



Betrayal

Harold Pinter

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Betrayal is Pinter's latest full-length play since the enormous success of *No Man's Land*. The play begins in 1977, with a meeting between adulterous lovers, Emma and Jerry, two years after their affair has ended. During the nine scenes of the play, we move back in time, through the states of their affair, with the play ending in the house of Emma and Robert, her husband, who is Jerry's best friend.

The classic dramatic scenario of the love triangle is manifest in a meditation on the themes of marital infidelity, duplicity, and self-deception. Pinter writes a world that simultaneously glorifies and debases love.

Betrayal Details

Date : Published October 1998 by Faber & Faber (first published 1978)

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Author : Harold Pinter

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Genre : Plays, Drama, Theatre, European Literature, British Literature

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ROBERT
Betrayal.

EMMA
No, it isn't.

ROBERT
Isn't it? What is it then?

EMMA
I haven't finished it yet. I'll let you know.

ROBERT
Well, do let me know.

Pause

Of course, I could be thinking of the wrong book.

AC says

It is the film you want to see, not the book:
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Betrayal...>

From today's obituary:
Pinter once said of language, "The speech we hear is an indication of that which we don't hear. It is a necessary avoidance, a violent, sly, and anguished or mocking smoke screen which keeps the other in its true place. When true silence falls we are left with echo but are nearer nakedness. One way of looking at speech is to say that it is a constant stratagem to cover nakedness."

One of the great writers of the 20th century.

Ali Fegghi says

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Saye Tafreshi says

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Niloufar Rahmanian says

From theconversation.com:

The word ruling this play is “when”. When did Jerry know that Emma had told Robert, her husband, of their affair? When did Emma know that Robert knew, and decide not to tell Jerry, but continue it? When did Jerry decide he would not leave Judith, his wife, and was this the catalyst for Emma to say, while pregnant with her son, Ned, that Robert was the father, not Jerry?

When was the moment of real betrayal? When Jerry drunkenly declared undying love to his best friend’s wife behind his best friend’s back? When Emma responded? When they slept together for the first time? When they carried on sleeping with their marriage partners?

Scene four: drinks at Robert and Emma’s; Emma offstage, with Ned, Jerry and Robert onstage, talking. What we don’t see, but will see later, is that Robert knows about the affair, and Emma knows he knows. What we don’t see, and will never see, is what this means exactly, because she has not given him up, and Robert tolerates this, and so does she – Robert knowing, Jerry not knowing he knows.

Casually Jerry says he will be taking a trip to America. He has not told Emma, and when he leaves it is clear this is devastating news for her. She then turns to Robert for ... what? Punishment? Pity? Comfort? Is it possible – that a wife would turn to her husband for solace when her lover casts her off

And:

And a betrayal to the self. For admitting i dont love u anymore is much harder. Even when Emma is giving Jerry the news of her pregnancy she is yearning for a new start but cant say it out loud. And can Robert be also betraying his instincts when he says i preferred to be in a relationship with Jerry myself? And Judith? Living a secret life?

Yael says

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Sarah says

Betrayal is a play about a woman, Emma, who is cheating on her husband, Robert, with his best friend, Jerry. Ok, so the story's been done before, but Pinter gives it his signature twist and has a way of making the

sometimes as if on automatic pilot.

The best aspect of the play was in how it was structured: in reverse order from the end of the affair to the very beginning. I thought that was truly well done. In fact, what I found so interesting was how the characterizations were developed. By providing you with the ending first, the author allows you to make judgments about these characters, then challenges those judgments by providing more and more insight into their past.

Still, despite these interesting elements, I thought that overall the story was unremarkable.

Final Rating: 3 stars

Clare says

I actually listened to this as a BBC Radio Drama (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01kr71s>) that starred Olivia Colman and Andrew Scott. I'd heard he'd won the BBC Audio Drama, Best Actor Award for it, and I liked him from BBC Sherlock so I thought it would be worth listening to.

This is a very interesting and thought provoking play. First of all, it's presented chronologically backwards... We meet the two people who have had an affair after their affair is over, as they are having a discussion over lunch. The woman reveals she has told her husband that she'd cheated on him with the ex-lover, who is his best friend. He's angry because she didn't consult him first, and then we hear his conversation with his friend...(view spoiler)

It proceeds from there, slowly revealing various lies the friends/spouses/lovers have told each other over the years and highlights their reactions to the various "betrayals".

It is very thought provoking. I think my favourite moment of the play was when Andrew Scott's character, Jerry, (view spoiler)

It was really a great moment, well acted... In a play full of moments worth listening to. Makes you think about all the different lies and different kinds of betrayals we have in daily life.

(Evidently the play was based on the author's real life affair with a famous female BBC broadcaster.)

Edited on December 17th, 2014 on rereading, after realizing I really should have spoiler warnings in several spots. At the time I originally posted I didn't know how to insert them- CRM

Amir Mojiry says

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metaphor says

Well, it's nice, sometimes, to think back. Isn't it?

Alissa Haley says

I genuinely really liked this play. The play focuses on something we've all seen before - the ups and downs of a love affair. However there's a great storytelling structure used here: we don't see the events going forward, but instead going backward. Each scene informs the previous scene. Definitely recommend this to any fans of Jason Robert Brown's *The Last Five Years*.
