


Araştırma Türü

Reading The Dissolution of Traditional Family Values through Harold Pinter's *Betrayal*

Harold Pinter'in *Betrayal* Eserinde Geleneksel Aile Değerlerinin Çözülmesi

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Öz: Bu makale, Harold Pinter'in *Betrayal* (1978) adlı oyununda yansıtılan geleneksel aile değerlerinin Britanya'daki çöküşünü incelemektedir. Dünya savaşları ve Büyük Buhran gibi tarihi olaylar ile teknolojiye ilerlemeler, varoluşsal temaların daha derinlemesine incelenmesi ve sahne olanaklarının geliştirilmesi yoluyla Absürd Tiyatro üzerinde önemli bir etki bırakmıştır. Savaşların yıkıcı etkileri sonrası toplumsal çözülme ve kolektif ruhun paramparça oluşu aile kurumunu da derinden etkilemiştir. Oyun, karakterlerin toplumsal çalkantıların bıraktığı boşluğu doldurmak için birbirlerine ihanet etmeleriyle aile yapılarının aşınmasını canlı bir şekilde tasvir etmektedir. Makale, 1950'lerden itibaren Britanya aile dinamiklerinin evrimini keşfederek bu tarihsel arka planın eserdeki iz düşümlerini ele almaktadır. Ayrıca araştırma, *Betrayal* oyununun metin analizini yaparak işlevini yitiren aileler üzerinden kendine ihanet eden bireyleri ve iletişim kopukluğu temalarına odaklanmaktadır. Bu analiz, Pinter'in karakterlerinin psikolojik derinliğini yoğunlaştıran duraklamalar ve sessizliklerin, Beckett'ten etkilendiğini ve Absürt Tiyatro'nun varoluşsal motifleriyle uyumlu olduğunu vurgulamaktadır. Sonuç olarak, makale, *Betrayal* oyununda tasvir edilen aile değerlerinin parçalanmasının, II. Dünya Savaşı sonrası daha geniş toplumsal dağılmayı yansıttığını savunmaktadır. Bir zamanlar istikrarın kalesi olan geleneksel aile, iç ve dış baskılara giderek daha fazla yenik düşmekte ve nihai çöküşe doğru ilerlemektedir. Bu çalışma, savaş sonrası Britanya'da ailenin kurumunun dönüşümüne ve bu durumun modern dramadaki temsillerini eleştirel bir bakış açısı sunar.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Geleneksel Aile, *Betrayal*, II. Dünya Savaşı Sonrası Britanya, Harold Pinter



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Abstract: This paper examines the disintegration of traditional British family values as reflected in Harold Pinter's play *Betrayal* (1978). Historical events like the world wars and the Great Depression, along with advancements in technology, have profoundly influenced the Theater of the Absurd by deepening its exploration of existential themes and enhancing its stage capabilities. The devastating effects of wars have deeply impacted the disintegration of society and the fragmentation of the collective spirit, significantly affecting the institution of the family as well. The play vividly portrays the erosion of familial structures, with characters betraying each other in a bid to fill the void left by social upheavals. The paper explores the evolution of British family dynamics from the 1950s onwards. It further conducts a textual analysis of *Betrayal*, focusing on themes of dysfunctional families, self-betrayal, and communication breakdowns. The paper ultimately argues that the fragmentation of family values depicted in *Betrayal* mirrors the broader social disintegration post-WWII. The traditional family, once a foundation of stability, is portrayed as increasingly susceptible to internal and external pressures, leading to its eventual collapse. This study provides a critical insight into the transformations of family unit during post-war Britain and their representation in modern drama.

Keywords: Traditional family, *Betrayal*, Post-WWII Britain, Harold Pinter

1. Introduction

The Theatre of the Absurd, an avant-garde movement that emerged in the mid-20th century, profoundly reflects the disintegration of traditional family values through its radical departure from conventional storytelling. This movement, characterized by its nonlinear narratives, illogical sequences, and existential themes, mirrors the post-war disillusionment and the accompanying breakdown of social norms, including those governing family structures. As traditional narratives in theatre gave way to absurdism, so too did the conventional family model begin to unravel under the pressures of modernity and the aftermath of global conflicts. This alignment suggests that the chaotic and often nonsensical world depicted by playwrights like Samuel Beckett and Harold Pinter is not just a stylistic choice but a response to the erosion of fundamental social constructs. Through the lens of absurdism, the family—once a cornerstone of social stability—becomes a microcosm of broader existential uncertainties, reflecting the profound sense of loss and moral ambiguity of the times. Harold Pinter's affiliation with the Theatre of the Absurd provides a foundational lens through which his portrayal of fragmented family dynamics can be understood. Esslin (1960) identifies Pinter as a seminal figure in this movement, using language and silence as tools to explore existential themes and human isolation. This is evident in *Betrayal*, where Pinter's use of reverse chronology and pauses disrupts traditional narrative structures, mirroring the breakdown of communication within families (Burkman, 1971).

