

**FROM REEL TO REAL :  
HAROLD PINTER'S SCREENPLAYS  
AND THE OBJECT OF DESIRE**

**LINDA DENISE RENTON**

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## ABSTRACT

Taking as a starting point Pinter's statement that 'The more acute the experience, the less articulate its expression', this thesis offers a theorisation of that essential point beyond representation, through Lacan's *objet petit a*, the focal point of the subject's desire. It is this small object, unarticulated in language, unrepresented in the visual field, that is most acute for the subject, and more real than external reality. It is a structure applicable to poetry, psychoanalysis and film, and it is through Pinter's screenplays that this approach is made. Using previously unpublished material from the Pinter Archive, the progress of each screenplay is charted to find Pinter working towards just such a structure of desire for the central character within the narrative, and for the spectator.

Chapter one outlines the basic premise of Lacanian theory and its relevance to the most recent writing on film. A direct link is established between Pinter and the Surrealists through Pinter's unpublished poem 'August Becomes', placing vision at the centre of being, and connecting Pinter, through the Surrealists, to Lacan. The construction of an object of desire is outlined in general terms within the screenplays, and the chapter concludes by identifying three different aspects of the object. The first two aspects are those of lack, which evokes desire: the object which is eternally lost, and can only be retrieved in fantasy or dream, and the object which, aligned to a real object in the external world, will change once that real object is achieved. The third aspect emerges when instead of a lack we encounter a fullness, which destroys the relationship with desire, and causes anxiety. Chapter two is a resumé of all the screenplays to date in the light of this reading, while chapters, three four and five, offer a close reading of three screenplays: *The Remains of the Day*, *The Handmaid's Tale* and *Victory*, each of which offers a different aspect of the object as outlined above.

In chapter six this approach is offered as a reading of Pinter's stage plays. Finally, a postscript outlines Pinter's latest screenplay, *The Dreaming Child*, which reinforces the subject of this thesis, that it is the object of desire which is more real, more acute than external reality. Throughout the screenplays Pinter can be seen to shape narrative and structure to create just such an acute, invisible object for his spectator, placing her in a vacillating relationship with desire.

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Finally, this work is dedicated to my mother, Clarice Linda Pritchard (1906-1996), and to those in my past who had no voice, Florrie, Ern, Eve, Laurie and Bert, and who remain acutely real. And to Mike and Sophie whose encouragement never wavered.

### EXTRACTS FROM MANUSCRIPTS AND PRINTED WORKS

Harold Pinter's manuscripts appear in many formats from brief handwritten notes to final typed draft. In order to unify the format and to distinguish between manuscripts and printed works, extracts from manuscripts give names of characters, settings and directions in lower case, with names and settings underlined.

Extracts from printed works give names and settings in capitals, and directions in italics.

## Chapter One

### INTRODUCTION

Harold Pinter has always been aware that 'The more acute the experience, the less articulate its expression.'<sup>1</sup> This crucial factor in Pinter's work has exercised Pinter's critics whose commentaries continually circulate around that hidden point beyond representation. But there is a way in. Pinter's privileging of that which is unarticulated and unseen goes hand in hand with his early fascination with film. Pinter has spoken of the film club that he joined at the age of fourteen, and the impact of those early films, among which were those of the Surrealists, Buñuel and Dali's *Un Chien Andalou* and *L'Age d'or*. Film was, he says, 'my language, apart from reading. The theatre didn't really come into it until much later.'<sup>2</sup> While critical orthodoxy continues to privilege language over silence and the stage plays over Pinter's adaptations for the screen, this approach allows a hitherto undeveloped reading of Pinter. Using previously unpublished material from the Pinter Archive, this thesis will show Pinter working towards the construction of that acute point beyond representation which becomes, for the spectator, an hallucinatory object of desire.

The Surrealists attempted to bring the intense and hidden world of unconscious desire into play in everyday life, and found in the 'conscious hallucination' of film a medium which could fuse the logic of conscious thought with the illogical patterns of the dream.<sup>3</sup> Through the work of the young psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, a contemporary of the

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<sup>1</sup> Harold Pinter, 'Writing for the Theatre' (1962), in *Plays One* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), pp. vii-xiv (p. ix).

<sup>2</sup> Mel Gussow, *Conversations with Pinter* (London: Nick Hern, 1994), p.138.

<sup>3</sup> Jean Goudal, 'Surrealism and Cinema', first published in *La Revue hebdomadaire*, February 1925, reprinted in *The Shadow and Its Shadow : Surrealist Writings on the Cinema*, ed. by Paul Hammond, 2nd. edn (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1991), pp. 91-102 (p. 96).

early Surrealists and friend of Salvador Dali, we can find a fresh approach to Pinter in a single theoretical principle, Lacan's *objet petit a*. It is this invisible object of desire which, unarticulated in language, unrepresented in the visual field, is most real for the subject. It is the focal point of the subject's desire, in relation to which 'reality appears only as marginal.'<sup>4</sup> As Joan Copjec explains, 'Contrary to the idealist position that makes *form* the cause of being, Lacan locates the cause of being in [...] the *unformed* (that which has no signified, no significant shape in the visual field).' It is because 'there is nothing behind representation' that the subject comes into being through desire.<sup>5</sup> It is this significant point in Lacanian theory which, Copjec argues, may be missed, as has its relevance to film theory.<sup>6</sup>

While Pinter's critics continue to privilege language, code and sign over subtext, this study alters the focus. We cannot escape from language; language, the cultural codes and signs which surround us, not only shape how we think, but shape what and how we desire.<sup>7</sup> But it is not the whole story, for there is always something left over, extra to representation, which belongs to the subject alone. It is that acute 'something' that belongs to poetry, film form and psychoanalysis, where in the gap between word and word, image and image, something extra emerges which is most real. This is Lacan's *objet petit a*, both the empty place and the hallucinatory object with which we unconsciously cover it over.

## CRITICAL APPROACHES

That which is unexpressed in Pinter's work has provided the starting point for many critical expeditions. For James R Hollis, Pinter reminds us that 'we live in the space between words.'<sup>8</sup> Andrew Kennedy, in an effort to move away from the 'critical

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<sup>4</sup> Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis (FFCP)*, 1973, ed. by Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. by Alan Sheridan (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), p. 108.

<sup>5</sup> Joan Copjec, 'The Orthopsychic Subject: Film Theory and the Reception of Lacan', in *Read My Desire: Lacan Against the Historicists* (London: MIT Press, 1994), pp. 15-38 (p. 35).

Note: [...] represents my ellipses.

<sup>6</sup> Copjec, p. 15.

<sup>7</sup> 'man's desire is the desire of the Other', Lacan, *FFCP*, p. 115.

