



DOMMAR®

Betrayal

by Harold Pinter

Study Guide

Written by Sara Clifford

Edited by Aimee Barnett

Photographs by Catherine Ashmore

This programme has been made possible by the generous support of Sir John Cass's Foundation, John Lyons' Charity and Universal Consolidated Group

Contents

Section 1: Cast list and creative team

Section 2: The playwright: Harold Pinter, his life and work

Section 3: Political and social context

British theatre in the 1950s

A new direction

Art, politics and 'truth'

Section 4: The play: *Betrayal*

Themes:

What is it about?

Why is it told backwards?

Who are the characters?

Who is betraying who?

How many betrayals?

Using autobiographical material

Playing Pinter:

Self deception and 'masks'

The balance of power

The dot and the pause

Section 5: *Betrayal* in performance

The Donmar production – an interview with Alex Sims, Resident Assistant Director at the Donmar Warehouse

Section 6: Reading

Bibliography

Appendix

Articles about the origins of *Betrayal*

Article about Pinter on his 70th birthday

Cast and Creative Team

Characters and actors



Emma
Dervla Kirwan



Robert, her husband
Samuel West



Jerry
Toby Stephens



Waiter
Paul Di Rollo

Pinter's notes tell us that in 1977 (the end of the play), Emma is 38 and Jerry and Robert are 40.

Creative team

Director	Roger Michell
Designer	William Dudley
Lighting Designer	Rick Fisher
Sound Designer	John Owens
Composer	Alec Dankworth
Video Systems Designers	Alan and Alex Cox

The Playwright: Harold Pinter, his life and work

Harold Pinter is one of the world's leading playwrights, and is equally well known as a director, actor, poet and political activist. Born on 10 October 1930 in East London, the son of a Jewish tailor, he attended Hackney Downs Grammar School, and went on to study acting for two terms at RADA in 1948-9. By 1949, not only had he written his first piece, *Kullus*, but he had already been tried as a conscientious objector (someone who refuses to fight in a war on the grounds of conscience), and this dual commitment to both his art and to politics has continued throughout his career.

In 2005, Harold Pinter was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, the highest honour available to any writer in the world. In announcing the award, Horace Engdahl, Chairman of the Swedish Academy, said that Pinter was an artist 'who in his plays uncovers the precipice under everyday prattle and forces entry into oppression's closed rooms.'

Recently retired from playwriting after completing 29 plays and 22 screenplays, Pinter remains, 'to his credit, a permanent public nuisance' (Michael Billington), composing 'poems, sketches, articles and passionate, antagonistic political pieces.'

Pinter's work

Pinter has written 29 plays including *The Birthday Party* (1957); *The Dumb Waiter* (1957); *The Caretaker* (1959) – recently revived at Sheffield Theatres, Tricycle Theatre and Richmond Theatre; *The Dwarfs* (1960); *The Homecoming* (1964); *The Basement* (1966); *Landscape* (1967); *Silence* (1968); *Old Times* (1970) – produced at the Donmar Warehouse directed by Roger Michell in 2004; *Monologue* (1972); *No Man's Land* (1974); *Betrayal* (1978); *Family Voices* (1980); and with *Victoria Station* and *A Kind Of Alaska* under the title *Other Places* (1982); *One For The Road* (1984); *Mountain Language* (1988); *The New World Order* (1991); *Party Time* (1991); *Moonlight* (1993); *Ashes To Ashes* (1996); *Celebration* (1999). His most recent work includes *Sketch Press Conference* (2002) and *Sketch Apart From That* (2006).

He has also written over 20 screenplays including *The Caretaker* (1962); *The Pumpkin Eater* (1963); *The Servant* (1963); *Accident* (1966); *The Birthday Party* (1967); *The Go-Between* (1969); *The Homecoming* (1969); *A La Recherche Du Temps Perdu* (1972) not filmed; *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1980); *Betrayal* (1981); *The Handmaid's Tale* (1987); *The Heat Of The Day* (1988); *The Comfort Of Strangers* (1989); *The Trial* (1989) and *Sleuth* (2007).

Pinter has directed nearly 30 theatre productions, including James Joyce's *Exiles*; David Mamet's *Oleanna*; Tennessee Williams' *Sweet Bird Of Youth*; seven plays by Simon Gray, and many of his own plays, including *The Birthday Party* (1964); *Party Time* and *Mountain Language* (1991); *The New World Order* (1991); *Ashes To Ashes* (1996); *Celebration* and *The Room* (2000); *No Man's Land* (2001).

His acting career spans 50 years, from his early touring days in rep, to appearing in productions of his own plays, *The Caretaker* – Mick, Duchess Theatre (1960); *The Homecoming* – Lenny, Watford Theatre (1969); *Old Times* – Deeley, Los Angeles (1985); *No Man's Land* – Hirst, Almeida and Comedy Theatre (1992-3);

The Collection - Harry, Gate Theatre, Dublin (1997) and Donmar Warehouse (1998); *One For The Road* - Nicolas, New Ambassadors Theatre, London (2001) and Lincoln Center Festival, New York (2001); *Sketch Press Conference*, Royal National Theatre (2002).

Literary prizes include a CBE, 1966; European Prize for Literature (Vienna) 1973; Pirandello Prize (Palermo) 1980; The David Cohen British Literature Prize 1995; Laurence Olivier Special Award 1996; Sunday Times Award for Literary Excellence 1997; BAFTA Fellowship 1997; Companion of Literature, RSL 1998; The Critics' Circle Award for Distinguished Service to the Arts 2000; South Bank Show Award for Outstanding Achievement in the Arts, 2001; S.T. Dupont Golden Pen Award 2001 for a Lifetime's Distinguished Service to Literature; 'Premio Fiesole ai Maestri del Cinema', Italy, 2001; World Leaders Award, Toronto, Canada, 2001; Nobel Prize for Literature, 2005; European Theatre Prize, 2006.

His work in politics has been recognised by the following:

Hermann Kesten Medallion for outstanding commitment on behalf of persecuted and imprisoned writers, awarded by German P.E.N., Berlin, Germany, 2001; Wilfred Owen Poetry Prize, 2005, for his work opposing the war in Iraq; Frank Kafka Prize, 2005; Serbian Foundation Prize, 2006; Legion d'Honneur, 2007.

He also has honorary degrees from 17 universities.

Harold Pinter is married to Lady Antonia Fraser and lives in London.



Political and social context

British theatre in the 1950s

Beginning in autumn 1948, for two terms Pinter attended the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (RADA). Later that year, he was called up for National Service, registered as a conscientious objector, was brought to trial twice, and ultimately fined by the magistrate for refusing to serve. He took his toothbrush with him to both trials, ready to go to prison.