Literary works of the period often reflect these social changes. For instance, Pat Barker's novels about the World Wars (1991-1995) provide a narrative backdrop to the emotional and psychological turmoil that influenced familial and social relationships. These literary depictions are essential for understanding the cultural milieu in which Pinter was writing. In *Betrayal* (1978), the demolition of the traditional family structure is evident, as the title suggests; all the characters betray each other and try to fill the emptiness within themselves. The characters' experiences and actions can be seen as reflective of the broader social transformation, where traditional norms no longer provided the same level of guidance or stability as before. This paper will critically present the disintegration of traditional British family values and the factors that led to this unit's disengagement. This paper commences with an exploration of the historical context surrounding the British family, tracing developments from the 1950s onward to establish a foundational understanding of the social shifts impacting familial structures. Subsequently, the focus will shift to an in-depth examination of Harold Pinter's play *Betrayal*. Utilising a textual analysis framework, the study will interrogate themes such as the dysfunctional family, self-betrayal, and communication breakdown. Through this analytical lens, the paper aims to elucidate how these motifs not only characterize the interpersonal dynamics within the play but also reflect broader social changes during the post-war era.

Witnessing bloodshed and death in the aftermath of the wars caused people to question togetherness and the idea of family. During the nineteenth century, Britain placed utmost importance on its conventional family values under the reign of Queen Victoria. However, as time passed, especially after WWII, the family unit started to experience its downfall. The historical context of post-World War II Britain is key in understanding the disintegration of traditional family structures. The catastrophic impact of the world wars not only reshaped the physical landscape of Britain but also its social fabric. Calder (1969) documents the shift in British social norms during and after the wars, noting how the collective experience of hardship and loss eroded traditional family roles and values. This period saw a significant transformation in the public and private spheres, with women entering the workforce in unprecedented numbers and a general

loosening of social strictures (Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 2000). David Kynaston's (2007) work on the post-war British society further explores how these changes led to a reevaluation of personal and familial relationships. The economic hardships, coupled with the psychological traumas of the war, contributed to a landscape where traditional values were questioned and often discarded. Kynaston discusses how this era witnessed a decline in church attendance and an increase in secularism, which further influenced changing attitudes towards marriage and family life. Fisher (2010) adds another dimension by exploring the impact of urbanization and industrialization on family structures. The post-war period was marked by significant migration from rural to urban areas, driven by the search for employment and better living conditions. This migration disrupted traditional extended family networks, leading to more nuclear but less stable family units.

The post-war period in Britain was a transitional time in which changes in the social structures can be observed. Ellen Castelow (2020) mentions that in 1950s many women left their work after marriage and undertook the job of taking care of the house and kids, while their husbands carried on working outside and became the head of the house. During these years, the British society was still mainly adhering to its traditional values, however in the following decade the legislation of several acts such as the abortion act, divorce reform act (1969) and the introduction of the contraceptive pill altered the family unit in Britain and created deviant relationships. According to Watson (2016), the parents in the 1960s wanted their children to be freer and not worry about the world as they did during the WWII. Hence, it can be noted that life in 1960s was fundamentally different from the lives of people during the 50s. Many innovations appeared in terms of music, fashion, and science during the 60s. As Watson (2016) further emphasizes, a key aspect of this transformation was music. The emergence of iconic groups like "The Beatles" and "The Rolling Stones" revolutionized the mindset of the younger generation, leading to increased assertiveness and a questioning of traditional norms. Concurrently, shifts in fashion, epitomized by the popularity of clothing fashion, purported to afford women greater freedom during this period. Consequently, women in the 1960s sought liberation and pursued careers outside the home, akin to their husbands. The passage of the Equal Pay Act in 1970 marked a significant milestone, enabling women to receive equal pay for equal work, aligning their earnings with those of their male counterparts.