<sup>8</sup> James R. Hollis, *Harold Pinter: The Poetics of Silence* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois

commonplaces' of 'failure of communication' and 'subtext', concludes that in the field of drama in general it is to structuralism that critics should look for a way forward;<sup>9</sup> while Austin E. Quigley speaks of Pinter's 'shaping' to produce 'multiple structural principles whose ongoing interaction takes precedence over any implication of their final resolution.'<sup>10</sup> Ronald Knowles finds in Pinter's technique just those 'binary opposition[s]' through which structuralism works: for example, the juxtaposition of the erotic and the ordinary, where oppositions create a critique of one element upon the other.<sup>11</sup> Critics therefore appear to be moving towards the identification of a live gap in articulation, a gap already identified by Pinter as the place between words where his characters are most real, where 'in the silence [...] they are most evident to me.'<sup>12</sup>

Leslie Bennetts acknowledges Pinter's creation of dialogue 'in which what is not said is very often more important than what is said.'<sup>13</sup> And the point is echoed by Ann C. Hall, writing on *Mountain Language*.<sup>14</sup> Hall asks, 'How can one represent the absence of language through language?' She notes that 'Pinter has made a career out of dramatizing such absences' and cites similar critical responses by Esslin, Quigley and Merritt.<sup>15</sup> Yet critics appear to reach an impasse at this point between language and silence, surface and void. However, for Pinter, and for Lacan, that gap in representation is not nothing, but something most acute and most real, and it is to Lacan that we can look for its theorisation. What is missing from critical commentary is not only the

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University Press, 1970), p. 1.

<sup>9</sup> Andrew K. Kennedy, *Six Dramatists in Search of a Language: Studies in Dramatic Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), pp. 174, 241-2.

<sup>10</sup> Austin E. Quigley, 'The Temporality of Structure in Pinter's Plays', *The Pinter Review* (1987), 7-21, (p. 14).

<sup>11</sup> As in the scene from *The Homecoming* where Max continues to speak to Teddy 'paternally as if nothing untoward were happening' while Teddy's wife rolls on the floor in an embrace with Joey (Ronald Knowles, *Understanding Harold Pinter* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1995), pp. 110-111).

<sup>12</sup> Pinter, 'Writing for the Theatre', *Plays One*, p. xiii.

<sup>13</sup> Leslie Bennetts, 'On Film, Pinter's "Betrayal" Displays New Subtleties', *New York Times*, 27 February 1983, pp. 1, 23 (p. 23).

<sup>14</sup> Hall refers to 'the fact that what is left unsaid is often more important than what is actually articulated.' Ann C Hall, 'Voices in the Dark: The Disembodied Voice in Harold Pinter's *Mountain Language*', *The Pinter Review* (1991), 17-22 (p. 17).

<sup>15</sup> Hall cites: Martin Esslin, *Pinter: The Playwright*, 4th Ed. (New York: Methuen, 1984), pp. 234-65; Austin Quigley, *The Pinter Problem* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1975), pp. 3-75, and Susan Merritt, *Pinter in Play: Critical Strategies and the Plays of Harold Pinter* (Durham: Duke UP, 1990), pp. 66-86, 137-70 (Hall, p.17).

theoretical underpinning of that gap, but the elevation of the gap to that which is *most real* both for Pinter's characters and his reader/spectator.

It is interesting to note that where a detailed Lacanian reading has been applied to Pinter's work (Marc Silverstein's forceful study of the stage plays<sup>16</sup>), that study concentrates on the effect of language and cultural codes in shaping every aspect of the individual, an approach discussed in context later in this chapter.

It is those critics who suggest the clash of two different images to present an unseen third who come closest to the present work, as in Quigley's and Knowles's suggestion of structural oppositions, noted above, and in Gay Gibson Cima's reference to 'Pinter's Eisenstein-style montage approach to scenic development.' Cima notes that 'Pinter often posits situation A, allows for a pause or silence, then presents situation B, at which time the actor must signal that the audience is to create situation C, a synthesis of A and B which does not necessarily exist on stage.'<sup>17</sup> An approach to what is hidden in the stage plays through information embedded in the text, is made by Richard Arthur Hansen,<sup>18</sup> while Barbara Ellen Goldstein Kern explores the connection between reader/spectator and text in the light of the 'psychoanalytic concept of transference', approaching the plays 'with an openness to all of the layers of meaning which each play may suggest.'<sup>19</sup> However, once again, these critics privilege the stage plays in their attempts to approach both what is hidden, and the link between that hidden element and Pinter's spectator.

Critical attention, fixed upon the stage plays, appears infinitely slow in recognising the importance of Pinter's adaptations for the screen. Martin Esslin led an early response to

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<sup>16</sup> Marc Silverstein, *Harold Pinter and the Language of Cultural Power* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1993).

<sup>17</sup> She gives an example from *Old Times* as Deeley speaks of food, and Kate replies in terms that hint at sex (Gay Gibson Cima, 'Acting on the Cutting Edge: Pinter and the Syntax of Cinema', *Theatre Journal*, 36.1 (1984), 43-56 (p. 48)).

<sup>18</sup> Hansen cites a range of hidden information including 'pointers/foreshadowing' of events and 'plants', 'non-verbal communication', the hidden relevance of titles, 'specifications for scenic, lighting, or sound design and overall plot' (Richard Arthur Hansen, ' "Something Hidden": A Structural Approach to the Stage Plays of Harold Pinter' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Missouri, Columbia, 1990), p. 301).

<sup>19</sup> Kern uses the concept of transference from Freud onwards, but omits Lacan (Barbara Ellen Goldstein Kern, 'Transference in Selected Stage Plays of Harold Pinter' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Drew University (1987), p. 6).

the screenplay adaptations by placing them as 'an exercise of craftsmanship rather than the wholly creative process of shaping themes and images which have entirely sprung from the artist's own imagination.'<sup>20</sup> Steven H. Gale (1977) praises Pinter 'as a master screenwriter, specifically of adaptations', but as with other critics, he views those screenplays from the point of view of the plays, seeking key factors of the stage plays which appear in the adaptations (notably 'problems of verification and communication'), and notes that 'Pinter transform[s] other writers' stories into vehicles to carry his own concerns' such as 'dominance, memory, and the disintegration of the individual.'<sup>21</sup> More recently, and particularly since the publication of *The Proust Screenplay*, critics have noted the way that Pinter's screen work reflects back into the structure of the stage plays, but discussions focus on elements of temporality and the equivalence of cinematic techniques.<sup>22</sup> Although two new studies of the screenplays are currently in preparation,<sup>23</sup> only one book-length survey of the screenplays has been produced so far, Joanne Klein's important work covering those film adaptations up to and including *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1978-1979).<sup>24</sup> Klein points the way forward in noting 'the significance of visual images' in 'Pinter's work for stage and screen', and 'his aptitude for stating theme in form', as well as his talent for capturing 'in obliquely articulated images and dialogue the unarticulated spheres of living.'<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Martin Esslin, *The Peopled Wound: The Plays of Harold Pinter* (London: Methuen, 1970), p.186. The statement remains unchanged in the revised 5th edition, retitled *Pinter: The Playwright* (London: Methuen, 1992), p. 218.

<sup>21</sup> Steven H. Gale, 'Screening Pinter', a review of Pinter's *Five Screenplays*, *Literature/Film Quarterly*, 5 (1977), 94-95 (pp. 94-95).

