as a married couple, they have a different life style and different habits. As a result, power changes from Anna to Deeley. He also adds, "Kate hasn't made many friends although there has been every opportunity" to emphasize that he is the only one in Kate's life because he means all and is more than enough to her. That is why she does not want and need to make any other friends. With this move, Deeley obviously attempts to eliminate Anna to rule Kate alone.

The characters' knowledge about one another and past memories play an important role in their production of discourses since their knowledge is an integral part of their struggles over power. Thus, in producing knowledge, they are at the same time making a claim for power. As Foucault insists, knowledge and power are intrinsically tied together, and they condition each other: "there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations."35 It is not possible for power to be exercised without knowledge, and it is impossible for knowledge not to generate power. Hence, a site where power is exercised is also a place at which knowledge is produced. The close connection between power relations and the way they shape the production of knowledge and truth can be evidently seen in the characters' discourses. Memories are malleable, ambiguous and uncertain; thus they cannot be verified or falsified. Thus, the characters persistently de-construct the past to re-construct the truth and reality about them and their relationship, as Anna nicely puts it: "There are some things one remembers even though they may never have happened. There are things I remember which may never have happened."36 Since none of the characters can easily control how the past is represented, even false memories become part of their reality. Who wins the battle of memory is determined by who best recovers the past or who best convinces others that s/he has the truer knowledge of the past.

Deeley's and Anna's contradictory account of the film 'Odd Man Out' which both claimed to have watched with Kate can be given as an example to demonstrate how the characters create their own version of the past by inventing

Pinter, Harold, p. 18.

Pinter, Harold, p. 18.

Pinter, Harold, p. 23.

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Trans. A. Sheridan. New York: Vintage,1979, p. 27.

Pinter, Harold, p. 32.

and reshaping their memories, and impose them upon the other characters to gain the control of the battle. The title of the film is symbolic, and displays Deeley's and Anna's underlying motive for their struggle. Who will be the odd-man-out in Kate's life? When Deeley tells his own story of the film, he implicitly asserts that Anna will be the odd-man-out in Kate's life. They met at the cinema for the first time, and there was nobody but Deeley and Kate, and nobody has been able to disrupt this unity since then: "I popped into a fleapit to see Odd Man Out. There was only one other person in the whole cinema, and there she is...It was Robert Newton [the actor in the film] who brought us together and it is only Robert Newton who can tear us apart." So, no one including Anna can separate Kate from him, and no other existence will be able to end his dominance over Kate. On the other hand, Anna claims that it is not Deeley with whom Kate watched the film because Kate and she herself watched it together. This is a maneuver Anna performs in order to take Kate back from Deeley. Anna continues to remind Deeley of her existence by imposing a threat to his masculine power over his wife, "Are Sunday she [Kate] said to me, looking up from the paper, come quick...We seized our handbags and went on a bus...almost alone, saw a wonderful film called Odd Man Out."3

Deeley and Anna act as victimizers and exploit Kate's body as well to win the battle. As already mentioned, Foucault sees body as a central component in the operation of power relations as a site of struggle where power is enacted and resisted. Deeley represents Kate and her body as an object of sexual desire. He puts himself into the position of the subject, and Kate's body into the position of the passive recipient of his actions: I hold her cool hand, as she walked by me, and I said something which made her smile...then our naked bodies met, hers cool, warm, highly agreeable...I touched her profoundly all over. Deeley aims to use sexuality to his advantage by using his masculine superiority since he thinks that sexuality is the only thing Kate and Anna cannot have shared in the past. He is her husband, and he is the only one who has the privilege to act on her body. Therefore, no other person can be closer to Kate than he is or knows her better than he does. However, Anna never gives up, and she responds with a counterattack by giving an account of the appearance and disappearance of the strange man in their room:

This man crying in our room. One night late. I returned and found him sobbing...Kate sitting on the bed...After a while I heard him go out...but sometime later in the night I looked across the room

Pinter, Harold, pp. 29-30.