He 'loath[ed]' RADA, and dropped out in 1949. Following a further two terms at Central School of Speech and Drama, Pinter began his career in the theatre as an actor, working in weekly 'rep' or repertory theatre.

In Britain, rep usually involved a weekly turnaround of plays, with six evening and two matinee performances, with rehearsals during the days for the next week's production. Between 1954 and 1959, having adopted his grandmother's maiden name, Pinter acted with the stage name David Baron in more than 80 plays around the country. With such a fierce time pressure, there was little opportunity to explore the writing or the direction in any depth, and these old style companies frequently revolved around an actor-manager, who would build the production around himself, often in a highly theatrical style. Whilst this has proved an invaluable training ground for many now established actors and playwrights, it could also be exhausting and unrewarding, and Pinter once told his friends that acting was a 'shithouse of a profession.' (Michael Billington, *The Life and Work of Harold Pinter*)

New writing for British theatre at this time mostly consisted of drawing room comedies and dramas, written by and for the middle classes. However, a sea change was about to happen, following the advent of free education after the war; a new generation of working class grammar school educated young men and women burst on to the scene, with new stories to tell. Beginning in the '50s and on into the early '60s, these were the 'angry young men', determined to change not only theatre, but the whole of society and its structures, later to lead on into the revolutionary politics of the late '60s. Spearheaded by the Royal Court Theatre, these writers included John Osborne with *Look Back in Anger* (1956); Arnold Wesker with *Chicken Soup with Barley* (1958); and Shelagh Delaney with *A Taste of Honey* (1958).

Alongside these British so-called 'kitchen sink dramas', other European plays were being performed which offered a more abstract or 'absurd' form of theatre, aiming to combine human tragedy with farce. This was exemplified by Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1955) and Eugene Ionesco's *The Chairs* (1952), both writers who challenged the form and content of established theatre.

At a time when cinema and mass entertainment through television were conspiring to reduce attendance at the theatre, 'Pinter belonged to a generation of playwrights who, together, were to redefine the very nature of British drama and rewrite the established rules.' (Mark Batty, *About Pinter: the Playwright and the work*)



A new direction

Betrayal was written in what could be regarded as the third phase of Pinter's work.

His early plays, the first phase, include *The Room* and *The Birthday Party* - *The Room* arose when he mentioned to a friend, Henry Woolf, who was working in the drama department of Bristol University, that he had an idea for a play. Woolf liked the idea so much that he asked Pinter to write it, but on the condition that he would need it within a week if the university was to perform it. Pinter wrote back and told him to forget it!

'And then I sat down and wrote it in four days. I don't know how it happened, but it did.'

Interview with Kenneth Tynan, BBC, 1960

As Martin Esslin has pointed out (Martin Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurd*), this play 'already contains a good many of the basic themes and a great deal of the very personal style and idiom of Pinter's later and more successful work - the uncannily cruel accuracy of his reproduction of the inflections and rambling irrelevancy of everyday speech; the commonplace situation that is gradually invested with menace, dread and mystery; the deliberate omission of an explanation or motivation for the action.' (Esslin)

Pinter also used a room as the primary poetic image of the play, another recurring motif in Pinter's work:

'What is going to happen to these two people in the room? Is someone going to open the door and come in?'

Pinter, interview with Hallam Tennyson, BBC, 1960

Betrayal ends (and therefore actually begins) with this very set up; Emma and Jerry are in a room together, and she says:

EMMA My husband is at the other side of that door.

As Jerry declares his love for Emma and kisses her for the first time, Robert opens the door and comes in, and so the lies, the dramatic tension, and therefore the story, start.

Back in the '50s, such was the success of *The Room* that Pinter was able to write *The Birthday Party*, which opened at the Lyric Hammersmith in 1958 following a regional tour. However, the praise that it had attracted on tour was not repeated in London, and the critics were harsh, accusing it of obscurity and forcing it to close after just eight performances. This was a bitter disappointment for Pinter, but the following year saw the premieres of *The Room* and *The Dumb Waiter* in London, where Pinter wrote a programme note that might ward off a similar critical response:

'A character on the stage, who can present no convincing argument or information as to his past experience, his present behaviour or his aspirations, nor give a comprehensive analysis of his motives, is as legitimate and as worthy as one who, alarmingly, can do all these things.'

Harold Pinter, *Various Voices*

Pinter has steadfastly maintained this approach to his characters throughout his writing career, saying that not only does he not lead them in a narrative of cause and effect, he often doesn't know what they are going to do at all, famously labelling them A, B and C, and seeing what they say to each other before he can ascertain their relationship. In his Nobel Prize speech, he said:

*'Most of the plays are engendered by a line, a word or an image. The given word is often shortly followed by the image... The first line of *The Homecoming* is:*

"What have you done with the scissors?" ... I had no further information... someone was obviously looking for a pair of scissors and was demanding their whereabouts of someone else he suspected had probably stolen them. But I somehow knew that the person addressed didn't give a damn about the scissors or about the questioner either, for that matter.'

Again, we can see this in *Betrayal*, where none of the characters gives any reason or motivation for their duplicitous behaviour – it just seems to happen, almost as if beyond their control, although the effects of that behaviour are immense.



Discussion Point

Discuss Pinter's viewpoint on characters and their motivations - do you agree? Do you think you need to know a character's motives in order to understand and/or enjoy a play?

Compare examples from plays where a character's motivation is clear, with some of Pinter's work, where he gives no motives.

What Pinter was offering was 'a form of drama unprecedented on the British stage' (Batty), a modernist approach; there was no longer a reliable point of view, such as the writer's, that could be seen as true. Instead, Pinter shows us many different perspectives, and characters whose idea of what is 'true' shifts according to their current circumstances. And although many critics were still dismissive of his work, others, such as the critic Harold Hobson, identified it as part of 'a new direction' in British theatre. Martin Esslin named this new direction as the 'Theatre of the Absurd', citing Pinter, Beckett and Ionesco, amongst others, as creating 'A new language, new ideas, new approaches, and a new vitalised philosophy to transform the modes of thought and feeling of the public.' (Esslin)

By 1960, Pinter was commissioned to write an Armchair Theatre television play, *A Night Out*, and in the same week that it aired, *The Caretaker* opened, leading the Times to describe his 'meteoric rise from our least understood avant garde writer to, virtually, our most popular young playwright.'

The second phase of Pinter's work includes two of his best known plays, *The Caretaker* and *The Homecoming*, as well as the film, *The Servant*, and, although seen as more metaphorical and allusive, they explore some of Pinter's favourite themes in human relationships; who is telling the truth to whom and when? Who has dominance or power and when? What is the relationship between men and women? All these themes would be revisited in *Betrayal*.

Following *The Homecoming*, however, Pinter experienced something of a writer's block. He had become very successful, and was endlessly discussed and critically examined, until by 1971, he felt:

'He's not me. He's someone else's creation.'

