



Actor, Author and Audience: Scene 7 of Harlod Pinter's *Betrayal*

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**"Actor, Author and Audience:
Scene 7 of Harold Pinter's *Betrayal*"**

by

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Two-thirds of the way through scene 7 of *Betrayal* the following exchange occurs:

Robert You like it yourself, do you?

Jerry I do.

Robert And it's very successful?

Jerry It is. (p.115)

The *it* in question is a novel written by Spinks, an author "discovered" by Jerry in his professional capacity (literary agent) and whose manuscript was turned down by Robert in his (publisher). The subject is therefore a tricky one, all the more so as it was introduced by Robert's announcement of the fact that the book had been read and enjoyed by Emma - Robert's wife, Jerry's mistress. Moreover, Robert and Emma had discussed the book - disagreeing over whether or not its subject was "betrayal" - just before Emma's forced confession of her affair with Jerry. Jerry, although he is unaware of Robert's discovery of his secret, knows that Emma read the book while on holiday with her husband. Robert may suspect, though he cannot know, that Emma might have revealed to Jerry that their affair is no longer a secret...

This brief summary of the situation (incomplete since it deals only with the state of the characters' knowledge and neglects the audiences') shows what a weight of connotation, suspicion, innuendo and calculation may bear on the exchange, all of them complicating the actor's approach to the text. And the text itself, for all its apparent simplicity, is not without its own difficulties, which require actors and director to make decisions on a linguistic level while only too aware that phonetics and syntax, in such a complex dramatic situation, are anything but "purely" linguistic.

One problem, for example, is how Jerry should pronounce his two brief responses: "I do, it is" ? Although their form is dictated by that of Robert's questions - particularly the first, with its tag ending - their abrupt, almost emphatically affirmative nature is nevertheless a little odd. The actor playing Jerry, like any actor playing an identifiable "character," will seek to determine the motivation that lies behind a particular remark and the way it is said, fitting it both

to the psychological situation in which he feels his character to be at any particular moment and to the broader outlines of the character's "character." Here, though, the author simply does not allow Jerry to respond in any of the obvious ways: he cannot appear surprised by the rather naive questions, or indignant in response to a veiled accusation, or apologetic or embarrassed about his friend's lack of perception, or arrogantly superior about his own. (Things would be far easier for the actor if Pinter had required Jerry to say, for example: "Yes, I do," and "Well, it is, actually"; or, to use more strongly-marked variants: "Yes, of course I do," "You know I do," "Indeed it is," "I'm glad to say it is.") If he tries to suggest any of these reactions (and in the situation several of them at once might be appropriate) the actor will find that he cannot do so in a straightforward manner; lengthy reflection on the complexities of the situation and the ambiguities of the character will leave him either baffled by the difficulties and unable to make anything of the part at all, or reduced to imposing a characterisation on it from the outside and playing it in a very one-dimensional fashion.

So what is the poor actor to do? The problem will not just go away, for the difficulties I have pointed to by means of this example are not particular to this episode or this scene, nor are they accidental: this type of sparse, ambiguous dialogue is quite typical of the play, and its unhelpful sparseness is obviously deliberate - in earlier plays and particularly in some of his short sketches Pinter used the redundancies of language, in which the actor is much freer to move around, to brilliant parodic effect.² The complexity too is deliberate; Pinter entangles his characters in a web of deceptions and then multiplies the references and echoes which bind this scene and its dialogue to the rest of the structure. The spectators, finally, thanks to the non-linear chronology of the play,³ find themselves in a position that is at once privileged and perilous - knowing what is to come, they can appreciate to the full the ironies of successive situations, but, partly ignorant of what has gone before, they are forced into the unfamiliar exercise of hypothesising about the past, and are denied the consolation of feeling that they understand the characters' motives.