According to Richardson (2014) the freedom and independence of the people in 60s caused many couples to get divorced, have kids outside of marriage, and form disorganized relationships that would corrupt and destroy the traditional family institution. Due to the increasing divorce rate, people of that time began to consider cohabitation before marriage. The instances of 'cohabitation' increased in the 1970s and the following years as a major practice for couples before marriage (Murphy, 2000). The cohabitation gave people "the freedom" to live together without signing any legal papers or making promises such as 'till death do us part'. Therefore, it became common among partners, and as Barlow et al. (2001: 51) indicates, "marriage is no longer seen as having any advantage over cohabitation in everyday life". Consequently, proponents may argue that cohabitation serves a beneficial mechanism for acquainting oneself with a partner and establishing a shared domestic environment.

However, it is imperative to acknowledge that the practice of cohabitation can also unveil instances of exploitation and breaches of trust, potentially resulting in emotional distress and disillusionment, particularly for any children involved in the event of dissolution between partners. Jenkins et al. (2009: 5-22) posit that the changes in attitudes towards the family unit have made recent families "less stable than in previous generations" and produced "non-

traditional families such as stepfamilies and cohabiting parents [who] are more prone to breaking down". The instability engendered by these non-traditional family structures created instances of infidelity, dishonesty, and betrayal. In some cases, marriages may appear conventional and normative to external observers but may, in reality, lack essential values and cohesion internally. Pinter's depiction of family dynamics in his play *Betrayal* exemplifies such complexities and contradictions within familial relationships.

2. Pinter's Absurd Theatre: The Outcry of Silence

Harold Pinter is widely recognized as one of the foremost and accomplished modern British dramatists. In addition to his contributions as a playwright, Pinter was also renowned as an actor, director, and screenwriter. His remarkable achievements in the field of literature were further cemented by his receipt of the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2005. Pinter's distinctive approach to both thought and writing continues to affirm his status as a formidable literary figure, resonating with audiences and scholars alike in contemporary times. Pinter has his own technique of writing labelled as 'pinteresque' which is "often interpreted as pauses, enigmas and menace" (Inan, 2005: 35). Generally, his plays may appear plain and simple with everyday language. However, Bakr (2019: 186) argues that despite the surface level of Pinter's plays that illustrates an ordinary human drama, underneath he is more concerned about the unspoken "deeper psychological and philosophical dimensions in his characters". Given Pinter's firsthand experience of the Second World War and his early displacement from home due to his Jewish heritage amidst the prevailing fascism of the era, his artistic focus gravitates toward exploring the human condition within the context of the twentieth century.

Central to his thematic concerns are the pervasive sensations of loneliness, alienation, and isolation that characterize the experience of modern individuals. Burkman (1971) further emphasizes that Harold Pinter's personal insecurities stemming from his experiences during World War II led him to adopt a mode of existence akin to that of his characters. This existential affinity gave rise to a pervasive sense of menace and dislocation evident throughout his plays. In this regard, Pinter's oeuvre aligns with the tradition of absurdist literature, positioning him as a significant figure within this literary movement. In line with Esslin's (1960) observations, *The Theatre of the Absurd* delves into the alienated and insecure nature of the human condition, while also grappling with the inherent meaninglessness and futility of human communication. This thematic convergence resonates with Burkman's (1971) assertion regarding Pinter's adoption of an existence mirroring that of his characters, mingling his plays with a pervasive sense of menace and dislocation. As such, Pinter's works align with the absurdist tradition, wherein the emphasis on action often supersedes linguistic expression, highlighting the profound existential dilemmas faced by individuals within his narratives.

In Pinter's plays, the characters in the plays use language as a shield to protect themselves from the harsh realities of their situations. Hence the language is important, but one must hear and understand the outcry of pinteresque silences. In order to explain himself and his characters, Pinter uses silences and pauses. As Hollis (1970: 15) notes, Pinter was influenced by Beckett with his use of silence and regarded it much more meaningful when compared to the "inane chatter" of the modern man to express themselves. In this respect, the pinteresque pauses articulate more about the characters and the conditions they are in. Similar to the profound silence and stillness that ensue in the aftermath of a bombing, conveying a depth of meaning that transcends words, Harold Pinter's dramatic works often evoke a poignant sense of resonance through their use of

silence and understated gestures. This silence speaks volumes, capturing the ineffable essence of human experience and echoing the existential void at the core of the absurdist worldview.