Interview, *About Pinter*

Theatre was changing again, with the influence of Antoin Artaud, Grotowski's 'Poor Theatre' and Peter Brook's artistic laboratory explorations of *Marat/Sade* (1964) and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1970). The Arts Council was beginning to fund more experimental fringe work, but Pinter found that this was not where his work was placed, and, in contrast to this, 'was and remained an essentially traditional playwright and.. maintains a focus on the text.' (Batty)

Old Times (1971), and *No Man's Land* (1975) signalled a new direction in Pinter's work, exploring how the past invades and informs the present, focussing on

close relationships, and this is where we can place *Betrayal*. He was particularly interested in 'how memory, by its very nature, is an act of the present, and cannot therefore be a verifiable record of the past' (Batty):

'The past is not the past' and 'one's previous parts are alive and present.'

Conversations with Pinter, Mel Gussow

As the character Anna says in *Old Times*:

ANNA There are some things one remembers even though they may never have happened. There are things I remember which may never have happened, but as I recall them, so they take place.

And in *Betrayal*, Jerry remembers:

JERRY Listen. Do you remember, when was it, a few years ago, we were all in your kitchen, must have been Christmas or something, do you remember, all the kids were running about and I suddenly picked Charlotte up and lifted her high up, high up, and then down and up. Do you remember how she laughed?

EMMA Everyone laughed.

JERRY She was so light. And there was your husband and my wife and all the kids, all standing and laughing in your kitchen. I can't get rid of it.

EMMA It was your kitchen, actually.

(Scene Six)

As we have seen in the first scene, Jerry always misremembers this scene as taking place in Emma's kitchen.



Discussion Point

Why does Pinter have Jerry recalling this memory twice in the play?

Why does Jerry always think it was Emma's kitchen?

Are there other times when memory is called into question in the play? Why is this important?

In *No Man's Land*, about a frozen writer, the poet is locked in the past, unable to connect with either his creativity or with others. Together with *Betrayal*, these plays present 'warnings against behaviour that might lead to social or emotional paralysis.' (Batty)

The final phase of Pinter's writing is heralded by *Family Voices* (1982, part of *A Kind of Alaska*), where the family is becoming a shelter, rather than a metaphor for disintegration, and again in *One for the Road* (1984). It is the repression and destruction of the family that takes him on into his 'political' plays, *Mountain Language* (1988) and *Party Time* (1991), and a time in his life when his political passion has dominated his outlook, particularly against the United States, and its repressions around the world, from Nicaragua to Iraq. In 1985, he visited Turkey

with Arthur Miller to represent International PEN, an organisation that offers solidarity with imprisoned writers around the world. Pinter said:

'I remember years ago I regarded myself as an artist in an ivory tower.. I've now totally rejected that. I find that the things that are actually happening are not only of the greatest importance, but (have) the most crucial bearing on our lives, including this matter of censorship of people and writers' imprisonment, torture, and the whole question of how we are dealt with by governments who are in power.'

Interview in *About Pinter*



Art, politics and 'truth'

When Pinter gave his Nobel Prize acceptance speech in 2005, he began:

'In 1958 I wrote the following:

"There are no hard distinctions between what is real and what is unreal, nor between what is true and what is false. A thing is not necessarily either true or false; it can be both true and false."

I believe that these assertions still make sense and do still apply to the exploration of reality through art. So as a writer I stand by them but as a citizen I cannot. As a citizen I must ask: What is true? What is false?'

Pinter used his speech as an opportunity to make a political comment about truth in relation to conflicts around the world, such as Iraq, but these investigations of what constitutes 'truth' have marked all his work, both as an artist and as an activist:

'Truth in drama is forever elusive. You never quite find it, but the search for it is compulsive.. More often than not, you stumble upon the truth in the dark.. often without realising that you have done so. But the real truth is that there is never any such thing as one truth to be found in dramatic art. There are many. These truths challenge each other, recoil from each other, reflect each other, ignore each other, tease each other, are blind to each other. Sometimes you feel you have the truth of a moment in your hand, then it slips through your fingers and is lost... But the search for the truth can never stop. It cannot be adjourned, it cannot be postponed. It has to be faced, right there on the spot.'

Batty adds, 'As an artist, his concerns have involved charting the anatomy of truth as a phenomenon constructed by the individual's perceptions of experience, tempered by the vagaries of memory, by the challenges and invasions of others, and by longings and fears coloured by denial, betrayal and anxiety. As an engaged citizen, he strives to keep the truth of the fact of human oppression centre-stage, and...target those who abuse power and manipulate language to keep those truths obscured.'



Discussion Point

How far should an artist be involved with 'politics'?

Can you think of other writers or artists who engage directly with politics, either in the UK or abroad?

How do they do this, and what do we mean by 'politics' in this context?

Themes in *Betrayal*

What is it about?

Written in 1978, *Betrayal* tells one of the oldest stories in the world: a love triangle, where the woman, Emma, has betrayed her husband, Robert, with his best friend, Jerry, for seven years.

As outlined above, Pinter does not set up a conflict to be resolved: there are no heroes or villains – each person is guilty of many betrayals over the years, of betraying their wife or husband or best friend, and this series of betrayals leaves them washed up on the remains of their relationships, where all trust and love has been destroyed.

Why is it told backwards?

The story is told in reverse, and this backwards structure ‘stops its audience concentrating on cause and effect and making the associated moral judgements that this might ordinarily induce. Instead, it is difficult to isolate a villain of the piece, and each character elicits our disdain and admiration in different measures at different stages.’ (Batty)

In other words, this structure for the play supports the idea that there are many realities and changing viewpoints in life, and that no one sets out with a clear motivation for their actions. The characters sometimes seem to drift into decisions and choices, deceiving themselves and others into further acts of betrayal, and this self deception lies at the heart of the play. As Alex Sims, Assistant Director of the Donmar Warehouse production points out below, the actors spent many hours in rehearsal defining which characters are lying to themselves and when, and when they are lying to others and why. Sometimes a pause leads to further betrayal, when in fact it could have been a moment of indecision: for example, the first time Jerry kisses Emma in 1968 in Scene Nine, she breaks away. The stage directions merely indicate:

He kisses her.

She breaks away.

He kisses her.

The whole play hinges on the moment when she breaks away - will she slap his face, leave the room, laugh or – what she does - allow him to kiss her again.

It would seem that our lives are full of these moments, when different paths present themselves, and we often take the path of least resistance, lying to ourselves, changing our memories.

Because the play is told backwards, we, as the audience, know what the characters don't – we know how it is all going to turn out. We know who has said what in the scene before (i.e. the consequences of their actions, chronologically).