In scene 2, Pinter's dialogue in effect makes fun of the pragmatic and epistemic warp in which both characters and audience can find themselves locked:

Robert I thought you knew.
Jerry Knew what?
Robert That I knew. That I've known for years. I thought you knew that.
Jerry You thought I knew ?
Robert She said you didn't. But I didn't believe that.
Pause
 Anyway I think I thought you knew. (p. 38)

So, once again, what is the poor actor to do? Having directed *Betrayal* with a group of actors⁴ who were well-versed both in playing Pinter and in textual analysis, I believe that the solution, like the difficulty, lies in the dialogue itself and its essentially theatrical nature. Much of Pinter's text is constructed of episodes which, on one level, are almost self-contained: short dialogue sequences possessing an individual tone and flavour - reflecting a particular pragmatic situation - which, once identified, will dictate the actors' handling of them, often in ways which override considerations of characterisation and interpretation on a larger scale. When the text is tackled on this level, many other broader effects fall into place with little extra effort. To return, for example, to Jerry's "I do, It is," the sequence needs to be completed by one further exchange.

Robert You like it yourself, do you?

Jerry I do.

Robert And it's very successful?

Jerry It is.

Robert Tell me, do you think that makes me a publisher of unique critical judgement or a foolish publisher?

Jerry A foolish publisher. (p.115)

In our production, we decided that Jerry should use a rising intonation for his monosyllabic replies, and a fairly jocular tone. He is at first quizzical and amused, then frankly amused as he pronounces judgement on Robert's lack of professional acumen. For him, the sequence is a co-operative one, and his rising tone suggests something like: "I suspect this is leading up to something, probably a joke, and I'm willing to play along - so out with the rest." The outcome of this particular sequence should be shared amusement, but that expectation is overthrown by what follows:

Robert I agree with you. I am a very foolish publisher.

Jerry No you're not. What are you talking about? You're a good publisher.
What are you talking about? (p.115)

Robert's solemn acquiescence in Jerry's judgement breaks the established tone and Jerry, in some confusion, has to contradict his own remarks and question the whole drift of Robert's discourse. And this reversal by Robert of a situation he has himself set up is indeed a turning point in the scene: up till this moment the dialogue is more or less equally shared between the participants in short exchanges, but after his second "What are you talking about?" Jerry is only allowed another 25 words against more than 350 for Robert.

The "sub-text" suggested above for Jerry at this point of the play is not determined solely by the short passage quoted. From the start, the scene has been built up of sequences of conversation in which a certain, often considerable, degree of cooperation between the participants is necessary. Or rather, to be precise, the scene starts (if we neglect the opening exchange of "Hullo") with a sequence in which elliptic language leads to a *breakdown* in communication - but significantly the exchange involves not Jerry and Robert but Jerry and the waiter:

Jerry I'd like a scotch on the rocks
Waiter With water ?
Jerry What?
Waiter You want it with water? (p.105)

This opening only serves to underline the degree of conversational cooperation normally achieved by Jerry and Robert. Straight away, Jerry correctly reads Robert's comment: "You don't usually drink scotch at lunchtime" (p.106) as a speech act equivalent to a question, to which he replies with an apparent *non-sequitur*: "I've had a bug actually." As the *actually* indicates, this cannot in fact be an irrelevant remark, but one that Robert is expected to cooperatively read as an explanation for Jerry's scotch-drinking. This is what one would expect to find in any normal conversation, and could indicate no more than a certain dialogic realism on Pinter's part. Some subsequent exchanges, however, stretch the principles of cooperation far beyond normal breaking point.

To Robert's insistence that they get together for a game of squash, for example, Jerry replies by apparently launching a new, unconnected sequence:

Robert We really must play. We haven't played for years.
Jerry How old are you now, then?
Robert Thirty six.
Jerry That means I'm thirty six as well.
Robert If you're a day.
Jerry Bit violent, squash. (p.107)

Once again it is only a conversational tag, *then*, that indicates to his interlocutor that Jerry's remark is to be topically connected with what precedes it. Robert, however, makes no protest and seeks no explanation; he answers as briefly as possible and leaves the initiative with Jerry. The latter responds with a statement that plainly flouts Grice's maxim of quantity: the information it contains is already available to both participants.