Pinter, Harold, p. 38.

Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality*, vol 1. New York: Random House, 1980, p. 98.

to her bed and saw two shapes. He was lying across her [Kate's] lap on her bed. 41

Kate's sexual life is private, and it is not a kind of topic that can be publicized or shared in her absence without her permission. However, Deeley and Anna thoughtlessly intrude into Kate's private domain and expose her private self. Their sharing her privacy with each other illustrates how cruelly Deeley and Anna take advantage of her non-existence-like passivity. Anna reveals that:

She was so shy, as shy as a fawn. When people leaned to speak to her, she would fold away from them, so that she was no longer accessible to them...in secrecy, in being so stubbornly private. I remember her first blush...I confessed I had borrowed some of her underwear. She stared at me, nonplussed. Each time she proposed this [underwear] she would blush.⁴²

Anna provides personal details about Kate with an aim to illuminate that before Deeley, Kate and she had intimate relationship, and she can be a dominant figure in Kate's life again by excluding Deeley from her life because she knows Kate better than he does.

Deeley and Anna also seek strength and authority by exposing each other's vulnerability and weaknesses. They do so by changing their memories strategically, and the events that they denied to have happened in the past become part of their memory later as long as they serve their purposes. At a later stage in the play, the power struggle is stimulated by the sexual rivalry between Deeley and Anna. Both characters make use of sexuality to vanquish each other. Deeley functions as the dramatization of misogyny at this point. He becomes more antagonistic and cruel when his sexuality is called into question. At the beginning of the play although Deeley states that he has never met Anna before, he later claims that he knows Anna from The Wayfarers Tavern where they met twenty years ago. He degrades her by reminding her how she once publicly displayed her female body to male gaze, and how she made herself sexually available: "You were the darling of the saloon bar. You had escorts. You didn't have to pay. You were looked after."⁴³ Sexuality is turned into a weapon against females in the hand of Deeley. As a product of heteropatriarchal logic, Deeley has a sexist attitude toward women and their place in society. He sees females as bodies whose main function is to serve and entertain males in every possible way. So, he treats Anna as a sexual servant who provides satisfaction to males, "I had a thigh-kissing view, nobody but you

⁴² Pinter, Harold, pp. 64-65.

⁴¹ Pinter, Harold, pp. 32-33.

⁴³ Pinter, Harold, p. 50.

had the thighs which kissed. I gazed up your skirt, you didn't object, you found my gaze perfectly acceptable." Sexuality is exploited as the surface for the exercise of power through which bodies are trained to be created as docile bodies. Deeley denies Anna her human qualities and portrays her in terms of sexual attractiveness and availability by placing the focus on her underwear, which is indeed an effort to claim authority over Anna's past in order to bring her into subservience in the present.

Sexuality is utilized as a means of exploitation not only by Deeley but also by Anna. In order to resist the biopower exerted on her, Anna gives an account of how she exploited Kate sexually in the past by implying a lesbian relationship between them to gain an advantage over Deeley especially after she senses Deeley's masculine inferiority which she assumes to be the main source of his fear for the solidarity between Anna and Kate.

Anna: Late at night, lying on the floor, looking old things. Sometimes I'd look at her face, but she was quite unaware of my gaze...I would choose a position in the room from which I could see her face, although she couldn't see mine. She listened and watched her listening.[...]

Deeley: You say she was Bronte in secrecy but not in passion. What was she in passion?

Anna: I feel that is your province.

Deeley: You feel it's my province? Well, you're damn right. It's my bloody province. I'm her husband. 45

This time Anna presents Kate as an object to be seen and observed. Both Deeley and Anna use watching as a method to keep a person under control.