Telling the story backwards also allows us to see the original innocent characters emerging from the maze of deceit and false memory they have created over the years. As Jack Kroll said in a review of the first production:

'It's like watching a flower blossom backward, its petals inexorably closing.'

Who are the characters?

Sarah Hemming, in a review of the 2003 Peter Hall production states that the characters change over the course of the play, as they move backwards in time. Emma moves from 'bruised wisdom to sexual power'; Robert is 'brittle and tight lipped' when we first meet him, becoming 'confident' as the play reverses; and Jerry is full of 'rumpled regret', becoming 'ardent and impulsive'.

The two families are so close that Jerry remembers the scene in the kitchen when he threw Charlotte, Emma's daughter, up in the air:

JERRY And there was your husband and my wife and all the kids, all standing and laughing in your kitchen.



Practical Exercise

When you watch the play, try and see how the actors show these changes across time.

Who is your sympathy with – at the beginning? At the end?

What do you think the characters' real feelings are for each other – do Jerry and Emma love each other? Does Jerry love his wife? Does Robert love Emma? Does it change over the course of the play?

Why does Pinter give Robert the lines about hitting Emma 'once or twice' ('the old itch')?

Who is betraying who?

Samuel West, who plays Robert, said in a recent interview with the Evening Standard that when he looked up the definition of the word betrayal, he discovered:

- to deliver to an enemy by treachery or disloyalty;
- to be unfaithful in guarding, maintaining or fulfilling;
- to seduce and desert – this is the one Samuel liked best.

The play explores the 'seduce and desert' definition most closely – but it is not only Jerry who seduces Emma, having betrayed Robert's friendship and Emma who deserts Robert; Jerry deserts Emma after several years of their affair; while Robert, in the end, deserts Jerry, when he tells him that he has known for some time about the affair. Their friendship can never recover.

Jerry has been 'unfaithful' in fulfilling his friendship with Robert – a friendship implies trust, and Jerry has broken this trust through disloyalty.

Emma has been disloyal to her husband; Robert has been unfaithful to Emma, and has had many affairs. He even suggests that he actually liked Jerry better than Emma, in the way that male friendship excludes women:

ROBERT To be honest I've liked him rather more than I've liked you. Perhaps I should have had an affair with him myself.

Meanwhile, it is suggested, Judith, the unseen wife of Jerry, has also been unfaithful. And how complicit has Robert been in the affair all along? It has even been suggested that it was convenient for Robert, so that he would have an alibi for his own affairs, and so he allowed that first scene in the bedroom to take place. Paradoxically, the very betrayals that destroy them also bind them - for a while. And while Jerry is the prime mover, he also becomes the ultimate outsider in the drama.

There is also the loss of their love of literature, a betrayal in their careers of a deeper vision that they once had; yet another betrayal that arises from the initial moment when Emma stays in the room with Jerry.

As Michael Billington says:

'Behind the play's action, lies an aching awareness of the way the high ideals of youth are betrayed by the compromises of daily life. Jerry and Robert were both, as undergraduates, editors of poetry magazines.. Now Jerry is an agent hawking around a writer called Casey, who is a useful money spinner, but little more; Robert, a successful publisher, drunkenly confesses that he hates the whole business of pushing, promoting and selling modern prose literature. They are not only parasitic literary middlemen, but, by extension, symbols of all those who betray their youthful commitment for the sake of bland, middle aged affluence.'

Michael Billington

This terrible web of treachery, disloyalty, breach of trust and desertion leads to the endless betrayals between the characters that destroy their marriages, careers and any hope of love or friendship.

As Peter Hall says:

'If you just receive the play without digging underneath it, it's a rather trite story. The obvious question is "Who is being betrayed?" ... The sleight of hand that Harold has performed is that, while dealing with the triangular relationship, he's talking about something else. He seems to be saying that if you start with self-betrayal, it gradually infects everything else, like a dreadful, destructive virus.'

Michael Billington, About Pinter



How many betrayals?

Alex Sims, Assistant Director, says that in rehearsals, they counted up to 52 different moments of betrayal – so who has betrayed whom?

For example:

- Jerry betrays his friendship with Robert by having an affair with Emma;
- Emma betrays her husband Robert, with her affair with Jerry;
- Robert betrays Emma by having several secret affairs throughout their marriage;
- Robert betrays Jerry, when he reveals that he has known for four years about his affair with Emma, and didn't tell him that he knew;
- Emma betrays Jerry in that she hasn't told him that she has told Robert about their affair.



Discussion and Exercise

Discuss the different 'betrayals' in the play. Think about moments when people withhold information to see what the other person will say, such as when Jerry asks Robert about the speedboat, having already had a conversation with Emma about it; or a bigger active moment such as when Emma decides to stay in the room with Jerry as he grasps her arm, right at the end/beginning of the play.

How does Robert betray Jerry and Emma in other parts of the play?

How many examples of betrayal can you find in the following extract from Scene Six?

Think about what information you know about the characters and their relationships, and from the preceding scenes.

The room is dimly lit. JERRY is sitting in the shadows. Faint music through the door.

The door opens. Light. Music. EMMA comes in, closes the door. She goes towards the mirror, sees JERRY.

EMMA Good God.

JERRY I've been waiting for you.

EMMA What do you mean?

JERRY I knew you'd come.

He drinks.

EMMA I've just come in to comb my hair.

He stands.

JERRY I knew you'd have to. I knew you'd have to comb your hair. I knew you'd have to get away from the party.

She goes to the mirror, combs her hair.

He watches her.

JERRY You're a beautiful hostess.

EMMA Aren't you enjoying the party?

JERRY You're beautiful.

He goes to her.

JERRY Listen. I've been watching you all night. I must tell you, I want to tell you, I have to tell you –

EMMA Please-

JERRY You're incredible.

EMMA You're drunk.

JERRY Nevertheless.

He holds her.

EMMA Jerry.

JERRY I was best man at your wedding. I saw you in white. I watched you glide by in white.

EMMA I wasn't in white.

JERRY You know what should have happened?

EMMA What?

JERRY I should have had you, in your white, before the wedding. I should have blackened you, in your white wedding dress, blackened you in your bridal dress, before ushering you into your wedding, as your best man.

EMMA My husband's best man. Your best friend's best man.

JERRY No. Your best man.

EMMA I must get back.

The scene progresses and then:

He kisses her.

She breaks away.

He kisses her.

Laughter off.

She breaks away.

Door opens. ROBERT.

EMMA Your best friend is drunk.

JERRY As you are my best and oldest friend and, in the present instance, my host, I decided to take this opportunity to tell your wife how beautiful she was.

ROBERT Quite right.

JERRY It is quite right, to .. face up to the facts.. and to offer a token, without blush, a token of one's unalloyed appreciation, no holds barred.

ROBERT Absolutely.