<sup>22</sup> For example, Martin S. Regal's recent study of the plays 'Post-Proust' (Chapter 5) in Martin S. Regal, *Harold Pinter: A Question of Timing* (London: Macmillan, 1995), Enoch Brater's 'Cinematic Fidelity and the Forms of Pinter's *Betrayal*', *Modern Drama*, 24 (1981), 503-513, and Steven H. Gale, 'The Use of a Cinematic Device in Harold Pinter's *Old Times*', *Notes on Contemporary Literature*, 10.1 (January 1980), 11.

<sup>23</sup> Steven H. Gale will include 'an analysis of the technical aspects of filmmaking', and chart the progress from novel to final screenplay to show Pinter's choice of 'ideas, scenes, dialogue, images, and so forth' in order to elicit Pinter's 'own imprint in meaning and style'. The other work in preparation is by Christopher C. Hudgins who 'concentrates on Pinter's depiction of central women characters in the filmscripts and the thematic statements that they may embody.' Within 'the context of audience response theory' this 'analysis is rooted in psychological and gender theory as well.' These details are given in Steven H. Gale and Christopher C. Hudgins, 'The Harold Pinter Archives II: A Description of the Filmscript Materials in the Archive in the British Library', *The Pinter Review* 1995 and 1996, 101-142 (pp. 101-2).

<sup>24</sup> Unless stated otherwise, dates refer to manuscripts in the archive, where known.

<sup>25</sup> Joanne Klein, *Making Pictures: The Pinter Screenplays* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1985), pp. 196,191.

This present study, based on The Pinter Archive, will use elements from successive manuscripts to show Pinter working towards the creation of a gap which traps the spectator's desire and causes her to cover it over with an invisible object of her own. This structure is exemplified in the opening shots of *The Proust Screenplay*, where, between each image, Pinter installs a blank yellow screen. We do not know what it is; we want to see more; we make assumptions; we replay our own projections of the images that have passed; in effect, we are trapped in a direct relationship with desire through that which is missing from representation. It is this structure which lends itself directly to a reading of Lacan's *objet petit a* - both the gap and the hallucinatory object with which we attempt to cover it over. This hallucinatory object can never fill the gap, but endlessly circulates around that central lacking point which traps our desire.

Lacan considered his final formulation of *objet petit a* 'his most important contribution to psychoanalysis.'<sup>26</sup> Earlier, in 'The Rome Discourse' of 1953, Lacan had designated three interlinking orders in the individual psyche, the Symbolic (which includes language, social and cultural systems and symbolism), the Imaginary ('the field of phantasies and images') and the Real which lies outside both the Symbolic and the Imaginary and is the cause of desire, driving the subject forward towards 'inexpressible enjoyment' (or *jouissance*), or beyond *jouissance* to death.<sup>27</sup> Lacan's focus gradually shifted to emphasise this Real order, and it is here that Lacan's *objet petit a* emerges, as 'both an empty *place* in being and body and the "object" that one chooses to stop it up because this void place produces anxiety.'<sup>28</sup> This small object, invisible, unarticulated, shapes the subject's every move. It is what is most real for the subject for 'in its relation to desire, reality appears only as marginal.'<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Mladen Dolar, ' "I Shall Be with You on Your Wedding-Night": Lacan and the Uncanny', *October*, 58 (1991), 5-23 (p. 6).

<sup>27</sup> Bice Benvenuto and Roger Kennedy, *The Works of Jacques Lacan: An Introduction* (London: Free Association Books, 1986), pp. 81, 166, 180.

Lacan's three subject positions, the Symbolic, the Imaginary and the Real, will be given capital letters to distinguish them from the more general use of these terms. However, within quotations I shall follow the original text.

<sup>28</sup> Ellie Ragland, 'The Relation Between the Voice and the Gaze', in *Reading Seminar XI: Lacan's Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, eds. Richard Feldstein, Bruce Fink, Maire Jaanus (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), pp. 187-203 (p. 189).

<sup>29</sup> Lacan, *FFCP*, p. 108.

In language, the subject's desire emerges in the split between the words spoken and what the subject is attempting to say (or avoiding saying). 'It is the object which always *escapes the subject*'<sup>30</sup> but at the same time it is that which is most truly real for the subject. Pinter's statement that 'below the word spoken, is the thing known and unspoken'<sup>31</sup> parallels Lacan's statement that:

I always speak the truth. Not the whole truth, because there's no way to say it all. Saying it all is literally impossible: words fail. Yet it's through this very impossibility that the truth holds onto the real.<sup>32</sup>

It is this acute point beyond representation where Pinter and Lacan meet, and which allows a particular theorisation of Pinter's work.

The only major work to date which offers a detailed Lacanian reading of Pinter is Marc Silverstein's examination of the stage plays in relation to cultural power, in which he nevertheless fails to escape from the dialectics of representation.<sup>33</sup> Silverstein finds that 'Pinter conceptualizes the cultural order as [...] totalitarian as well as totalizing in its ability to embrace and structure every aspect of human experience.'<sup>34</sup> For Silverstein, even desire is subsumed by the law embedded in the Other (the Symbolic) and he quotes Anthony Wilden :

The Other is not a person, but a principle; the locus of the "law of desire" ... the only place from which it is possible to say "I am who I am" ... [the Other] puts us in the position of desiring what the Other desires: we desire what the Other desires we desire.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Benvenuto and Kennedy, p. 176.

<sup>31</sup> Pinter, 'Writing for the Theatre', *Plays One*, p. xii.

<sup>32</sup> Jacques Lacan, *Television / A Challenge to the Psychoanalytic Establishment*, 1974, ed. by Joan Copjec, trans. by Denis Holier, Rosalind Krauss and Annette Michelson, (London: W. W. Norton, 1990), p. 3.

<sup>33</sup> Where Silverstein deals with the Lacanian Real in his essay on *The Dwarfs*, he refers to the Real as madness, as neurosis belonging to the pre-Symbolic relation. Marc Silverstein, 'Theorizing the Madness of the Real: The Case of Pinter's Len' *The Pinter Review* (1990), 74-78.

However, in the healthy psyche, the Real is both inextricably linked to, and extra to the Symbolic. The Real is the split between subject and Symbolic that can never be filled but which anchors the subject's desire to that central lacking point.

<sup>34</sup> Silverstein, *Cultural Power*, p. 47.

<sup>35</sup> Anthony Wilden, *System and Structure: Essays in Communication and Exchange* (London: Tavistock, 1972), pp. 22-23, quoted by Silverstein in *Cultural Power*, p. 20. (Ellipses and brackets follow Silverstein).