Jerry's strategy in this exchange is now becoming clear; his unnecessarily pedantic establishing of the fact that he and Robert are both thirty-six is to be read, by implicature, as a suggestion that such an age is incompatible with the playing of squash. This might still leave room, though, for different attitudes on Jerry's part. His "That means" statement could be a challenge to Robert ("Disagree if you can"), or an invitation to his friend to draw the required conclusion. The first might occur in a competitive situation, and would provoke a "Yes, but..." response from Robert; in the second case we should expect Robert to reply in the affirmative (acknowledging the implicature rather than the surface content) and add a remark to show that he had understood the syllogism that Jerry was hinting at (squash is a violent game, middle-aged men shouldn't play violent games, they are middle-aged, therefore they shouldn't play squash). But instead of "Yes, I suppose we are a bit long in the tooth", or "Yes, it is a bit energetic, isn't it," Robert comes out with a cliché that simply reinforces the surface content of Jerry's statement (much as he had used a proverbial saying - "Like an apple a day" - on p. 106 to acknowledge Jerry's explanation of his whisky-drinking). It is left to Jerry to supply one of the premisses of his syllogism) - with a tone presumably more appropriate to a conclusion, since Robert apparently accepts it as such, and the exchange then comes to an end. In fact, it has achieved nothing; the line with which Robert rounds it off ("Ring me. We'll have a game") could have followed immediately on his opening remark, or after a noncommittal or positive response from Jerry. As in the opening example, the only way for the actors to play these lines seems to be by adopting a detached, perhaps ironically quizzical, finally amused tone.

My analysis may seem to be as heavy-footed as Jerry's logic - but it is necessary to go into some detail to establish the source of the paradoxical impression conveyed by the dialogue here. Robert is obviously not baffled by Jerry's indirect approach, but nor does he cooperate in the normal conversational sense by responding immediately and fully to the implicatures. He plays, in fact, a textual rather than a conversational game, supplying Jerry with the lines that will enable him to carry the exchange on to a predetermined point. From the audience's point of view, the effect is similar to that of a music-hall dialogue between a comic and his "feed," where individual attitudes or surface "characterisations" exist only to promote dialogue that will lead up to a punch-line or a comic dead-end, and are abandoned as soon as the sketch is over. In the music-hall situation, the audience is always fully aware of the collaborative nature of the undertaking; joker and victim join in acknowledging the laughter and applause at the end of one sketch before resuming their rôles for the next. At the same time the comic - though not his "straight man" - may take the audience into his confidence during a sketch by means of winks or asides. Obviously, in Pinter's theatre, no such direct actor-audience communication is possible. But the collaborative nature of the dialogue is, I suggest, clear enough, and the laughter, applause, and ironical acknowledgement of the comic rôle-playing are shared between the

characters themselves and can be made visible (without over-emphasis) to the audience.

Obviously, many past and contemporary writers have produced theatrical dialogue that exists primarily to produce a witty effect or to lead up to a smart one-liner: Restoration comedy, eighteenth-century comedy and Wilde all come to mind, not to mention more recent writers who may have been directly influenced by the music hall. But there is, I think, a difference of degree and probably of kind between such instances and the examples I have put forward from *Betrayal*. In Restoration comedy and its derivatives, the characters are perceived as trying to outdo one another in a competitive situation; even where dialogue has an overall stylistic unity it can be analysed in terms of B taking over A's tropes, sentence structures or semantic fields and turning them to his own advantage. When the punch-line comes in too pat, when the beginning of an exchange is too obviously a preparation for its conclusion, then we condemn the dialogue as artificial. Pinter can and does write competitive dialogue, notably in scene 4 of *Betrayal*. In the first part of scene 7, though, the verbal comedy is not of his sort. On the surface, at least, the sense is of collaboration between the characters, not competition. Even when one character does take advantage of the other, the outcome is still a shared joke. The example here is the follow-up to Jerry's "bug" explanation:

- Robert* How are you? Apart from the bug?
Jerry Fine.
Robert Ready for some squash?
Jerry When I've got rid of the bug, yes.
Robert I thought you had got rid of it.
Jerry Why do you think I'm still drinking scotch at lunchtime?
Robert Oh yes. (p.107)

This time Robert is allowed one expression of surprise but, faced with the outrageous logic of Jerry's last line, he accepts the joke and the part he has been led to play in it. The audience, once again, has the impression that it is watching a collaborative performance involving two partners.

We can also consider the curious exchange concerning the waiter's identity :

- Jerry* Is he the one who's always been here or is it his son?
Robert You mean has his son always been here?
Jerry No, is *he* his son? I mean, is he the son of the one who's always been here?
Robert No, he's his father. (p.109)

This time the starting point is an ambiguity that cannot be cooperatively resolved: Robert has to ask for a "repair." Although he seems satisfied with the resulting explanation, the audience is still further confused by the multiplication of pronouns. The dialogue seems to have, on the

surface, hardly any point; it is justified only by the passing comic effect that it generates. And (although it is possibly to play the sequence in such a way as to show Jerry plunged into confusion at the end) the comedy basically lies in the fact that these few lines exist as comic nonsense, independent of the characters who speak them.