JERRY And how wonderful for you that this is so, that this is the case, that her beauty is the case.

ROBERT Quite right.

JERRY moves to ROBERT and takes hold of his elbow.

JERRY I speak as your oldest friend. Your best man.

ROBERT You are, actually.

He clasps JERRY'S shoulder briefly, turns, leaves the room.

EMMA moves towards the door. JERRY grasps her arm. She stops still.

They stand still, looking at each other.

(END)

Using autobiographical material

As mentioned below, *Betrayal* is based on real events: the long standing affair that Pinter had with Joan Bakewell, despite his friendship with her husband, Michael Bakewell. As Billington says, 'His stage plays are triggered by a sharp memory of some personal experience, which then develops its own internal logic.'

Although Pinter initially didn't acknowledge that the play was based on his own life, he later did, and when questioned about the potential moral dilemma (another betrayal perhaps?) involved in using this material, he said:

'I think every writer does that one way or another. Otherwise what are we writing about? We're writing about something to do with ourselves and observable reality about us. .. But I think, as long as the work is written with understanding, it is legitimate....

For example, in Betrayal, I think the situation that the wife finds herself in, is one which a lot of people will associate with.. It's a situation you find yourself in, and what do you do about it? You live it and you find your ways out..'

The Life and work of Harold Pinter



Practical Exercise

Individually, decide on an early, happy memory you are open to sharing. Discuss these memories with a partner. What do you remember about it? How can you be sure it happened? Have you been told about it by a family member, or seen a photograph? What feelings do you associate with it? Why do you think you remember it?

Then individually write a paragraph about the memory their partner has told them. Share and discuss: what has been remembered, what forgotten? What seemed important to the listener?

Try acting these paragraphs out for each other. Does this change the story again?

Playing Pinter: Self deception and 'masks'

Assistant Director Alex Sims comments below that a really important note from Harold Pinter when they first started rehearsing was:

'Don't show what you can conceal.'

It is important to identify when the characters are lying to themselves and others, and when they are really speaking the truth. Alex highlights how important it is that the actors never play what the characters are really feeling, and that they instead wear a 'mask' for their feelings - and that it is crucial therefore to pin down when the mask is momentarily dropped - and then reinstated.

From Scene One

JERRY When did he tell you all this?

EMMA Last night. I think we were up all night.

Pause.

JERRY You talked all night?

EMMA Yes. Oh yes.

Pause.

JERRY I didn't come into it, did I?

EMMA What?

JERRY I just-

EMMA I just phoned you this morning, you know, that's all, because I.. because we're old friends.. I've been up all night.. the whole thing's finished.. I suddenly felt I wanted to see you.

JERRY Well, look, I'm happy to see you. I am. I'm sorry.. about..

EMMA Do you remember? I mean, do you remember?

JERRY I remember.

Pause.

EMMA You couldn't really afford Wessex Grove when we took it, could you?

JERRY Oh, love finds a way.

EMMA I bought the curtains.

JERRY You found a way.

EMMA Listen, I didn't want to see you for nostalgia. I mean, what's the point? I just wanted to see how you were. Truly. How are you?

JERRY Oh what does it matter?

Pause.

JERRY You didn't tell Robert about me last night, did you?

EMMA I had to.



Practical Exercise

Bearing in mind what you know from the rest of the play, where in this scene are the characters telling the truth and where are they wearing a 'mask'?

What are they really feeling?

Does Emma still love Jerry? Does he love her?

Who initiates the conversation?

Try playing the scene, with and then without 'masks'.



The balance of power

Alex says that Pinter's note at the first read-through concerned Scene Five, when Robert is interrogating Emma after finding Jerry's letter to her at the Post Office. Pinter felt that she was too strong (powerful) at that point:

Pause.

EMMA It was from Jerry.

ROBERT Yes. I recognised the handwriting.

Pause.

ROBERT How is he?

EMMA Okay.

ROBERT Good. And Judith?

EMMA Fine.

Pause.

ROBERT What about the kids?

EMMA I don't think he mentioned them.

ROBERT They're probably all right then. If they were ill or something he'd have probably mentioned it.

Pause .

ROBERT Any other news?

EMMA No.

Silence.

ROBERT Are you looking forward to Torcello?

Pause.

ROBERT How many times have we been to Torcello? Twice. I remember how you loved it, the first time I took you there. You fell in love with it. That was about ten years ago, wasn't it? About.. six months after we were married. Yes. Do you remember? I wonder if you'll like it as much tomorrow.

Pause.

ROBERT What do you think of Jerry as a letter writer?

She laughs shortly.

ROBERT You're trembling. Are you cold?

EMMA No.

(The scene continues)



Practical Exercise

In the above scene, Emma is hiding the fact that Jerry, her lover, has written to her. Later in the scene, she goes on to confess to Robert.

What is she feeling? What is Robert feeling?

Read the scene, with the 'masks', as outlined above.

Read the scene with Emma as strong and Robert weak; then reverse it. How does this affect the scene? Does it change through the scene?

Act the scene out to show the power balance on each line, perhaps standing higher and lower than each other to show the changes.



The dot and the pause

Harold Pinter is famous for his use of pauses. It has become part of theatrical language to refer to a 'Pinteresque pause', and Pinter writes them in very carefully in his scripts, along with ... dots, indicating a trailing off, a short pause, and his other stage directions.

Sir Peter Hall once ran a 'dot and pause' rehearsal to pin these down, looking only at the dots, pauses and silences in each scene – each one has been placed, and changing them or taking them out can change the whole meaning of a scene.

What is happening in a pause? Why didn't the character finish their line there? What might have been said in that pause? What happens as a result of that pause?

Look at the following example:

From Scene Five

ROBERT He wasn't the best man at our wedding, was he?

EMMA You know he was.

ROBERT Ah yes. Well, that's probably when I introduced him to you.

Pause.

ROBERT Was there any message for me, in his letter?

Pause.

ROBERT I mean in the line of business, to do with the world of publishing. Has he discovered any new and original talent? He's quite talented at uncovering talent, old Jerry.

EMMA No message.

ROBERT No message. Not even his love?

Silence.

EMMA We're lovers.



Practical Exercise

Discuss the pauses and the silence in this short extract. What is happening in each one?

Find other examples in the play where Pinter has been very specific with his stage directions, either as to what the actors are doing, or with pauses.

Take one of these examples - read or act it out with no pauses. Try again with pauses in different places or doing something different to the stage directions. How does it affect the scene?



Discussion Point

What is the importance of drinking and music in the script?

AND FINALLY...

'Essentially, the play asks one big question - if you knew where a move would lead would you still make it?'

Discuss the meanings of the word betrayal:

- to deliver to an enemy by treachery or disloyalty;
- to be unfaithful in guarding, maintaining or fulfilling;
- to seduce and desert.