Emphasis on the Symbolic alone distorts the picture. We *are* conditioned and shaped by the cultural systems and codes which surround us, even to the extent of what and how we desire, but there is always something extra, left over, which is the subject's own. Silverstein cites a 'general affinity between Pinter and [...] the "structuralist" Lacan' <sup>36</sup> but Slavoj Žižek points out that Lacan's later teaching goes beyond 'the "structuralist" problematic of a senseless, "mechanical" symbolic order regulating the subject's innermost self-experience.' <sup>37</sup> While Silverstein sees a lack between subject and Symbolic Other, which the Other appears to fill, the subject's true reality lies in something which is extra and outside and that is *objet petit a* or 'little other.' It is the fantasy space where desire is located, since 'the object exists [...] only as a *lacking object*.' The subject's fantasy is constructed to cover over this split (the Real) between subject and Symbolic. *Objet petit a* 'represents what the Other lacks in order to be absolute [...] It is the object which always *escapes the subject*' <sup>38</sup> but at the same time, it is that which is most truly real for the subject. For Lacan, 'the very notion of life is alien to the symbolic order. And the name of this life substance that proves a traumatic shock for the symbolic universe is of course *enjoyment*.' <sup>39</sup>

What is lacking in studies of Pinter's work is not the revelation of a space, but of something extra, 'an *object* in the strict sense of materialized enjoyment' <sup>40</sup> which is 'literally our only substance, the only positive support of our being, the only point that gives consistency to the subject.' <sup>41</sup> It is the focal point of the subject's desire, and therefore what is most real for the subject. While Freud was 'gradually forced to use the entire panoply of psychoanalytic concepts' Lacan uses this one 'pivotal point around which [all other] psychoanalytic concepts revolve, the point that Lacan calls object small *a*.' <sup>42</sup> It is this acute object that Pinter creates, through what is hidden; what lies behind

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<sup>36</sup> Silverstein, *Cultural Power*, pp. 156-157.

<sup>37</sup> Slavoj Žižek, 'Why Does a *Letter* Always Arrive at its Destination?', in *Enjoy Your Symptom! Jacques Lacan in Hollywood and Out* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 1-28 (pp. 22-23).

<sup>38</sup> Benvenuto and Kennedy, p. 176.

<sup>39</sup> Žižek, *Enjoy Your Symptom!*, p. 22.

<sup>40</sup> Žižek, *Enjoy Your Symptom!*, p. 22.

<sup>41</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989), p. 75.

<sup>42</sup> '[C]astration complex, Oedipus, (primary) narcissism, compulsion to repeat, death drive, repression, anxiety, psychosis, etc.' (Dolar, p. 6).

the signifying chain of language, or the signifying chain of words and images in the screenplays. But rather than a gap, an empty space, what emerges is an invisible, and unconscious, object of desire.

In the field of vision, that object emerges in the formal structure of the gaze. Lacan's later work evolved in a series of seminars entitled 'Of the Gaze as *Objet Petit a*' where he argues that rather than the subject identifying with what she sees, the subject identifies with what she does not see. There is nothing beyond representation, and therefore this is the cause of the subject's desire:

The subject is the effect of the impossibility of seeing what is lacking in the representation, what the subject, therefore, wants to see. The gaze, the object-cause of desire, is the object-cause of the subject of desire in the field of the visible.<sup>43</sup>

This impossibility of achieving recognition, or confirmation, or satisfaction, results in the emergence of the subject as a desiring being, creating the drive that will keep the subject returning to the same point, and filling out that lack with a fantasy object. But rather than filling a gap between self and Symbolic Other (which is impossible) the subject's desire covers it over, veils it, with an object of the subject's own.<sup>44</sup>

## FILM THEORY AND THE GAZE

In Joan Copjec's re-reading of the Lacanian gaze in relation to film theory, she points out that earlier theorists believed they were following Lacan in placing the screen as mirror so that 'the images presented on the screen, are accepted by the subject as its own'. That is 'an image *of* the subject or an image *belonging to* the subject' and where 'The imaginary relation produces the subject as master of the image.'<sup>45</sup> However Copjec points out that Lacan's later reformulation of his mirror-phase essay ('Of the Gaze as *Object Petit a*') offers a different picture. While 'film theory [...] has always claimed that the cinematic apparatus functions *ideologically* to produce a subject that

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<sup>43</sup> Copjec, pp. 30, 35.

<sup>44</sup> It should be noted that there are two types of gaze: the gaze which is the Real, the '*unoccupiable* point' and the formal structure of the gaze which includes both that point and the hallucinatory object with which we attempt to cover it over, and which forms *objet petit a*.

<sup>45</sup> Copjec, p. 21.

*misrecognizes* itself as source and center of the represented world', in a position where 'misrecognition operates without the hint of failure', in 'Lacan's description misrecognition retains its negative force in the process of construction.' And, says Copjec, 'As a result, the process is conceived no longer as a purely positive one but rather as one with an internal dialectic.'<sup>46</sup> For Lacan, the subject is 'constructed by something *beyond*' both word and image:

For beyond everything that is displayed to the subject, the question is asked, 'What is being concealed from me?' [...] This point at which something appears to be *invisible*, this point at which something appears to be missing from representation, some meaning left unrevealed, is the point of the Lacanian gaze. It marks the *absence* of a signified; it is an *unoccupiable* point, not, as film theory claims, because it figures an unrealizable ideal but because it indicates an impossible real [...] it is what the subject does not see and not simply what it sees that finds it.<sup>47</sup>

As Lacan points out, it is 'precisely because desire is established here in the domain of seeing', that it can be made to vanish.<sup>48</sup> As a result, the subject is constantly suspended in a vacillating relationship of desire through the gaze. Lacan's *objet petit a* belongs on screen, inherent in montage where 'the surplus of the real is, in the last resort, precisely the gaze qua object.'<sup>49</sup> Escaping all symbolization, unarticulated in language, unseen in the formal structure of the gaze, it is from this small object that Pinter's spectator is suspended.

In order to pave the way for the more detailed examination of the screenplays, this chapter will show how Pinter's narrative and structure work towards a Lacanian reading. It seems unlikely that Pinter has read Lacan, and yet his work appears to be specifically

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<sup>46</sup> Copjec, pp. 30-33.

<sup>47</sup> Copjec, pp. 34-36.

As with Silverstein's examination of Pinter's work in relation to the Symbolic and cultural systems, here also, in the field of vision, he appears to allow no space for the spectator, finding that the viewer is subordinated 'to [...] the gaze of the male protagonist/camera' (Silverstein, *Cultural Power*, p. 123) rather than created as a desiring being through what lies beyond representation.

<sup>48</sup> Lacan, *FFCP*, p. 85.

<sup>49</sup> Slavoj Žižek, 'Looking Awry', *October*, 50 (1989), 30-55 (p. 45).

tailored to such a reading.<sup>50</sup> In the early years of this century, Jacques Rivière gave a series of three lectures comparing the work of Proust with that of Freud. Rivière found that although Proust was in no way influenced by Freud, each 'had discovered the unconscious in his own way.'<sup>51</sup> At the end of this century, a parallel can be drawn between Pinter and Lacan. Taking just a few of Pinter's acknowledged influences as starting points we arrive at a Lacanian reading where that which lies beyond language and beyond vision is most real for the subject and for Pinter's spectator - a reading which re-visions the entire body of Pinter's work.