Anna also attempts to win Kate emotionally to become more powerful against Deeley. She endeavors to prove that she can understand Kate as a woman through empathy, and thus sympathize with her better than Deeley. By using the lack of communication in their marriage to her advantage, Anna criticizes Deeley for obliging Kate to live in such an isolated and silent place. She ironically and sarcastically suggests; "How wise you were to choose this part of the world, and how sensible and courageous of you both to stay permanently in such a silence." Anna victimizes Deeley by blaming him for being inconsiderate since he fails to realize that he should not leave his wife alone in this secluded place when his work takes him away: "No one who lived here would want to go far. I would be afraid of

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⁴⁴ Pinter, Harold, p. 51.

⁴⁵ Pinter, Harold, p. 66.

⁴⁶ Pinter, Harold, p. 19.

going far, lest when I returned the house would be gone."47 In order to possess Kate, Anna shows affection and compassion to her which she thinks Deeley is incapable of offering: "I must come and keep you [Kate] company when he's away."48 Deeley is disturbed by Anna's emotional involvement and launches an attack back to defeat Anna by reminding her of her husband, "Won't your husband miss you?"⁴⁹ Deeley aims to re-take power from Anna by accusing her of being irresponsible since she has left her husband alone in Sicily.

Listing the things Kate likes is another tactic Deeley and Anna use to demonstrate that they know Kate better in order to surpass the other rival. Deeley remarks: "She likes taking long walks. You know. Raincoat on. Off down the lane, hands deep in pockets."⁵⁰ When Kate goes to have a bath, Deeley's and Anna's struggle for dominance reaches its peak. Deeley first challenges Anna by drawing attention to the privilege he has as her husband: "You know what she is like when she gets in the bath". However, Anna, to Deeley's surprise, responds, "Yes." 51 Deeley then starts to give details which he thinks are not probably known by Anna to regain power in this struggle, "Enjoys it. Takes a long time over it. Gives herself a great soaping all over, and then washes the soap of, sud by sud. Meticulously"52 He strives to passivate Anna by throwing her outside of the picture and by assuming the control of the situation completely. While they are discussing how to dry Kate, Deeley cries out, "I'll do it. I'll do the whole lot. The towel and the powder. After all, I am her husband."53

The next strategy Deeley and Anna employ to obtain supremacy over Kate and one another is to express their intention covertly through the implicit discourse of songs. The distorted songs of the past reflect the ongoing cold war between them. Anna and Deeley sing nostalgic songs by exchanging the lines which reveal their efforts to oppress Kate. For instance, the lines Deeley sings embody the idea of ownership, "I've got a woman crazy for me. Oh, no they can't take that [Kate] away from me...And some day I'll know that moment divine, when all the things you are, are mine."⁵⁴ Deeley sees his wife as a commodity to possess. Without doubt, Kate naturally and legally belongs to him alone. On the other hand, Anna overpowers Kate in her attempt to awaken old days in Kate's memory to re-exist in her current life as she did in the past, "The way you comb your hair ... You are the

Pinter, Harold, p. 19.

Pinter, Harold, p. 39.

Pinter, Harold, p. 39.

Pinter, Harold, p. 24.

Pinter, Harold, p. 53.

Pinter, Harold, p. 53.

Pinter, Harold, p. 56.

Pinter, Harold, p. 27.

promised kiss of springtime...You're lovely with your smile so warm."⁵⁵ Anna reveals that Kate used to be lively and vigorous in the past before Deeley took all her joy away, and Anna offers her such a possibility in the present time provided that Kate welcomes her to her present life. As seen obviously, the power struggle between Deeley and Anna turns out to be a cruel duel over the ownership of Kate.

To expand their area of dominance, both Deeley and Anna use other strategies as well. Pinter's theatre involves verbal violence. The way the characters use the language reflects their wish as to how to situate the other people in their relationships. Kate is also subjected to verbal abuse. For instance, although Anna and Deeley start their conversation by directly addressing Kate, after one or two sentences, they turn to each other by excluding Kate from the game and changing 'you' into 'she' because it is easier to control Kate when she is not given any opportunity to defend or stand up for herself. Sometimes Kate reacts against their attitude:

Kate: You talk of me as if I were dead.