Create a list of words associated with betrayal. In groups select one word and create a tableau (frozen image) of it, then turn it into a scene of betrayal.

Working backwards, show three to five images of the events leading up to this betrayal.



Betrayal in Performance: The Donmar Production

The following includes notes from Roger Michell, the director, and Alex Sims, Resident Assistant Director at the Donmar Warehouse, in week three of the five week rehearsal process.

What attracts you to Pinter's work, and why have you chosen to work on *Betrayal*?

Roger: I first read Pinter when I was at school, aged about fourteen. We were shown *The Caretaker* and it blew my head off. I had never read anything like it.

People spoke to each other in a way that I knew was real and yet in a way that people in other plays never spoke: it opened my ears as well as my eyes and my mind. I became fascinated by Pinter. In fact one of the first things I ever directed were some sketches by Pinter, five of them, one a day in our school assembly for a week. A bit later, at university, I acted in *The Homecoming* and *The Caretaker*. I can't imagine modern British drama without Pinter. His influence is everywhere, from *Eastenders* to Tom Stoppard to Joe Penhall. He discovered a new way of listening to other human beings.

I first saw *Betrayal* in its first production at the National Theatre in 1978. I was 22. I have seen it three or four times over the years and always wanted to go at it. I was watching another show at the Donmar last year and Michael Grandage said he was doing it and would I direct it? To his surprise, and to mine too, I instantly said "yes".

Why did Pinter write *Betrayal* backwards?

Roger: Pinter writes this play backwards and forwards. Four of the scenes go back and four go forward. So time is an extra character in the play.

How far has Pinter been involved in this production? Has he visited rehearsals, and, as a director and actor himself, has he given any notes?

Alex: Roger has previously directed *Old Times* and *The Homecoming*, and Samuel West produced a celebration of Pinter's work in 2006, while he was Artistic Director of the Sheffield Crucible theatre, so they know each other quite well already and Pinter trusts them with his work.

The cast and the director all went for lunch with Pinter before rehearsals started, followed by a closed read-through. He then came to another read-through, when he gave a couple of notes, and he returned to a run through in the third week of rehearsals.

An example of a note he gave was in the Venice scene (Scene Five), and this was around the balance between Emma's guilt and Robert's interrogation: he felt, at that point, that she was too strong.

A really important note from Harold when they first started was 'Don't show what you can conceal'. An example of this is when Robert and Jerry are in the restaurant (Scene Seven) and Robert is being weird and Jerry can't work out why. Jerry then says, 'How should I know, she's your wife', and this is the point when Robert makes his big decision, okay, I'm going to live with this, because I want you to be my friend. And then we see Emma... so all of them are masked.

It is interesting how much they have to cover what they are really feeling, for example, when Emma is pregnant: it could all come crashing down then, they could all lose everything. The can of worms is opened, and they are infected.

And of course the audience have seen something in the scenes before; they know something the characters don't .

What approach has Roger taken to directing the play?

Alex: For the first week, the company sat around a table and read it through chronologically – i.e. from the end of the script to the beginning. We then created a timeline on the wall, beginning with Pinter's birth in 1930, and creating birth dates for all the characters alongside other events happening in the world. We also decided the backgrounds for the characters, such as which college Robert attended at Oxford and which one Jeremy attended at Cambridge, and found pictures of those colleges and added them. We asked questions about the Torcello scene – when did he first take you? - and from that worked out that it was the date when they got married, and that it was for their tenth wedding anniversary. We also collected pictures of what all the children would look like, and of a possible Italian restaurant where Jerry and Robert might have met (Scene Seven). We put a big sheet of lining paper on the floor and marked all the facts on that.

We then read the script through as it is, from 1977 to 1968, and, again working round the table, we delved into the scenes and made notes, before starting to put it on its feet in the second week. There was a lot of line analysis, rather than 'actioning'.

The cast members are very experienced and they came to rehearsals having already learnt some lines and with a feeling for the characters in the play. They have been cast very well – each one is exactly right for the place and time of the play.

We did some improvisation as well: for example, Jerry sends Emma a letter in response to a letter she sent him first, so Dervla went away and wrote the letter that Emma would have sent, and then Toby went away and wrote his response as Jerry.

We tried to get as much information as possible - anything that is in the scene or just before the scene, but is unseen by us [the audience].

What about the characters' changing ages? Was that difficult for the actors?

Alex: The actors found it very useful to first read the play chronologically. Their age in each scene is very important, and how they change: for example, Robert falls out of love with literature. We also found that the most precious relationship is actually between the men, more than with Emma.

We have been jumping around scenes since then. The actors are helped by costume changes, but they don't change their mannerisms – it is all there in the language and the playing of it. For example, the last scene is very light, and it is the only time there is music in the play. This signifies a time when they didn't have responsibilities. Also significant in the play is how much alcohol they drink – it is very specific in the stage directions. It is all down to the mindset of the actors and it is also all there in the script. It is quite a challenge though.

You mentioned that the men’s friendship is the most important relationship in the play. Have you discovered anything else during rehearsals?

Alex: One really interesting thing we did was to run a sweepstake on how many betrayals there are in the play – the current total is running at 52! For example, in the last scene, the very last stage direction is: ‘They stand still, looking at each other’, after Jerry grasps her arm. The fact that Emma stays is a betrayal. When she goes to the bedroom to comb her hair, knowing that Jerry is in there is a betrayal. Jerry and Emma’s affair is a betrayal. Jerry and Emma getting a flat together is a betrayal. Robert not telling Jerry about his affairs is a betrayal.

It is a deceptively simple play and there are so many betrayals. Jerry is in the restaurant with Robert and Robert has just found out that Jerry is having an affair. Robert hints that he knows, but Jerry doesn’t have a clue. So ‘Scotch on the rocks? You don’t usually drink Scotch’ is a loaded line.

The betrayals are like a poison seeping into all of them, like a bug – symbolised by the ‘bug’ that Jerry is ill with. It is a manifestation of the guilt. The memory of the kitchen is significant, the fact that he remembers the wrong kitchen – is a betrayal. It is like a canker.

However it is a naturalistic piece – there are no tricks in the script.

What is the design for the production and how was this decision reached?

Alex: The set is minimal: three chairs, a table and a bed, and this is the same in every scene – the furniture is common to every house. We originally talked about using curtains as a ‘wipe’ between scenes, with projections of iconic footage from each year, then Hockney windows projections. But we found that the more we added, the more it took away, and actually the script is quite bare, so it is now stripped right down – the curtains are still there as a wipe, with the date on them. What we didn’t want was to worry whether the audience was getting it or not, so this helps them with the fact that it is going backwards.

Have you got any advice for the audience when watching the play, especially for the first time? Anything to watch out for?