3. Textual Analysis of *Betrayal*

Betrayal stands as one of Pinter's renowned memory plays, where the narrative unfolds through the prism of the characters' recollections. This structural approach to storytelling earns the play a distinct sense of subjectivity, as the audience gains insight into the characters' perspectives and perceptions of past events. Through this narrative technique, Pinter skillfully explores themes of memory, perception, and the complexities of human relationships, inviting audiences to consider the subjective nature of truth and memory. This strategy allows the audience to observe the evolution of the characters' emotions and relationships over time, illustrating the complexity of lies, loyalty, and time. The reverse chronology effectively demonstrates how past decisions and actions shape the characters' present and future. The story involves a love triangle where the wife (Emma) betrays her husband (Robert) with his best friend (Jerry). During this infidelity, all the characters ultimately betray not only each other but also themselves. In *Betrayal*, Pinter makes use of a postmodern reverse chronology where the plot progresses backwards in time that allows the writer to present the audience with several fragmented parts of the affair instead of giving a linear action from the beginning (Bakr, 2019). The act of regression in *Betrayal* is innovative and representative of the flawed nature of Pinter's characters. According to Nabamita Das (2013: 27), the unique reversed time sequence allows Pinter to omit "what's next?" in the spectator's mind and replace it with "the deeper 'how?' and 'why?'". Therefore, instead of keeping up with the superficial plot of events, the reader and viewer ponder on more deep-seated reasons for the act of betrayals.

In this play, Pinter dwells more upon the dysfunctional family values and inner struggles than the mere betrayal between partners or the marital infidelity. It is a multi-dimensional narrative that conceals numerous betrayals among individuals, whether they be friends, spouses, or family members. As Scolnicov (2008: 2) states, with the omission of the definite article from the title unlike Pinter's other plays such as *The Dumb Waiter* or *The Homecoming*, the title *Betrayal* indicates that "the idea of betrayal [is] its generalized or abstracted structure, and not the story of one particular instance of betrayal". In examining the play, one can discern that the erosion of traditional family values stems from various factors, notably including self-betrayal among individuals, communication breakdowns, and the presence of dysfunctional family structures prevalent in post-war society.

3.1. Self-Betrayal

The post-war period left people puzzled and numb in every aspect of living. This can be clearly observed in the themes of absurdist tradition. The plays mainly focus on the helplessness and despair stemming from the realization of life's inherent meaninglessness and the futility of everyday occurrences. This sense of nihilism is why characters in such plays often betray one another or themselves in their ordinary daily lives. According to Khan and Larik (2018: 4), Pinter also regarded the postmodern world absurd; people had no identity nor peace of mind which made life meaningless to the modernist. They further emphasized that due to wars, the mindset of people changed, and they only passed the days without knowing "the reason for their existence". Accordingly, Pinter creates his characters as incomplete and unaccomplished where they constantly search for identity and voice as in the play *Betrayal*. As Linda Benzvi (1980: 228) points out, the core of the play is "not betrayal, but existence in society". The characters in

Betrayal navigate a quest for identity and the essence of existence, often traversing the path of self-betrayal through their deceitfulness and adoption of double identities. The primary characters in *Betrayal* are well-educated members of the upper-middle class, deeply engaged in the literary and artistic circles. Emma and Robert, a married couple with two children, Charlotte and Ned, are central to the narrative. Robert works as a publisher, and Emma manages an art gallery. Complicating their domestic life, Emma has been engaged in a seven-year affair with Jerry, Robert's friend. Jerry, a literary agent, also has a family of his own with two children, Sarah and Sam. Notably, the play is marked by the absence of Jerry's wife, Judith, who, despite being often mentioned, never appears on stage. This absence adds a layer of intrigue and unspoken complexity to the relationships depicted in the play. The act of betrayal operates by lying, ignoring, or violating the common social values. It is like a virus that once penetrates never hesitates to stop. Emma's dishonesty to Jerry who is her lover and friend of her husband by not admitting that Robert knows about their affair shows that she is not only betraying her husband but also her lover too.

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

Emma: I had to.

Pause.

Emma: He told me everything. I told him everything (Pinter, 1978: 18).

Emma tells Jerry that she talked about their affair last night which the spectator and Jerry later find out to be not the truth. Emma's dishonesty causes her to betray herself and her dream to find someone to love and have a happy life. In the play, Emma seemed very affectionate towards Jerry and wanted to have a real relationship with him but her dishonesty during and after their affair complicated the situation and brought about their end. Kirmizi and Yildiz (2020) have proposed that the post-war society has forced individuals to construct walls around them which they struggle to break down and this springe? causes their alienation and loneliness. It appears that Emma is also trapped inside her walls and her dishonesty only makes it harder to escape, rephrase. This struggle leads to not only her downfall but also ruins the relationships and family she possesses.