Anna: No, <u>you weren't dead</u>, you <u>were so lively</u>, so animated. You <u>used to laugh</u>. (*To Deeley*) Yes, <u>she could</u> be so animated...<u>Her</u> eyes lit up. ⁵⁶

The use of 'were' and 'she' creates the effect of alienation since it causes Kate to feel that she is not being personally addressed. Moreover, Deeley and Anna refer to Kate as if she were inanimate.

Anna: (to Deeley) You have a wonderful casserole. I mean wife. A wonderful wife. I was referring to casserole. I was referring to your wife's cooking.⁵⁷

As clearly seen in Anna's sentences, she subdues Kate by killing her human quality and individuality, and by reducing her to an object, either 'a wonderful casserole' or 'cooking'. They deny Kate's existence as an individual and see her as a prize to be won in their struggle against each other. To illustrate, when Kate asks Anna a question, she cannot get a response:

Kate: Do you like the Sicilian People?

Anna stares at her. Silence 58

⁵⁶ Pinter, Harold, p. 34.

⁵⁵ Pinter, Harold, p. 27.

Pinter, Harold, p. 21. Pinter, Harold, p. 43.

In addition, they comment on her actions and behavior as if she were not present there, and speak on behalf of her instead of inviting her to join in their conversation. By doing so, they push her into a position where she cannot have an active control of her actions or thoughts.

Deeley: It's nice I know for Katey to see you. She hasn't many friends.

Anna: Perhaps she has all she wants.

Deeley: She lacks curiosity.

Anna: Perhaps she is happy.

Kate: Are you talking about me?

Deeley: Yes.

Anna: She was always a dreamer.⁵⁹

Deeley and Anna place themselves in this power structure as 'subjects', and they seem to be the ones in control of their surroundings by making decisions and carrying out the actions. Kate is assigned a passive, weak and helpless role, and her action is limited to observing the things, happenings and people around because in order to empower their position and authority, it is essential for Deeley and Anna to weaken her agency. If Kate is made dependent and servile, she will be more easily led, directed and controlled. Thus, Kate is situated as the one who is affected and acted upon, namely a passive victim in this network of relations. Anna explains how Kate is incapable of acting as follows, "Katey would always wait not just for the first emergence of ripple but for the ripples to pervade the surface...but even when she felt that happen, she still might not jump." Moreover, Deeley regards her silence as the sign of Kate's only virtue. Like Anna, he also draws attention to her passivity and incapability to act and decide, "I bejasus saddle myself with a slip of girl not long out of her swaddling clothes whose only claim to virtue was silence but who lacked any sense of fixedness, any sense of decisiveness. A classic figure, I said to myself."61 Both Deeley and Anna misinterpret and misuse Kate's silence and passivity, and reduce her silent existence to an absent-minded person who mixes all the things and who cannot even explain the differences between the days, months, seasons and years:

⁶¹ Pinter, Harold, pp. 35-36.

⁵⁹ Pinter, Harold, p. 23.

Pinter, Harold, p. 36.

Anna: One day she said to me, I've slept through Friday. No you hadn't, I said what do you mean?...today is Saturday.

Deeley: We're forcing her to think. We must see you more. You're a healthy influence. 62