* * *

So far we have been looking at things very much from the point of view of performance, and granting motivations to characters much as the actor is obliged to do. But in attributing to Robert the playing of "a textual rather than a conversational game" I have obviously reached the limits of this approach; the text does not belong to the character, and only author and audience (or reader) can play textual games. Pinter, in fact, is playing games with the audience - or, more precisely, using the privilege of his authorial position to make continual subtle changes in the rules of the interpretative game which any audience, consciously or unconsciously, plays when reading a text or watching a theatrical performance. The text throws up an easy lob - a transparent speech-act, let us say -, the audience seizes the obvious implicature and makes a confident interpretative smash - only to find that the base-line has been treacherously shifted.

In the examples I have taken from scene 7, it is the rules governing the actor-text-character relationship that Pinter blurs. One of the bases of representation in the theatre is that actors collaborate - as actors - to create the illusion of characters producing utterances which can be interpreted as speech-acts, and that these speech-acts attributed to the characters constitute the interpersonal action of the drama - persuasion, argument, discussion, etc.⁵ But at times Pinter's illusory characters appear to be collaborating - as characters? as actors? - to create a different discourse which can be read as a purely comic exchange having little relevance to their situation,⁶ and in which interpretation of their speech-acts in personal terms is extremely problematic. The audience's hesitation is reflected in the question-marks of that last sentence: we can perhaps make the terms of the dilemma clearer by calling on the notion of "stage figure."⁷ The stage figure is the actor on stage as physically perceived by the spectators: speaking the text, and using his or her own speech-organs and body, but normally with modifications brought about by costume, make-up and the application of professional techniques in the field of voice-production and gesture. The stage figure is not the actor himself - who, off-stage, would not necessarily speak, walk, dress in that way, express the same opinions, use the same style of language, etc.- but it is not yet "character." Character is something created by the spectators, a psychological construct built up on the basis of their own reactions to and interpretations of the stage figure and its relationship to other scenic elements - including, notably, other stage figures and the events of the plot.

In the "collaborative" dialogue that we have noted in scene 7, the spectator can interpret the stage figures in two different ways simultaneously: as parts of the "Robert" and "Jerry" constructs that he has been building up since the beginning of the play, and as transparent personae whose existence is justified by a text that could belong to quite a different situation. The two readings are not totally incompatible. Pinter's aim is not to destroy the notion of theatrical character entirely by total fragmentation, in the manner of Foreman for example - just as his studies of the problems and absurdities of verbal communication have never led him to reduce language itself to absurdity, *à la* Ionesco. He simply renders the interpretation of the stage figure indeterminate - not from the outside, by some technique of distanciation, but from within: the indeterminism is inscribed in the discourse itself, and the text becomes "visible" as an independent object with a cohesion of its own. The structures of this text and its distribution between the speakers are not incompatible with a reading of it as represented conversation between the "characters" Robert and Jerry, so the audience is not quite prevented from resorting to the classical theatrical convention of a character producing dialogue dictated by a situation and a psychological state; however, the psychological interpretation cannot do justice to all the features of the text even on an interpersonal level, and the audience is not allowed to relax in the comfort of a conventional reading.

This indeterminacy of the stage figure is also the source of the actor's problem which I noted at the outset. On one hand there is no warrant for the player to abandon the external features of Jerry or Robert - the comparison with music-hall comedy does not mean that he should suddenly clap on a false nose and adopt a funny voice when he encounters the anomalous passages of dialogue. On the other hand, as we have already seen, he cannot suggest by voice and gesture many of the reactions which might be expected to spring from the encounter between his character and the situation at these points; his only solution is to depersonalise to a large extent the stage figure, narrowing down reaction to the immediate dialogic context. In so doing he probably serves Pinter's aims in two ways: the sense of enigma surrounding the Jerry-Robert relationship is deepened, and the audience is made uneasy, its confidence in its ability to play the interpretative game a little shaken.