#### VISION AT THE CENTRE OF BEING

Before any literary influences, Pinter speaks of a formative experience in his evacuation to Cornwall as a child. Years later he describes that experience as a sense of formlessness, and external reality no more than a series of echoes, 'echoes of the sea, echoes of London, the past, echoes of [...] just *things* happening.' He found that 'there was no fixed sense of being ... of *being* ... at all.' And yet there was another, hidden reality, since he describes a 'kind of mystery [...] that sense of not knowing what was round the next corner' and the sea making a 'great resonance of noise and [...] silence, and shapes , and the incomprehensible existence being cut off, not knowing where one was and why.'<sup>52</sup> Together with those acute memories of the mystery that lay hidden and unseen, runs an equally acute sensation: that of being trapped by a gaze, since he also speaks of being '*caught out* being a child, *having been seen*' (my italics).<sup>53</sup> Rather than having 'no fixed sense of being', the young Pinter was already experiencing an

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<sup>50</sup> There is, however, an interesting connection through Barbara Bray who produced *The Dwarfs* for radio in 1960, and worked with Pinter and Losey on *The Proust Screenplay* in 1972. It was Bray who translated Elisabeth Roudinesco's work on Lacan, see Elisabeth Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan*, trans. by Barbara Bray (Chichester: Columbia University Press, 1997.)

<sup>51</sup> Elisabeth Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan & Co: A History of Psychoanalysis in France 1925-1985*, trans. by Jeffrey Mehlman (London: Free Association Books, 1990), p. 89, quoting *Cahiers d'occident*, 4, 1926, "Deuxième conférence," 17 January 1924, p. 23.

<sup>52</sup> Pinter interviewed in 1968 by B. S. Johnson, 'Evacuees', *The Pinter Review* (1994), 8-13 (p. 11).

<sup>53</sup> Pinter speaks of his parents coming to tea in Cornwall and his mother offering him the best cake. When they had left 'one or two of the boys who had seen this little gesture said I was spoilt and all that' (Johnson, p. 10). In other words, Pinter was made aware of an aggressive, external gaze.

acute sense of being, suspended in a vacillating relationship between the desire to see, and the awareness of being seen.

There is a parallel here with the Lacanian structure of the gaze. In order for desire to operate, there must be a gap between ourselves and the outer world that causes us to view the world with a look distorted, set awry, by our interior world of unconscious desire. However, if that outer world presses too close, it is as if we are caught out by a gaze (of the world as Other), and, conscious of being seen, that desiring relation vanishes, causing anxiety. Mladen Dolar points out that while 'traditional thought' attempted 'to draw a clear line between the interior and the exterior' in its pairing of conceptions, such as 'essence/appearance, mind/body, subject/object', Lacan's object 'is located there where the most intimate interiority coincides with the exterior and becomes threatening, provoking horror and anxiety.' Both 'the intimate kernel and the foreign body [...] it is this very dimension beyond the division into "psychic" and "real" that deserves to be called the real in the Lacanian sense.' For Lacan, this object emerges in the formal structure of the gaze, a structure which is 'rather a device to open a "non-place," the pure oscillation between an emptiness and a fullness.'<sup>54</sup> For Pinter, as for Lacan, the subject is suspended in a constantly vacillating relation within this formal structure of the gaze.

## THE OBJECT EMERGES

Pinter's engagement with the unseen object becomes clear if we look at his fascination with the image. It is an image that generates an idea for a play, as in *The Room*, where Pinter saw one man cooking for another sitting silently at the table.<sup>55</sup> In *Betrayal* the image was that of 'Two people at a pub ... meeting after some time.'<sup>56</sup> But the visible image is only the beginning, beyond it lie other, invisible images, 'where image can freely engender image' in the act of creation.<sup>57</sup> And here Pinter refers to something beyond representation. In the opening shot of *The Heat of the Day* (1988), a man sits on a park bench. Pinter explains that 'The man just sits there. He does absolutely

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<sup>54</sup> Dolar, pp. 6, 20.

<sup>55</sup> Gussow, p. 31.

<sup>56</sup> Gussow, p. 50.

<sup>57</sup> Pinter, 'Writing for the Theatre', *Plays One*, p. xiii.

nothing [...] Yet it resonates within the spectator [...] So little can tell so much: the sense of great loss.’<sup>58</sup> Speaking of *Party Time* (1991) Pinter says that ‘It’s the image that remains of the distinction between what happens upstairs at the party and what’s going on down there in the street.’<sup>59</sup> In this final example from *Party Time* he refers most clearly to an image *that we do not see*. Pinter creates a gap (between the bright party/the dark street), and in that gap a clash between image and image that invokes an hallucinatory object for the spectator. In Pinter’s first major work, *The Dwarfs*,<sup>60</sup> Len refers to the hallucinatory nature of perception, and how it arises through ‘Pure accident’ on the part of both ‘The perceived and the perceiver’. But he adds that ‘We depend on such accidents to continue’, accidents that ‘might also be hallucination’.<sup>61</sup> It is through such hallucinations that what is most real for the subject emerges.

It was through an hallucinatory vision that the Surrealists, following Freud, found a short-cut to desire, where everyday reality would be re-visioned into a more intense reality, a *surreality*, akin to the dream. As Freud explains, in the image presentation of dreams, ‘we appear not to *think* but to *experience*; that is to say, we attach complete belief to the hallucinations.’<sup>62</sup> For Breton, discussion centred on ‘The Crisis of the Object’ whereby ‘accepted notions of reality’ would be overthrown and poets and painters would unite in ‘consider[ing] the objects of external reality only in their relationship with the inner world of consciousness as embodied in art by inner representation, “the image present to the mind”’.<sup>63</sup>

That sense of an inner world which is more real than the external is most evident in an unpublished poem, ‘August Becomes’, written in 1951, and found among Pinter’s archive papers.<sup>64</sup> In a letter to me of 31 March 1999, Harold Pinter refers to the poem

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<sup>58</sup> Edward T. Jones, ‘Harold Pinter: A Conversation’, *Literature/Film Quarterly*, 21.1 (1993) 2-9 (p. 7).

<sup>59</sup> Gussow, p. 153.

<sup>60</sup> Pinter says ‘I wrote *The Dwarfs* in the early fifties, before I began writing plays.’ Author’s Note, *The Dwarfs: A Novel* (London: Faber and Faber, 1992).

<sup>61</sup> *The Dwarfs*, novel, p. 151.

<sup>62</sup> Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 1900, trans. by James Strachey, The Penguin Freud Library, Vol. 4 (Harmondsworth: Pelican 1976, repr. Penguin, 1991), p. 115.

<sup>63</sup> André Breton, ‘Situation surréaliste de l’objet; Situation de l’objet surréaliste (1935) in *Manifestes du Surréalisme* (Paris, 1962), quoted by Haim N. Finkelstein, *Surrealism and the Crisis of the Object*, (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1979), pp. 1-2.