As the characters hide the truth from each other and avoid being open about their feelings, they create a second identity which causes them to wear masks to hide their true emotions. For instance, when Robert finds out the relationship between Emma and Jerry, he acts like he does not care but still plays word games with Jerry and refuses to tell him that he knows the affair.

Robert: Really? You mean you don't think it gives Emma a thrill?

Jerry: How do I know? She's your wife.

Pause (Pinter, 1978: 44).

Robert's use of equivocation might be to make Jerry admit his affair with his wife, but still causes double identity and makes him betray his friend too. The mutual deceptions and betrayals justify the characters' struggle for "self-validation" as well as "individual power and social agency" (Ali, 2018: 3). These characteristics of the modernist man reveal his inner instabilities and cause the downfall of the traditional values by immoral and adulterous behaviours.

3.2. Lack of Communication

The use of language is important to Pinter but what is more important is his Pinteresque pauses and silences in his plays. He uses his famous pauses as a way of expressing the character's feelings and makes use of language mostly as a shield with which the characters can hide or protect themselves. Hollis (1970) also highlights that the way Pinter communicates is through his silence, which he considers to be more valuable than the emptiness of the spoken language. The language Pinter uses in *Betrayal* is plain and simple which is the daily language of the people, but the pause and silence elements give the play more depth and put forward more about the characters' wishes, regrets, or plans for their future. Pinter also makes use of some objects or a game to reveal some intentions or dreams of the individuals. In scene six where Jerry and Emma are together in their flat after Emma's trip to Italy, she opens up a present.

Emma: I bought something in Venice-for the house.

She opens the parcel, takes out a tablecloth. Puts it on the table. Do you like it?

Jerry: It's lovely.

Pause.

Emma: Do you think we'll ever go to Venice together?

Pause. No. Probably not.

Pause (Pinter, 1978: 39).

In this scene, Emma tries to communicate with Jerry via the present that she bought from Venice. She lays the tablecloth on the table as she wants to have a real home with Jerry or start a new family together. However, as it can be understood from the pauses, Jerry appears to be indifferent to this request and slides over the conversation by only saying 'it's lovely'. This short dialogue between these two characters conveys many meanings and from this day on their affair starts to crumble and they end their so-called secret relationship. As Bakr (2019) stresses, Pinter is great at expressing his characters' feelings through the unspoken words and this is what makes his plays so unique and great to read. The silence we hear and observe in Pinter's plays reflects the lives of post-war society in which people live in an inconceivable world with no meaningful communication. So, the prevailing miscommunication takes away the interaction among people which leads to the disintegration of the society and unit of family.

According to Khan and Larik (2018), the common theme of isolation and alienation in Pinter's plays derives from not only the Second World War and the state of postmodern people but also due to his Jewish background. They argue that as Pinter was a Jewish playwright, he experienced all the hardship of discrimination first-hand and reflected his own uncertainty and detachment in his plays. Therefore, his use of silence and vague dialogues can represent the difficult and sorrowful lives of the Jewish community.

In scene two, after learning that Emma has told Robert about their previous affair, Jerry invites Robert to his house to confront him. However, he discovers that Robert had known the relationship beforehand and knows that Emma is in a relationship with Casey as well.

Jerry: We used to like each other.

Robert: We still do.

Pause.

I bumped into old Casey the other day. I believe he's having an affair with my wife. We haven't played squash for years, Casey and me. We used to have a damn good game (Pinter, 1978: 22).

From this line, it can be observed that Robert is avoiding his true feelings or does not know how to express himself. Rather than encountering with the people around him or his fears, he hides behind the squash game. The game of squash has become somewhat of an escape mechanism for him. Instead of having a meaningful conversation, Robert plays squash with his wife's lovers. According to Burkman (1971: 8), Pinter is more concerned about how "people fail to avoid that communication from which they wish to run". On Robert's account, it feels like he fails to abstain from his wife's lovers, but he chooses to play a game over having a dialogue with them. It is understandable that individuals in society somehow communicate however, the wrong kind of interaction can also provoke corruption in the society.