Roger: Just listen carefully to what the characters are saying to each other. Sometimes what they are saying is more clearly expressed in what they don’t say to each other. Sometimes the gaps or pauses in what they are saying reveal another truth.

Alex: I would advise the audience to really listen to the script, and to try and work out when people are saying what they really mean, and when it’s a cover for their true feelings. It is very rare in the play when the characters are honest with each other or with themselves. For example, when Emma tells Jeremy she is pregnant, is she telling the truth, or does she realise he’s not ready? Does she choose at that moment to say it’s Robert’s baby? What are the secret moments when the characters choose to conceal the truth? E.g. Emma has a real chance to tell about the affair, but she doesn’t tell him, she chooses not to tell him at that point – and then when he does finally find out, it represents four years of lying and betrayal.

Judith is never seen, but she is a brilliant character, and she is having her friendship with the doctor. It’s all about lies and games. How much is conscious lying and how much subconscious? How much are they lying to themselves?

It’s that bug I mentioned earlier, the guilt eating away at them, the constant lying, the constant betrayals.

If you are able to look at the script, it is very interesting to see how accurate and specific Pinter is. All the pauses and stage directions are there, and the company have adhered to them because he is absolutely right about where he's put them. Ask why that pause is there – is someone thinking: should I speak?

So I've been 'pause monitor', making sure that no one leaves a pause where there is no pause written. The rhythm of the play is brilliant and should be trusted.

The silences speak volumes; they are really loaded. People make decisions before they've spoken, or they haven't committed quite enough – and that pause, while you're thinking, can change your life.



Reading

Primary sources

Betrayal (Harold Pinter: Plays, Faber and Faber Contemporary Classics 1996)

Donmar Warehouse rehearsal copy of *Betrayal*

Harold Pinter's Nobel Prize acceptance speech

www.haroldpinter.org Harold Pinter's website, a fund of information about the man, his work and his life

Bibliography and further reading

The Life and Work of Harold Pinter, Michael Billington (Faber and Faber, London 1996)

About Pinter - the playwright and the work, Mark Batty (Faber and Faber, London, 2005)

The Theatre of the Absurd, Martin Esslin (Penguin Books, 1961)

Various Voices: Poetry, Prose, Politics, 1948 – 1998, Harold Pinter (Faber and Faber, 1998)

Betrayal, film 1983, starring Ben Kingsley, Jeremy Irons and Patricia Hodge. Directed by David Hugh Jones.

Appendix

Pinter's personal life and the link to *Betrayal*

From 1956 until 1980, Pinter was married to Vivien Merchant, a rep actress whom he met on tour, probably best known for her performance in the original film *Alfie*. Their son, Daniel, was born in 1958. Through the early '70s, Merchant appeared in many of Pinter's works, most notably *The Homecoming* on stage (1965) and screen (1973). The marriage was turbulent and began disintegrating in the mid-1960s. For seven years, from 1962-69, Pinter was engaged in a clandestine affair with Joan Bakewell, which informed the play *Betrayal* (1978). According to his own programme notes for that play, between 1975 and 1980, he lived with the historian Lady Antonia Fraser, wife of Sir Hugh Fraser. In 1975, Merchant filed for divorce. The Frasers' divorce became final in 1977 and the Pinters' in 1980. In 1980, Pinter married Antonia Fraser.

Unable to overcome her bitterness and grief at the loss of her husband, Vivien Merchant died of acute alcoholism in 1983. According to Michael Billington (*ibid*) Pinter 'did everything possible to support' her until her death and regrets that he became estranged from their son, Daniel, after their separation and Pinter's remarriage.

Pinter stated publicly in several recent interviews that he remains 'very happy' in his second marriage and enjoys family life, which includes his six adult step-children and over twice as many grandchildren, and considers himself 'a very lucky man in every respect.'

Book reveals Pinter's betrayal with Bakewell

Article by Nigel Reynolds, 1996

The playwright Harold Pinter and Joan Bakewell, the television broadcaster once hailed as "the thinking man's crumpet", were lying low yesterday after it was disclosed that they had had a long, extra-marital affair.

A new biography (by Michael Billington) of the Left-wing playwright reveals that Pinter's most autobiographical drama, *Betrayal*, was based on his seven-year affair in the 1960s with Miss Bakewell, who was then married. Many believed that the work had been about the later affair that led to his second marriage, to Lady Antonia Fraser.

Educated at Cambridge and a presenter of BBC TV's Late Night Line-Up, Joan was married to Michael Bakewell, a BBC drama producer and friend of Pinter. Several people in the theatre world said yesterday that the affair had been a long open secret...

Mr Billington says *Betrayal*, first performed at the National Theatre in 1978 and later made into a film, is a close dramatisation of the Harold Pinter/Joan Bakewell/Michael Bakewell triangle...Mr Billington says both of them confessed their affair to him during recent interviews for the biography. Miss Bakewell told him: "*Betrayal* is all about my relationship with Harold. It is accurate in its chronology and its events."

Mr Billington says it is now clear that the play concerns several acts of betrayal - not only by the lovers against their respective partners. During the affair, Pinter himself felt deeply betrayed, claims Mr Billington. He had believed that the affair was secret but discovered that Mr Bakewell had known about it for two years.

Writing the play was Pinter's way of exorcising this act of treachery, Mr Billington suggests. Both Bakewells said they felt betrayed when the play appeared. "It's like a diary and so I was upset when I first read it," Miss Bakewell said. She has, however, forgiven. She told Mr Billington: "Harold and I are very fond of each other and have terrific lunches. Now when I see the play I feel it's a brilliant, convoluted piece of writing, even if it lacks the real characters of the people involved."

Mr Billington said yesterday that Pinter had recently read proofs of his book. The only objection he had raised was the suggestion that he was indignant at Mr Bakewell's knowing silence.

Pinter was unavailable for comment yesterday.



Article by Kate Kellaway, Sunday September 24th 2000 in the Observer

Pinter is 70. (Pause for applause)

As a young man he was 'a charismatic front runner', a radical with his own unique vision. Now, more than 40 years after *The Birthday Party*, even his old pals still can't work him out.

There has always been a Harold Pinter who wanted to escape detection: as a young actor, he changed his name to David Baron. His first poem was published under the semi-false name of Pinta. In his plays, his characters are anything but known. They are often hailed as people they may - or may not - actually be. Even the most ordinary identities are open to doubt. On 10 October, Harold Pinter will turn 70. To all intents and purpose, he is a 'recognised' figure. But do we know who he is? Or has he, for 50 years, succeeded in giving us the slip? Should we still be asking the question that Mick drops with casual force at the end of the first act of *The Caretaker*: 'What's the game?'