<sup>64</sup> The poem remains unpublished at May 1999.

as one of which he was 'always fond', adding that 'It was strange' to see it as he had not read it for years. In his letter, Pinter describes the poem as a 'prose poem.'<sup>65</sup>

The poem is of value for another reason, since it is headed with a quotation from André Breton: 'This summer the roses are blue; the wood is made of glass.' The statement comes in Breton's paper 'What is Surrealism?', which Breton gave as a lecture in Brussels in June 1934. It seems more than possible, therefore, that Pinter's knowledge of Surrealism extends beyond his early viewing of the films, to the theoretical underpinning of the movement. In his paper Breton states that 'What is admirable about the fantastic is that there is no longer a fantastic; there is only the real.' And what is most real is the hidden world of unconscious desire. Breton goes on to state:

The *Surrealist Manifesto* has improved on Rimbaud's principle that the poet must become a *seer*. Man in general is going to be summoned to manifest through life those *new sentiments* which the gift of vision will so suddenly have placed within his reach. [...] This summer the roses are blue; the wood is made of glass. The earth wrapped in its foliage has as little effect on me as a ghost. Living and ceasing to live are imaginary solutions. Existence lies elsewhere.<sup>66</sup>

It is the sense of an external vision entirely dependent on inner vision which emerges in Pinter's poem:<sup>67</sup>

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Susan Hollis Merritt has published brief findings from the Archive (mainly poetry and prose) in 'The Harold Pinter Archive in the British Library', *The Pinter Review* (1994), 14-53. Steven H. Gale and Christopher C. Hudgins have published a list of manuscript items in 'The Harold Pinter Archives II: A Description of the Filmscript Materials in the Archive in the British Library', quoted at footnote 24. However, neither Merritt nor Gale and Hudgins mention this poem.

<sup>65</sup> I am most grateful to Harold Pinter for permission to reproduce the whole poem.

<sup>66</sup> André Breton, 'What is Surrealism?', 1934, reprinted in *André Breton, What is Surrealism? Selected Writings*, ed. by Franklin Rosemont (London: Pluto, 1978), p.125.

<sup>67</sup> The version given here is what appears to be the final of three slightly different versions found in The Pinter Archive, Box 61. However, that progression is problematic. As will be seen from Pinter's comments at notes 71 and 77 below, in two cases (but not all), the versions I have designated A and B appear to hold Pinter's final intention.

Version A : Brown foolscap photocopy. Two pages. Second page headed Cont. Aug. Bec. in top left hand corner starts with verse five: 'All rooms speak.'

Version B : Typed copy (roman type?). White foolscap with handwritten corrections - although not all the corrections between B and version C are added by hand to this copy.

Version C : Given above. Typed on White A4 with a dark (carbon?) ribbon and a different (and larger) typeface.

May<sup>68</sup>

The poem 'August Becomes' has been removed from this digitized version of the thesis due to potential copyright issues.

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<sup>68</sup> Version A : Brown photocopy: 'May' handwritten in corner.

<sup>69</sup> B gives a handwritten accent : André. A and C have no accents.

<sup>70</sup> Pinter's letter of 31 March 1999 gives a comma here (instead of a full stop).

<sup>71</sup> A and B give 'though', C gives 'thought.' Pinter says 'though' is correct.

<sup>72</sup> A and B give 'barbarous'.

1951<sup>81</sup>

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- 73 A has a typing error at pianofingers, with 'i' typed over the first 'a'.
- 74 A and B give 'climbling.'
- 75 A has typing error at 'endig' with 'n' and 'g' overtyped.  
B has 'endig' with a handwritten alteration to 'ing'.
- 76 A has 'Dissention' with 's' handwritten over the top of the 't'.  
B has '~~Dissension~~' crossed through, and 'Displacement' handwritten.
- 77 A and B give 'breasts', C has 'breast'. Pinter says that 'breasts' is correct.
- 78 A gives 'the'.  
B has '~~the~~' crossed through and 'her' handwritten at the end of the line.
- 79 A gives 'fire's resentment.' Both words come on a new line, and the lines in this version are split as follows:  
     fire's resentment. Took the shape of  
     my legs with torn hands. In the white  
     in night's pelvis in the centre the  
     never of the sun's gone.
- B gives 'fire's: ~~resentment.~~' The lines are split as above.
- 80 A has typing error at pelvis, with handwritten 'v'.
- 81 A is undated.  
B '1951' is handwritten.  
C '1951' is typed.

In the first verse, an intense vision anchors the progress of the self through the day. 'Seeing eyes' draws attention to eyes which see something beyond ordinary vision, while relegating ordinary sight to a state of unseeing. All is subject to sight, even memory, where the image of an island can be lost 'At the blink of an eyelid.' The outer scene is therefore both directly linked, and subject to, the inner landscape.<sup>82</sup> The act of looking is set awry as we find mirrors distorted (and distorting) and rooms displaced. In the final verse, 'the sand-dunes/of memory shaping a kingdom' place all memory, all representations as shifting, impermanent. What then is real? The answer may lie in the second verse where 'the inquiry of/dark where I had no voice' links lack of sight and lack of language but suggests (through 'inquiry') something more beyond representation so that what is most real is both unspoken and unseen. But something does speak out of the silence as in 'The nothing of voices' (verse four) and 'All rooms speak' (verse five) which suggest both speech and silence. Verse six conflates darkness and light, loss (and therefore desire) in the phrase 'in night's pelvis [...] the/never of the sun's gone.' This point beyond vision, beyond speech yet invoking both, is the only reality, the only permanence. All the rest is flux.

It is flux which is hinted in Pinter's title where August, and therefore the whole of time, is in a state of transition. As Beckett describes in his essay on *Proust*, 'The individual is the seat of a constant process of decantation [...] from the vessel containing the fluid of future time, sluggish, pale and monochrome, to the vessel containing the fluid of past time, agitated and multicoloured by the phenomena of its hours.'<sup>83</sup> Like Breton's 'Communicating Vessels' which stand as metaphor for the 'constant interpenetration of dreams and waking life',<sup>84</sup> we are suspended in an unending vacillation between past and present, inner and outer worlds. The only reality is that intense, still point beyond representation which traps our desire.

Pinter's use of linked words such as 'glassbowl', 'ironshapes' 'pianofingers' 'deathflowers' intensifies the property of poetry to create an acute and hallucinatory object which

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<sup>82</sup> Ramona Fotiade refers to 'the surrealist theory of the revelatory nature of a sort of *blinded sight*. The miraculous is only unravelled to the eyes that close on the outside world, and open to the inside world of dreams and desires, of the imaginary' (Ramona Fotiade, 'The Slit Eye, the Scorpion and the Sign of the Cross: Surrealist Film Theory and Practice Revisited', *Screen*, 39.2 (1998), 109-123 (p. 113) ).

<sup>83</sup> Samuel Beckett, *Proust*, 1931 (London: John Calder, 1965), p. 15.