Deeley and Anna have a yearning to assume a leading role in Kate's life. In order to achieve this, they are motivated and driven by the urge to define and determine who she is by assigning qualities and roles in accordance with the image they create in their minds. Deeley and Anna project Kate as incapable of thought, lacking linguistic competence and communicative skills. Deeley suggests that what she says or thinks is not worth listening and remembering, "I said wasn't Robert Newton fantastic, and she said something or other, Christ knows what."63 Anna also points out that since Kate lacks the ability to establish relationship with other people, she helped her to socialize by putting her in touch with other people in London, "She grew to know wonderful people, through my introduction. I took her cafes, where artists and writers collected. All I wanted for her was her happiness."64 Both Deeley and Anna try to patronize her by constructing her subjectivity as an unable and impotent woman who needs help from them. In the docilization process, the qualities of independence and decision are weakened in the person. When Kate goes to have a bath, Deeley tells Anna, "She [Kate] is totally incompetent at drying herself properly. Did you find that? You will always find a few odd unexpected unwanted cheeky globules dripping about."65 When Kate enters the room after having a shower, Deeley first asks "Have you dried yourself properly, Kate?... Are you quite sure? I don't want you sitting here damply all over the place...Do it again."66 Deeley uses an imperative structure to make Kate dry herself again in order to turn his wife into a submissive being by using his male authoritarianism. Besides, Anna treats Kate as if she were a little girl waiting to be dried since she is needy, "She floats from the bath. Like a dream. Unaware of anyone standing with her towel, waiting for her, waiting to wrap it round her. Quite absorbed."67

As can be clearly seen from the examples above, Kate's seeming passivity encourages and invites the other two to get involved in the power games to control and possess her. Although Kate's silence implies that she submits to the object position imposed on her, it, in fact, creates the contrary effect. She is very well aware of the constructed nature of existing power structures established by Anna

⁶² Pinter, Harold, p. 25.

⁶³ Pinter, Harold, p. 30.

⁶⁴ Pinter, Harold, p. 69.

⁶⁵ Pinter, Harold, p. 54.

Pinter, Harold, p. 61.

Pinter, Harold, p. 54.

and Deeley, and she knows for certain that there is no an outside to these power relations. Pinter's characters' attempts to exert control always put them at the risk of being controlled as in the case of Anna and Deeley. Kate manages to construct herself as a resisting and power-exercising subject rather than a regulated and disciplined one. She produces counter-discourses to establish her subjectivity and reality. This can be explained through Foucault's claim that people are able to resist the forces of power and discourse. Foucault asserts that people can counter the operation of power with the claims of bodies, pleasures and knowledges.⁶⁸ If there were no possibility of resistance, there would be no power relations at all. Discourse not only transmits, produces and reinforces power, but it also undermines it and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it.⁶⁹ Thus, power which is always unstable and reversible can be contested at every moment and in every interaction. In this aspect, Kate should not be seen simply as a recipient of power, a place where power is enacted by Anna and Deleey but at the same time the place where power is resisted. Although Deeley and Anna try to generate Kate and her subjectivity as the effect of their power relations and discourses, she is not a helpless object formed and moved by their power. As a Foucaldian free and ethical subject, she takes the responsibility of altering existing power relationships through reversal. Hence, her resistance to power is not an escape from the power of the sovereignty of Anna and Deleey but, rather, an attempt to reconfigure this power relation which is fluid, flexible, and dynamic. As Foucault suggests, resistance involves shifts and changes in power relations, and shifting power relations can end a situation of domination and increase possibilities for freedom.⁷⁰

At the end of the play, Kate takes care of herself by attaining a different mode of being. She gets out of her ostensibly docilized state. She assumes a superior position and eventually emerges as an independent, assertive, a well-adapted, competent, adequate subject with determination and strength contrary to Deeley's and Anna's representation of Kate. Kate has greater self-knowledge when compared to her husband and her so-called friend. Unlike Deeley and Anna, she is not led by irresistible whim to seem powerful, or she does not need to relate to others, which makes her more powerful. Anna had a lot of friends whereas she was Kate's only friend in London, and it was her preference. Moreover, when Anna feels sorry for Kate's being left alone in that isolated place, Kate makes it clear that it does not matter to her at all.

Foucault, M. The History of Sexuality, vol 1. New York: Random House, 1980, p.157.

⁶⁹ Foucault, M. *The History of Sexuality*, vol 1. New York: Random House, 1980, pp. 100-101.