Interestingly, this *mise en discours* of the indeterminacy of character is paralleled by a *mise en scène* of further indeterminacy - perhaps that of representation in general. Scene 7 is set in a restaurant, on the occasion of one of the regular lunches which Jerry and Robert have together. Everything leads us to suppose that this lunch, apparently the first occasion on which the two men meet after Robert and Emma's Italian holiday, is the one talked about by Jerry and Emma in scene 6. There we are told - insistently - that it is Jerry's turn to take Robert out. We

might therefore expect Jerry to choose the venue, take charge of the ordering, and generally play the host. So it is a slight surprise to find Robert already in possession of the terrain at the beginning of the scene, more familiar with the place, and taking upon himself the role of host. The point would not be worth noticing if Pinter himself did not draw our attention to it.

Waiter Ready to order, signori?

Robert What'll you have?

Jerry looks at him, briefly, then back to the menu.

Jerry I'll have melone... (p.108)

Stage directions indicating details of gesture or manner are rare in *Betrayal*; when they do occur they mostly relate to moments of crisis (Jerry holding his head in his hands in scene 2, the business with the key in scene 3), or to opening and closing sequences (scene 4, 6, 9, notably, for closing *tableaux*). In scene 7 the *only* directions, apart from the one quoted, are the instructions for Jerry's entrance and the comings and goings of the waiter.

So Pinter, clearly, wants Jerry's glance to direct our attention to something out of the way - and this may lead us to reflect on the situation of the restaurant, a meeting place which should have been neutral terrain but which Robert has apparently appropriated. The main feature of the restaurant is that it is Italian, a fact that emerges quite clearly in the text when the food is ordered on p.108, but that is probably apparent much earlier, through the waiter's accent and, if the director so chooses, the décor (particularly the picture of Venice to which the waiter draws attention on p.110). Two points then need to be made. The first is that *Italy* and *Venice* are obviously connected, for the audience, with scene 5 and with the theme of betrayal, whence the question: is the Italian setting to be seen as a deliberate choice by Robert, or is it a typical dramatist's use of coincidence? The answer is irrelevant, for in either case the immediate dramatic effect is the same: a heightened suspense through the bringing together of Robert and Jerry in a setting connoting betrayal. But - second point - Pinter then casts doubt on the genuineness of the Italian character of the restaurant. *A propos* of the waiter whose identity is so confusingly discussed on p.109 Robert says: "He's the one who speaks wonderful Italian." This is of course not a remark that would normally be made about someone who really was Italian - Grice's maxim of quantity again - and to underline the point Pinter continues the dialogue with discussion of Robert's and Emma's Italian.

Details such as these are entirely trivial - and therein lies their significance. Scene 7 contains at least one major contradiction: Robert claims to have been to Torcello whereas Emma in scene 6 had implied that neither she nor her husband had made the trip. But the visit to Torcello, having been a *leitmotiv* of scene 5, has been established as a very sensitive subject, and the audience will readily explain away the discrepancy in psychological terms: either Robert

or Emma is lying, at least by omission. For the other questions - Robert's treat or Jerry's? genuine or false Italian restaurant? - no such explanation can be sought. We are in a domain which has nothing to do with the characters; nor can we say that Pinter, like Shakespeare with Lady Macbeth's children or the time-scheme of *Othello*, was careless or had other priorities - the text itself brings these points gently but deliberately to the attention of an alert spectator or reader. Once again Pinter is playing a game with the audience - a game, this time, that puts both the textual and the extra-textual elements of theatrical representation into question.

* * *

Even in these days of reader response and *instances narratives* we cannot entirely ignore the author; it is still his prerogative, as it always has been, to plot the twists and turns of his own narrative, to stage coincidences, to create parallel or symmetrical situations, and generally to make himself felt as the puller of the strings that guide characters and events on page and stage. So how far does what I have called Pinter's "playing of games" differ from the authorial privilege necessarily exercised by dramatists since theatre began? The answer perhaps lies in the fact that Pinter's authorial manipulations can be felt both on the largest scale (in the chronological arrangement of the scenes) and in the smallest details of discourse, and that the two are intimately related. Sometimes the results of this relationship are paradoxical. The inversion of chronology operates on the level of plot, and so one of its consequences is to drive audiences to pay close attention to event and motivation as they emerge in dialogue, in an attempt to reconstruct a linear sequence of cause and effect. As I have suggested above, this is precisely what many of the dialogue sequences of scene 7 prevent the spectator from doing in a satisfactory way. However, so obtrusive is the chronological problem that it is likely to be regarded by most members of the audience as exclusively responsible for the unease they feel. The large-scale effect - chronology - masks the subtler effects at work on the discourse level - and this in itself is another aspect of Pinter's game-playing strategy: the audience, wrestling as it were with the problems of a triangular tennis-court, fails to notice the occasional shift in the lines.