<sup>84</sup> Rosemont, introduction to André Breton, 'The Communicating Vessels' (excerpts), in Breton, *What is Surrealism?* pp. 67-75 (p. 67).

belongs to the reader alone. It is just such an object which Breton found in Rimbaud's 'alchemy of the verb' which made way 'for something new: a poetics in which "words make love".'<sup>85</sup> Pinter has acknowledged the early influence of Rimbaud's poetry<sup>86</sup> and it was Rimbaud's last great work *Illuminations* which influenced Breton's definition of Surrealism.<sup>87</sup>

Following Rimbaud's 'Alchimie du verbe' where sense and image emerge from between the words, Max Ernst finds a parallel in painting. 'QU'EST-CE QUE LE COLLAGE?' he asks in *Au delà de la peinture*. And his answer: 'L'hallucination simple, d'après Rimbaud [...] Il est quelque chose comme l'alchimie de l'image visuelle.'<sup>88</sup> (It is Rimbaud's poetry, together with that of Lautréamont, which Bruce Morrissette describes as the literary forerunners of film.)<sup>89</sup> Breton saw that 'The invention of photography ha[d] dealt a mortal blow to the old modes of expression, in painting as well as in poetry',<sup>90</sup> and changed forever the role of the true artist who would from henceforth search for '*la représentation mentale pure [...] le domaine hallucinatoire.*'<sup>91</sup>

The following is part III of Rimbaud's 'Enfance' (from *Illuminations*), quoted because elements of the poem (both narrative and structure) have a strong affinity with the discussion which follows. The narrative echoes Pinter's boyhood experiences in Cornwall with its recall of intense, lost moments of childhood. And there are affinities

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<sup>85</sup> David Macey quoting André Breton, 'Les Mots sans rides', in *Les Pas perdus*, p.141 (David Macey, 'Baltimore in the Early Morning', *Lacan in Contexts* (London: Verso, 1988), pp. 44-74 (p. 53) ).

<sup>86</sup> At Hackney Public Library from 1944 onwards, Pinter 'discovered Joyce, Lawrence, Dostoevsky, Hemingway, Virginia Woolf, Rimbaud, Yeats, etc.' 'Harold Pinter: A Speech of Thanks' on receiving the David Cohen British Literature Prize for 1995. *The Pinter Review* 1995 and 1996, 1-3 (p. 2).

<sup>87</sup> Anna Balakian, *André Breton: Magus of Surrealism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 18, 27.

Both Rimbaud and Lautréamont were influential in Breton's thinking but Finkelstein points out that it is Rimbaud who is 'the first to have left his mark on the surrealist consciousness' (Finkelstein, p. 8).

<sup>88</sup> Finkelstein, p.8, quoting Max Ernst, *Écritures* (Paris, 1970), p. 253.

<sup>89</sup> Morrissette finds the literary origins of film in the 'flashbacks' of Homer's *Ulysses*, and cites the 'Free transitions, background changes, unusual lighting, shifts in point of view' as 'visual poetry' already evident in Rimbaud's *Illuminations* and Lautréamont's *Les Chants de Maldoror*. Bruce Morrissette, *Novel and Film: Essays in Two Genres* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press: 1985), p. 42.

<sup>90</sup> Breton, 'Max Ernst', in *What is Surrealism?*, p. 7.

<sup>91</sup> Finkelstein, pp. 11-12, quoting from Breton's *Manifestes*, pp. 326-327.

with the second verse of Pinter's early poem: the place of lost enchantment, of something half-glimpsed which can vanish as a hidden and threatening gaze emerges. Within the lines and between the lines, a series of hallucinatory objects arises:

Au bois il y a un oiseau, son chant vous arrête et vous fait rougir.

Il y a une horloge qui ne sonne pas.

Il y a une fondrière avec un nid de bêtes blanches.

Il y a une cathédrale qui descend et un lac qui monte.

Il y a une petite voiture abandonnée dans le taillis, ou qui descend le sentier en courant, enrubannée.

Il y a une troupe de petits comédiens en costumes, aperçus sur la route à travers la lisière du bois.

Il y a enfin, quand l'on a faim et soif, quelqu'un qui vous chasse.<sup>92</sup>

Each image has its own internal movement, as in the clock which does not chime (so that the chime is evoked although it is silent); both the cathedral and the lake move in opposite and unexpected directions, and the little pram is either abandoned in the hedgerow *or* runs down the path, ribbons streaming.

Pinter can be seen to be achieving a similar effect in his opening to *The Proust Screenplay* which installs a series of thirty-four intense images, made yet more intense by the intercutting of a yellow screen within the first eight shots. In the example below we can see how that doubled and vacillating image works. The train, made for speed and movement, stands heavy and inert, while the dining room at Balbec, created for the bustle and hum of diners, stands empty and silent. Between the lines too, a clash occurs between a silence and stillness that is inert (the train, still) and a silence and stillness as prelude to enchantment (the sea from a high window):

1. *Yellow screen. Sound of a garden gate bell.*
2. *Open countryside, a line of trees, seen from a railway carriage.  
The train is still. No sound. Quick fade out.*
3. *Momentary yellow screen.*

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<sup>92</sup> Arthur Rimbaud, 'Enfance' III, *Illuminations, Œuvres Poétiques*, 1886 (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1964), p. 147.

4. *The sea, seen from a high window, a towel hanging on a towel rack in foreground. No sound. Quick fade out.*
5. *Momentary yellow screen.*
6. *Venice. A window in a palazzo, seen from a gondola. No sound. Quick fade out.*
7. *Momentary yellow screen.*
8. *The dining room at Balbec. No sound. Empty.*

Like Rimbaud's 'Enfance' the images have a duality, an interplay within the line, and between the lines, creating something which exists beyond representation and which belongs to the spectator alone. This is the pattern found in the larger structure of Pinter's screenplays, which create intense moments of revelation for the spectator in the clash of one shot with another, or as shots already seen return. As Klein has noted, repetitions create hallucinations.<sup>93</sup> Referring to this extended sequence of shots at the opening of *The Proust Screenplay*, Pinter describes how 'Marcel, in his forties hears the bell of his childhood [...] long forgotten [which] is suddenly present within him [...] more real, more acute, than the experience itself.'<sup>94</sup> That acute experience is recreated for the spectator as the shots return later in the screenplay in context where, in the clash between the image and its repetition, they will provide moments of 'disillusion' or 'revelation.'<sup>95</sup>

It is just such an acute experience that Pinter first encountered in the films of Salvador Dali and Luis Buñuel. Speaking in late 1996, Pinter referred to the lasting effect made by the early films of the Surrealists (*Le Chien andalou* [sic] and *L'Age D'or*) stating that 'Buñuel and Salvador Dali left quite extraordinary images in my mind at the time; images that I have never really recovered from.'<sup>96</sup> From its first moments on screen *Un Chien andalou* (1928) creates a traumatic impact for the spectator in its confluence of image and image, image and emotion, most evident in that famous opening shot.

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<sup>93</sup> 'Replications reproduce gaps between what we understand and what actually exists: our understanding amounts to hallucination' Klein, p. 4.

<sup>94</sup> Harold Pinter, Introduction, *The Proust Screenplay: A la Recherche du Temps Perdu*, with the collaboration of Joseph Losey and Barbara Bray (London: Eyre Methuen, 1978), p. viii.