Foucault, M. *The History of Sexuality*, vol 1. New York:Random House, 1980, p. 90.

Anna: Poor Katey when you're away? What does she do?

Kate: Oh, I continue. 71

As already discussed, Anna makes several efforts to patronize Kate. When Kate wants to go out to take a walk, Anna tries to manipulate her to keep Kate in subjugation: "Why do you want to go out tonight, don't let's go out tonight, let's stay in. I'll cook something, you can wash your hair, you can relax, we will put on some records." She even interferes with Kate's dressing habit and tells her what to wear: "Wear your green... You have your turquoise blouse." Anna wants to possess not only Kate but also her house and her roles as well. She tries hard to make herself useful in the house and constantly offers to do the things which Kate is in charge of, and behaves as if she were the host and Kate the guest: "Are you hungry?", "Shall I read to you?" [...] "Shall I run your bath for you?" However, Kate condescends and rules over Anna by treating her as if she were a servant:

Kate: This coffee's cold.

Anna: Oh, I'll make some fresh.⁷⁵

Although Kate is aware of the battle, she intentionally exiles herself into self-protective detachment, and seems indifferent to and disengaged from the power struggle Deeley and Anna are involved in. She lacks voice most of the time but not because she is deprived of her voice but simply because she chooses to be silent. She makes herself inaccessible and "indecipherable"⁷⁶, and thus *unpossessible*. While Anna and Deeley are talking about her, she rarely interferes in their conversation. Instead, she prefers to speak about something irrelevant. While Deeley is boosting about his profession to assert his sense of superiority over Anna, Kate undermines him and inquires about Anna's house in Sicily. That Kate has always something else on her agenda rather than what Deeley and Anna are talking about shows that Kate does not take them seriously. She repudiates their existence and forces them into silence through silence.

Deeley: I had a great crew in Sicily. A marvelous cameraman. Best in the business. I wrote the film and directed it.

Pinter, Harold, p. 43.

Pinter, Harold, p. 39.

Pinter, Harold, p. 45.

⁷⁴ Pinter, Harold, pp. 44-46.

Pinter, Harold, p. 61.

Savran, David. "The Girardian Economy of Desire: *Old Times* Recaptured." *Theatre Journal*. 34, 1 (1982). p. 46.

Kate: (To Anna) Do you drink orange juice on your terrace in the morning?

Anna: Sometimes, Yes.

Deeley: As a matter of fact I am at the top of my profession.

Kate: Do you have marble floors?⁷⁷

Throughout the play, Kate uses Pinter's silences very successfully, and Deeley and Anna fall prey to her silence. Silence functions as a liberating force through which Kate frees herself from oppression and suppression. Kate has what Judith Butler describes as "virtuous disobedience". Kate's silence can be interpreted as subversive and disobedient way of responding to Deeley's and Anna's practices of power. Silence is her ultimate weapon, a tool of power to subjugate the other characters. Her silent discourse prevents the other two from gaining access to her thoughts, feelings and her life. While she is being questioned by Deeley at the beginning of the play, Kate provides short answers or asks him to direct his questions to Anna. As a result, Deeley could not get what he wants. He gets frustrated and accuses her of being indifferent, "Haven't you any curiosity?" 78

In addition, Kate gains preeminence over Deeley by correcting his version of the past. When Anna reminds her of their old good days in London, Deeley attempts to defeat Anna by saying "We rarely get to London", but Kate's answer "Yes I remember" causes him to lose power in the battle. By doing this, she wants to make Deeley realize her powerful being. In addition, when Deeley tells Anna how he "takes her face in [his] hands and look at it", Kate attacks him, "My head is quite fixed. I have it on." She is always there and keeps an eye on them. Kate controls Deeley and Anna with her awareness of the ongoing battle on her. The other characters lose their battle of dominance since they are totally unaware that Kate is not withdrawn into a passive state; on the contrary, she actively watches everything, though silently.