3.3. Dysfunctional Family

Martin Esslin (1960) notes down in his influential book *The Theatre of the Absurd* that as with scientific and technological breakthroughs in the twentieth century such as Darwinism theory Freudian psychoanalysis and the destruction caused by wars or loss of faith in God have all paved the way for an erosion of the conventional moral and social values within the post-war society. Normally, the word betrayal or the act of betrayal would evoke negative connotations within the community, however, in this play, it is regarded as ordinary or acceptable among the characters. Scolnicov (2008: 32) points out that while reading the play, lack of ethical values among characters forces us to question our own moral beliefs and reasonings. Besides, she indicates that the acts of "betrayal and divorce are presented along with marriage, having children, going on vacation [...] as common landmarks in life's routine". The normalisation of such guilts or sins may cause dysfunction among individuals and strengthen isolation as well as damaging the accepted norms of society. In the play, such kind of permissive characters are evident who also mirrors the distorted postmodern families in real life. The depiction of the families in the distinctly embodies postmodern characteristics by challenging traditional family values and navigating complex moral landscapes. The play's portrayal of fragmented relationships and moral ambiguity reflects the postmodern critique of grand narratives and normative social structures. Within this framework, acts typically viewed as transgressions, such as infidelity and betrayal, are normalized, illustrating a shift towards moral relativism where conventional judgments are seen as outdated or culturally relative.

According to Burkman (1982), the reason behind the betrayal in Pinter's play derives from Rene Girard's theory called 'triangular desire'. This theory claims that when two people have the same 'imitative desire' they wish to have the same man or woman. Hence, Burkman states that due to Robert and Jerry's interest in each other, they both wish to possess Emma as a kind of prize. In this sense, Emma instead of the main betrayer becomes the victim of betrayal by these people. In scene five, when Emma admits the affair to her husband, Robert's affection towards Jerry can be understood as he says "Robert: I've always liked Jerry. To be honest, I've always liked him rather more than I've liked you. Maybe I should have had an affair with him myself." (Pinter, 1978: 36). This line seems very odd and unusual for a person who just learned his wife's long-time affair. In a way, it justifies Girard's 'triangular desire'. Moreover, Robert's attitude displays the corrupted mindset that allows sins and wrongdoings as something agreeable and common. It shows the reality of the descending value of traditional ethics and beliefs in contemporary society. Das (2013) states that the buoyant attitude of Robert towards deception and cheating discomforts the audience and causes bewilderment. Human life and relationships become mysterious.

Robert: You look quite rough.

Pause.

What's the trouble?

Pause.

It's not about you and Emma, is it?

Pause.

I know all about that.

Jerry: Yes. So I've ...been told [...]

Robert: Well, it's not very important, is it? Been over for years, hasn't it? (Pinter, 1978: 19).

In this excerpt, after Emma tells Jerry that she confessed their affair to Robert, Jerry confronts him and is surprised by his reaction. Jerry seems to have expected a different response such as shouting or quarrelling, but Robert is very casual and does not give importance to their long-time betrayal. The play *Betrayal* shows that relationships have become meaningless and absurd. It is as if the game of betrayal among the characters is over so they can move forward from where they left. The supposed strong relationship between a husband and wife or the vows they made to each other has lost its significance. By the same token, the relationship between God and Humans seems to have also lost its strong bond in such a way that humans have drifted apart from each other, and the relationships have become complicated and absurd. Ultimately, Pinter's *Betrayal* vividly shows how deeply people can grow apart, turning once meaningful relationships into something distant and confusing.

Conclusion

Harold Pinter's *Betrayal* is as versatile as its creator, skillfully weaving the ordinary lives of its characters into a rich narrative with hidden depths. Initially, the drama seems to present a straightforward story of common interactions and personal betrayals. Yet, as one delves much deeper, it becomes clear that beneath the surface lies a complex web of motives and intentions. This study has revealed that the play itself misleads its audience with a superficial simplicity, encouraging a deeper examination of its themes. The play serves as a mirror to the social norms and personal realities of its time, especially in how it addresses morality and human behavior. As the characters in the play betray one another, they also betray themselves by straying from their true identities. This study concludes that their acts of betrayal are not just destructive but are crucial steps in their journeys toward understanding their true feelings and motives. The breakdown of communication, honesty, and moral values depicted in *Betrayal* reflects the wider collapse of family units and social connections during the post-war period. Pinter's work offers a critical look at the so-called Western civilization of the twentieth century, highlighting its moral decline despite the progress of a capitalist system. The play portrays the alienation and dislocation felt by society due to internal conflicts and identity crises. Pinter skillfully highlights how self-betrayal and moral corruption slowly eat away at the foundations of society, causing pain and eroding traditional values. Through *Betrayal*, Pinter not only captures the fragility and complexity of human relationships but also critiques the subtle yet powerful forces that undermine both social and personal integrity. This makes the play a profound commentary on the challenges of maintaining personal and social cohesion in a changing world as in today.

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