There will be a birthday party for Pinter on 9 October, hosted by Faber, his publishers. The invitation stipulates 'no presents'. Yet I like to imagine that Pinter might be given, as Stanley is in *The Birthday Party*, a drum to unwrap. And then, like Stanley, he could beat it with that mixture of anger, concentration and panache that we have come to see as Pinteresque. But even in the absence of any drum, it is clear that there will be no shortage of people volunteering to blow Pinter's trumpet for him. All this week, I feel I have been attending a surreal party for Pinter, conducted by telephone, talking to friends, writers, actors and directors. But the extraordinary thing is that everyone has wanted to celebrate something different. And while almost no one has hesitated to define the adjective

'Pinteresque', no definition has been the same. Indeed, there is so much energy in the adjective, it should at once, I think, be promoted to become a verb.

David Hare had a brilliant stab at trying to describe Pinter's 'game'. He claims he is 'heretical' about Pinter. He suggests that Pinter explodes 'European, existential ideas in a working-class setting'. It is this which 'leads to subsequent humour'. Hare goes further, placing Pinter above Beckett. 'I think he is one of the few disciples superior to the master, rooting Beckett in a real social world instead of an arid limbo.' As a skittish - but serious - postscript, he says he thinks that Monty Python is inspired by Pinter; the kerchiefed woman in *The Room* could, with a tweak or two, be played by Eric Idle....

...Peter Hall won't have any truck with the idea of an enigma that cannot be solved. He speaks as someone who has devoted a life to solving Pinteresque riddles and is not going to be deprived of the right to feel he has done so. He believes that 'structure' is the key to understanding the plays and that Pinter's imitators make the fatal mistake of allowing incompletely imagined situations to masquerade as mystery. Not that Hall is being reductive in any way: 'Pinter brought poetry back into the theatre; he said things by the unsaid. People make jokes about his pauses, but the pauses are as eloquent as the lines.'

Joan Bakewell reminds us of the overwhelming presence in the plays of 'menace - the sense of a threat to existing relationships... illuminated by flashes of blazing comedy'. For Richard Eyre, he is also 'extraordinarily fresh and prescient'. For Ian McDiarmid, artistic director of the Almeida, he is a 'brilliant compressionist'. David Leveaux, director of *No Man's Land*, *Betrayal* and *Moonlight* at the Almeida, settles for one word to describe the Pinteresque: 'Suddenness'.

Pinter is recognisable in all these definitions - and yet not contained by any of them. Perhaps it is Lenny's question in *The Homecoming* that needs answering next: 'In other words, apart from the known and the unknown, what else is there?' Pinter himself seems somewhere between the two. Earlier this year, the Almeida put on a double bill of his first play, *The Room* (1957), and his last, *Celebration* - directed by Pinter himself. There was an uncanny family likeness. Both took place in one room. In each, cabin fever combined with a terror of the outside....

...Pinter emerges as a director who makes life fun for actors, and an actor who is willing, as David Leveaux says, to be directed - even when the play is his own. He is a passionate cricketer, too. The actor Roger Lloyd Pack, who played in the Gaieties team of which Pinter was captain, remembers Pinter's delight in the details of the sport - 'the weather, the psychological effects, what is correct and what isn't, where your elbow is, how your stance is.' And Lloyd Pack does not think it fanciful to draw an analogy between Pinter's writing and cricket. 'In both, there is a loving attention to detail and a formality, a passion and correctness - the same concentration.' But he admits that Pinter was 'not a good loser. He is very competitive.'

There is, famously, another side to Pinter's character. As Michael Frayn amusingly puts it: 'He has a notoriously short fuse and easily leaps to the conclusion, in the middle of a conversation about something else, that one is insufficiently serious about the evils of US foreign policy in Central America. But his fury is usually as short as his fuse, and two minutes after he has launched into you, he is likely to put his arm around you and make it up.' Peter Hall suggests that he is a 'strange combination of a thin skin and justifiable arrogance. He is easily hurt and misunderstood.' And there is another word that keeps coming up: 'power'. David

Hare argues that Pinter is a 'poet of power. It is his basic currency and that is why he is sometimes an uncomfortable person to meet.'..

...Only Michael Frayn and Tom Stoppard balked at trying to define Pinter's essence. Stoppard said he has never been able to understand how Pinter does what he does. As a young man, seeing Rattigan, Osborne or Wesker, he used to think: 'I could do that myself, if only I was clever enough.' But in 1959, when he first saw *The Birthday Party*, he realised he could never copy Pinter. 'I couldn't see how it was done.' Nowadays, he feels that everything has been said about Harold Pinter... everything and nothing. In other words: the game is not up.

A birthday card from his friends

'He was Pinter from the beginning. As a nameless dramatist once said: I feel sorry for Harold. Other people can choose between comedy and tragedy, Pinter always has to write a Pinter play.'

Peter Hall

'His own certainty about his talent is vindicated 100 per cent. There is no one who doesn't admire him.'

David Hare

'Pinter writes from his unconscious to the page. The door then shuts and he can only dimly remember his way back. He writes and then he becomes aware.'

David Leveaux

*'One of the things about *Betrayal* is how many people recognise themselves in it.'*

Joan Bakewell

'Mature ladies who have got their lives and their marriages still talk of him with special affection.'

Henry Woolf on Pinter's former girlfriends

'I think people will be going to Pinter's plays in 100 years time. He has such an individual voice; it may move in and out of focus but it won't disappear.'

Richard Eyre

'At the Almeida in the offices above the rehearsal room we take our shoes off. Pinter is in the business of trying to create silences. We understand that perfectly.'

Ian McDiarmid

*'Dramatic suspense is to do with the flow of information to the audience.
Pinter achieves this in a way that is unique to himself.'*

Tom Stoppard

*'He's not dead is he? Oh good. Haven't we been here before? When Pinter
turned 50 I was asked to say something and couldn't think of anything.
Later I thought there should be a two-minute silence.'*

Alan Bennett

About the Donmar Warehouse

a special insight into the theatre

The Donmar Warehouse is an intimate (not for profit) 251 seat theatre located in the heart of London's West End. The theatre attracts almost 100,000 people to its productions a year. Since 1992, under the Artistic Direction of Michael Grandage and his predecessor, Sam Mendes, the theatre has presented some of London's most memorable theatrical experiences as well as garnered critical acclaim at home and abroad. With a diverse artistic policy that includes new writing, contemporary reappraising of European classics, British and American drama and music theatre, the Donmar has created a reputation for artistic excellence over the last 12 years and has won 25 Olivier Awards, 12 Critics' Circle Awards, 10 Evening Standard Awards and 10 Tony Awards for Broadway transfers.

For more information about the Donmar's education activities, please contact:

Aimee Barnett
Development Department
Donmar Warehouse
41 Earlham Street
London WC2H 9LX

T: 020 7845 5816

F: 020 7240 4878

E: abarnett@donmarwarehouse.com