Parallels between micro- and macro-structures in the play are found by A.E. Quigley on the level of character and plot.

The local texture of the dialogue, which exhibits the tension between implicit and explicit information,... recapitulates the larger patterns of the dialogue, which manifest the tension in character interaction between concealing and revealing knowledge. This, in turn, is reflected in the structure of the play, which explores the possibility that novelty can emerge in the context of conventionality if local

domains can be insulated from larger domains.⁸

The plot, of course, demonstrates the breakdown of such attempted insulation, and Pinter's whole technique demonstrates the interdependence of every domain and every level of expression. For the relationship between small and large scale effects is the relationship - a primordial one in the theatre - between text and context: that is, the way any fragment of the text is embedded in a dramatic, co-textual, referential and pragmatic situation.⁹ We have already seen that fragments of Pinter's text can be anomalous with respect to their pragmatic situation and indeterminate in referential terms. A glance at the position of scene 7 in the organisation of the play as a whole, and at the structuring of the early parts of the scene, will show how interactions between the text and its dramatic and co-textual situations are also foregrounded.

In the plot of *Betrayal*, "action" in the physical sense (and even as perlocution) is rare; what seems to be important is what the characters think about each other and about their own situations. For if we accept that "a narrative plot is a temporal succession of different states of affairs mediated by events,"¹⁰ then it is certain that in *Betrayal* the states of affairs that really count are states of knowledge - what the characters think they know; and "events" in this context are revelations or discoveries. However, it is far from easy to distinguish important "events" of this sort in all scenes of the play. Rather, the episodes round which Pinter has chosen to construct his scenes appear to be of two sorts: genuine exchanges of information leading to new states of knowledge (notably in scenes 1, 2, 5); and situations where differing states of knowledge are brought into possibly eventful confrontation. Scene 7, the first meeting between Jerry and Robert after the latter has discovered the secret of his wife's adultery with his friend, is obviously the prime example of this latter type. It is also the climax of a straightforward chronological sequence - in scene 5 Robert learns of the affair, in scene 6 Emma fails to warn Jerry that their secret has been discovered, in scene 7 Robert and Jerry meet. The stage is therefore set for a confrontation full of suspense - or would be but for the inverted chronology, thanks to which the audience knows by the end of scene 2 all there is to know about what becomes of the protagonists, and most of what there is to know about their past history. It is aware, therefore, that Robert is not going to exploit his knowledge; that Jerry will remain in blissful ignorance; that the meal will not end in open conflict between the two - at least not on the subject of Jerry's affair. To return to our tennis-match comparison, the audience should be in the position of TV viewers watching the recording of a match after the result has already been announced, interested to see just how X fought his way back and wore down Y's resistance after losing the first set, but unable really to thrill to the suspense of the vital tie-break.

And yet there is tension in scene 7 of *Betrayal*, and the audience does react to a suspense which its global knowledge should render impossible. It manages, in other words, to assimilate

two broadly contradictory readings of the plot simultaneously, just as it manages to accept two parallel readings of the stage figures presented by the actors. This is not in itself so very surprising; theatrical communication, as Keir Elam notes,¹¹ takes place on many levels other than the purely informational one, and we can return to see again and again plays that we know intimately. In *Betrayal*, though, the audience cannot but be aware of the paradoxical position in which it has been placed; the efforts spectators have to make to re-establish a linear chronology guarantee that, on one level of consciousness at least, the current, apparently suspenseful, situation and the outcome that denies suspense are both present in their minds. The result is to foreground any suspense-creating techniques simply *as* techniques.