Deeley's and Kate's desire to dominate Kate is, in fact, motivated by their desire to hide the fact that they are incompetent, unsatisfied and frustrated beings. Their incompetence takes the form of the pursuit of power to make up for their shortcomings and weaknesses which they project onto Kate. Through Kate, they hope to experience a sense of victory and success. However, Kate subverts the harmful effects of policing, challenging and contesting, and transforms the unwanted subjectivity imposed on her. She actively participates in the process of

Pinter, Harold, p. 14.

Pinter, Harold, p. 42.

Pinter, Harold, p. 18.

Pinter, Harold, p. 24.

her self-making when she breaks her silence and undoes the chain of domination Deeley and Anna set up to keep her imprisoned. She takes her turn to exercise power by delivering the last and longest speech and presents her own version of the past memory to declare victory over Deeley and Anna.

Deeley's and Anna's fixation on the past and their failure to move on into the future as self-sufficient beings bring about their end. In her speech, Kate underlines the fact that her relationship cannot be what it used to be both with Deeley and Anna. Anna cannot be part of her life anymore since she is dead in the past and cannot be reborn in the present. Kate describes Anna as dirt and her relationship with Anna as dirty, which shows that Anna is of no importance or value in Kate's eyes. She also implies that it is not Anna but she herself who dominates her by watching. Therefore, Anna has been kept in control by Kate:

I remember you lying dead. You didn't know I was watching you. I leaned over you. Your face was dirty. Your face scrawled with dirt...You were dead in my room...sat naked beside you and watched you.⁸¹

Similarly, she does not let Deeley assert his masculine power and authority on her. She clears herself from the dirt, and exploits Deeley to get rid of Anna. Kate also identifies him with dirt. It is clear that she married Deeley not to catch happiness or for the sake of her love for him but just for a change of environment. In the end, Anna and Deeley are dispossessed of their status, power, discourse and territory.

When I brought him into the room your body of course had gone. What a relief it was to have a different body in my room, a male body behaving quite differently... To lie in, or on... I dug about in the window box, where you had planted our pretty pansies...and plastered his face with dirt...He suggested a wedding instead and a change of environment... He lay there in your bed. He asked me once, at about that time who has slept in that bed before him: I told him no one. No one at all."82

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Pinter, Harold, pp. 71-72.

⁸² Pinter, Harold, pp. 72-73.

4. Conclusion

To sum up, Deeley, Anna and Kate are intrinsically entangled with power/knowledge/discourse relations and emerge both as subjects and products of discourses and power. In their relations, power circulates, and as a result, the characters take on different characteristics according to the range of subject positions they map out for themselves and the other character opens up for them. From the very first moment of their confrontation, the characters are engaged in the production of discourses, and their discourses, as spaces of knowledge, become a battleground, a space of contest and struggle. The discourses the characters produce function not only as 'an instrument and an effect of power' they exert but also 'a point of resistance' and 'a starting point for an opposing strategy'. 83 In other words, their discourses about the past are not only the means through which they carry out their struggles with one another but also something for which they fight in order to resist and counterattack their rivals. They produce the knowledge and versions of truth to destabilize the power acted upon them. What they have offered as knowledge and truth undergoes constant reconstitution, transformation and continuous readaptation in the course of the play. They deconstruct the discourses about the past fabricated by the other characters and then reclaim the past by constructing the version of the past which serves their self-interested ends. The battle between the characters is fought primarily to deconstruct the existing power equations within the relationships, that is, marriage and friendship, in order to reconstruct a new one which is inevitably to be re-deconstructed by the other character because of the dynamic nature of power. This struggle over power, knowledge and discourse is carried out through cold war tactics, strategic developments of memory, subjugation, exploitation and victimization. However, the most powerful weapon, silence is used by Kate very effectively, and as a result, Kate expels both Deeley and Anna from her life at the end of the play.

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