If we examine the scenic and discursive means by which suspense is maintained and the topic of "betrayal" (contained as a potentiality within the topic "holiday in Venice") is brought forward, we discover that many of them link up with devices that are already foregrounded in other ways, or with textual echoes that bind this scene to other parts of the play. The Italian restaurant setting is the first scenic index of the Venice topic, while the interruptions and delays caused by the waiter are obvious sources of suspense (and have been part of every dramatist's bag of tricks for centuries); as we have already noted, the text throws their "Italian" status open to doubt. Jerry's carefree tone as he replies to Robert's first, conventional, questions reinforce the idea that he has no suspicion of what might lie in store; but as we have seen this tone, in conjunction with Robert's, also contains elements of artificiality. It is Jerry himself who introduces the subject of Venice (p.108: "How was Venice?"; p.110: "How was it, anyway? Venice."; p.111: "So how was it?"); the form of words he uses recalls his conversation with Emma in scene 6. (p.92: "How was it?"). And the suspense-creating techniques really thrust themselves on the audience's attention as the first two questions get no response from Robert because the waiter intervenes - answering the second time as if the question had been addressed to him.

In the following sequence (p.111) Robert interrogates Jerry (possibly with a hostile tone) concerning *his* past visits to Venice, his family, and then, as Jerry once more gets in his own question, Venice again. Under this barrage, Jerry seems much less sure of himself; his replies are vague, and at one point he breaks off in mid-sentence, caught out by an overlap between his current conversation and the one he had had previously (scene 6) with Emma. In fact he has no need to stop; he is about to repeat something he said to Emma, not something he learned from her. However, his hesitation reinforces the audience's sense of the dangers of his situation, and also allows Pinter to inscribe in the theatrical text, *via* the character's awareness, the echoes and overlaps that are already present in the dramatic text. Indeed, he underscores the effect by doubling this perfectly innocuous slip with a potentially dangerous one a little later in the scene.

Pinter then piles on the suspense by making Jerry wriggle out of the imaginary risk by retuning for the third time to the potentially explosive topic of Venice. As the question goes unanswered yet again Jerry begins to look like another comic character, the sleepwalker in the minefield, persistently heading for danger only to escape it by inches thanks to a last-minute chance. Pinter has succeeded here, perhaps, in replacing one type of suspense by another; rather than waiting for Robert to come out with an accusation, the audience is now simply wondering whether the topic of the Venetian holiday will be successfully launched at all.

When (on p.112) Robert finally does, almost indirectly, reply to Jerry's questions, Pinter throws in another shoal of textual red-herrings to keep the audience busy. Robert's declaration that he went to Torcello contradicts the impression Emma had given in scene 6, as does his statement that he went by speedboat. Jerry is so surprised that he almost gives himself away, stopping in mid-sentence as he had done earlier, but this time with good reason: he is (presumably) about to repeat what Emma had told him about the speedboats being on strike. When he covers up by talking about gondolas, Robert's response - "It would take hours" - (p.113) exactly parallels Emma's (scene 6, p.93). Finally, Robert mentions that on Torcello he read Yeats, recalling, for the audience, an ambiguous piece of dialogue from the end of scene 2:

Jerry You read Yeats on Torcello once
Robert On Torcello?
Jerry Don't you remember? Years ago. You went over to Torcello in the dawn, alone. And read Yeats.
Robert So I did. I told you that, yes.
Pause
 Yes. (p.45-46)

The ambiguity lies in "I told you that," which could imply "It was only a tale, not in fact true", or could be an expression of surprise: "Fancy my revealing that to you" (with the stress either on the *that* or the *you* - or both!). No type of sentence stress seems perfectly natural, and the context is of no help in disambiguating the remark.

Once again, the audience has a strong sense of the author's presence - or at the very least, of his text as *text*. The sequence on pages 112-113 fits into the dynamic movement of the dialogue between Jerry and Robert, which seems to be spiralling round through "Venice" and "Torcello" towards the ultimate goal of "betrayal"; at the same time their exchange is suspended in a web of conflicting textual cross-references that extend both backwards and forwards in time.

After another interruption from the waiter, and another plunge towards "betrayal" as Robert introduces the topic of Spinks' book, the dialogue reaches the point at which I began this study. Robert has set up a dialogue situation similar to those in which he and Jerry were collaborating earlier, and then broken aggressively out of the collaborative mould. The high point of suspense has been reached, and if Robert is to launch an attack this, structurally, is the point at which he should do so. In fact he goes off on what seems to be a tangent - one on which I do not propose to follow him on this particular occasion. Suffice it to say that his (pseudo?)-confessional quasi-monologues provide a quite unexpected conclusion to the scene, and that the ambiguity of his discourse makes for the same kind of double-edged audience involvement as that we noted earlier.

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Although the dramatic text cannot be examined in the same way as prose narrative for syntactical evidence of a narrative or pseudo-authorial voice, my treatment of the first dozen pages of scene 7 has shown, I hope, that on the level of discourse and of overall structure - and particularly in the relationship between the two - we encounter effects which cannot be attributed to the *dramatis personae* or any other dramatically realized source. The conclusion must be that very often the difficulties of the text of *Betrayal* reflect the presence of the author, not just as organiser of the conflicts, encounters and coincidences of his plot but, far more subtly, as a permanent mediator between his audience and the dramatic event. Unlike many absurd dramatists and some post-modernists, Pinter feels no need to question, distort or destroy the code he uses; unlike many contemporaries, he has no need of narrator, truchman, Everyman or other framing device to dramatize his interventions; he achieves his results from within the text and from within the dramatic framework, by playing off large-scale effects against micro-text, conventional reactions against more sophisticated expectations, one type of theatrical illusion against another. And Pinter-as-author survives, despite the filtering presence of director and actors, into the theatrical presentation of his text since his interventions concern precisely the point at which the text becomes theatre as the actor addresses the problem of how to give the dialogue vocal and bodily form - the point from which I began.

However, Pinter's mediating presence between audience and performance is not designed to direct the interpretation of his text this way or that. On the contrary, my examples show that we sense the authorial intervention in the very places where the text becomes most indeterminate and where the available levels of reading are most complex - the moments, in fact, at which the audience is invited to be most active. For, whatever games the author may choose to play, however much he may involve actors and performance technicians in his schemes, it is the

audience that has the privilege of the final word.

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- 1 - Quotations from *Betrayal* are from the Eyre Methuen paperback edition (London, 1980). All page numbers refer to this edition.
 - 2 - See, for example, Guido Almansi's comments on Pinter's "phonomimesis" in "Harold Pinter's Idiom of Lies," Stratford-upon-Avon Studies 19, *Contemporary English Drama*, 1981, pp 79-92. The remarks in question are on p.90.
 - 3 - The scenes of the play are carefully dated and span a period of 10 years moving backwards from 1977 to 1968. Chronologically, the order of the scenes is: 9, 8, 5, 6, 7, 4, 3, 1, 2.
 - 4 - Emma was played by Carole Bernicchia, Jerry by Graham Dallas and Robert by George Morgan. I owe many of my ideas about the play to discussions with them and with our audiences.
 - 5 - See Keir Elam, *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama* (London: Methuen, 1980), pp.156-170.
 - 6 - A comparable comic effect from Stoppard, *Every Good Boy deserves Favour*, is instanced by Elam, op. cit, p.164. Lack of uptake by one character - his failure to recognise the illocutionary intention of his interlocutor - leads to comedy, the verbal sources of which span the whole dialogue. However, in my examples from *Betrayal* there is no such lack of uptake: the actors/characters seem to react in two different ways on two different levels, with full understanding.
A similar foregrounding of the text occurs when formal features such as rhyme-schemes are common to more than one character's discourse. The effect is relatively common in early Shakespeare, e.g. Richard and Bolingbroke in *Richard II*, IV, 1:
Bol. I Thought you had been willing to resign.
Rich. My crown I am; but still my griefs are mine.
Here, however, the patterning seems to belong to the act of utterance and so to remain at the actor's level. (Shakespeare's game-playing with words, leading to foregrounding of the text, is the subject of K.Elam, *Shakespeare's Universe of Discourse* (Cambridge, 1984).
 - 7 - Discussion of the actor/stage-figure/character triad originated in the work of Zich and the Prague school. The notion appears to be a fruitful one, worthy of redefinition in the light of more recent reception-orientated theories.
 - 8 - A.E. Quigley, *The Modern Stage and Other Worlds* (New York and London, 1985), p.237.
 - 9 - See Elam, *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*, pp.39 and 137 ff.
 - 10 - This definition is put forward as "one of the least controversial of narrative theory" by Marie-Laure Ryan, "The Modal Structure of Narrative Universes," in *Poetics Today*, vol. 6 n°4, 1985, p.717.
 - 11 - Elam, *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*, p.40.