<sup>95</sup> Pinter, Introduction, *The Proust Screenplay*, p. vii.

<sup>96</sup> 'Harold Pinter and Michael Billington in Conversation at the National Film Theatre, 26 October 1996', in Harold Pinter, *Harold Pinter: Various Voices: Prose, Poetry, Politics 1948-1998* (London: Faber and Faber, 1998), p.50.

(The tape recording of the interview provided by the NFT gives 'images from which I've never recovered', and the date, on the typed cover, is given as Friday 25 October 1996.)

Here we see a man sharpening a cut-throat razor. A woman sits passive and receptive as the man prises open her eye. The moon is slit across by a thin black cloud, and the movement is echoed in the apparent slitting of the woman's eye. Throughout the film, the bizarre juxtapositions of time and space and objects (two dead donkeys hauled on two grand pianos, with two recumbent priests behind) both excite and confound our expectations. As the film ends, we see two lovers walking along the beach. The caption reads 'In the spring' (intimating *jouissance*) only to be followed by the lovers, immobile, buried upright in the sand (so that instead of *jouissance*, we encounter death).<sup>97</sup>

It is through this clash of image and emotion that something extra is created, a hallucinatory object that belongs to the spectator alone. Salvador Dali linked hallucination to paranoia, since paranoia 'consisted in delusional interpretation of reality, but it was also the opposite of a hallucination, since it sustained itself through a coherent critical method.' It was therefore 'pseudo-hallucinatory.'<sup>98</sup> Dali's ideas fed into his work in paintings which offered multiple images, such as that of a woman which is at the same time a horse and a lion.<sup>99</sup> Without any distortion, it is possible to see the image in front of the spectator in several different ways. For Dali this confirmed that 'delusion is part and parcel of interpretation' and 'paranoia a creative activity which does not depend, like hysteria, on deformation, but on logic.'<sup>100</sup> Dali's 'paranoia-criticism' is, as Haim N. Finkelstein notes, 'a whole new outlook on the world of visible reality, a manner of accommodating reality and its objects to one's own desires and obsessions.'<sup>101</sup>

Dali's ideas attracted the interest of Jacques Lacan, at a time when his own work was developing. Lacan admired and supported Dali's ideas, realising 'that Dali was giving Surrealism its second wind with his notion of "paranoia-criticism".' In his own work,

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<sup>97</sup> Buñuel's later films softened the clash of images but retained until the end that sense of something extra to representation that belongs to the spectator alone. In his last film, *That Obscure Object of Desire* (1977), Buñuel divides the central female role between two different dark haired actresses, a fact which is not immediately clear. Because that moment of recognition is different for different spectators, Buñuel proves that all our viewing is a personal hallucination.

<sup>98</sup> Roudinesco, *Lacan & Co*, p. 110.

<sup>99</sup> Salvador Dali, 'Invisible Sleeping Woman, Horse, Lion, Etc.', 1930, Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris. (Illustrated in Dawn Ades's catalogue notes for the exhibition: *Dali, The Early Years*, The Hayward Gallery, London, 3 March - 30 May 1994).

<sup>100</sup> Roudinesco, *Lacan & Co.*, p. 110-111.

<sup>101</sup> Finkelstein, p. 30.

Lacan was 'effecting a synthesis of the teachings of the Surrealists, of Freud [...] and of the entire tradition of psychiatric doctrine concerning paranoia', as confirmed in his published thesis *De la psychose paranoïaque dans ses rapports avec la personnalité*.<sup>102</sup> This thesis was welcomed by the Surrealists and acclaimed by Dali in his paranoia-critique of Millet's painting 'L'Angélu' published in *Minotaure* in 1933.<sup>103</sup>

Dali was fascinated by 'L'Angélu', which shows a man and woman in the fields at dusk, heads bowed. Dali said that he had seen no other picture like it - this man and woman:

'debout', 'immobiles', 'verticaux' l'un en face de l'autre sans qu'ils se parlent ni qu'un geste les mette en communication effective, sans qu'ils se portent à la rencontre l'un de l'autre, etc. . .<sup>104</sup>

Dali believed that between the two, near the feet of the mother, Millet had painted the coffin of the couple's dead son. When the picture was examined under X-ray at The Louvre, it was found that there was between the man and the woman a dark mass which would appear to confirm Dali's belief. Dali later heard that Millet had changed the picture in order to accommodate contemporary taste, and had erased the cause of the drama but left the grieving figures, leaving the true meaning of the picture unexplained.<sup>105</sup> Yet it is that missing object which shapes the posture and mood of the figures and forms the clue to their very being, the hidden key to the picture. It can also be argued that Dali inserted himself into the picture; that it was his *imagined* image which lay between the two bowed figures, and brought the picture to life for him. Dali's interpretation of 'L'Angélu' reveals an object which has no material form, yet it is that which is unseen and unstated which shapes the figures within the picture, and is the cause of the spectator's desire in relation to the picture.

In 'What is Surrealism?', Breton hails Dali's 'paranoiac-critical method' as 'an instrument of primary importance' for Surrealism, showing itself 'capable of being applied with equal success to painting, poetry, the cinema',<sup>106</sup> and it was through the

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<sup>102</sup> Roudinesco, *Lacan & Co.*, p. 110-111.

<sup>103</sup> Dali refers to Jacques Lacan's admirable thesis which for the first time gives a homogenous and complete idea of the phenomenon (of paranoia). (Salvador Dali, 'Interprétation Paranoïaque-critique de l'Image obsédante "L'Angélu" de Millet', *Minotaure*, 1 (1933), 65-67 (p. 66).

<sup>104</sup> Salvador Dali, *Le Mythe Tragique de l'Angélu de Millet*, Jean-Jacques Pauvert, ed. (Montreuil, Seine: Les Presses de la Société d'Impressions Publicitaires, 1963), p. 35. (Dali speaks of them in silent non-communication).

<sup>105</sup> Dali, Prologue, *Le Mythe Tragique de l'Angélu*, p. 9.

<sup>106</sup> Breton, 'What is Surrealism?', p. 136.

cinema that the Surrealists intended that confrontation between the conscious and the unconscious should take place. Dali's interpretation is particularly relevant to Pinter's work on the screenplays which can be seen to intensify, through narrative and structure, the way in which desire works. Pinter's spectator is given a place within the picture, covering over that gap in representation with an invisible, intangible object of her own.

## THE NARRATIVES OF DESIRE

Lacan's definition of the object is one that can never be found except in fantasy or dream since it can only be recognised after the event.<sup>107</sup> It is, therefore, eternally and everlastingly lost. It is just such an object that Pinter describes in a quotation from Proust: '*Le vrai paradis c'est le paradis qu'on a perdu.*' He speaks of this paradise as 'another territory', hesitating to name that territory as childhood since 'childhood is undoubtedly full of fears and anxieties of the highest order'.<sup>108</sup> Yet in Rimbaud's 'Enfance' and Pinter's own experiences as a child in Cornwall, there is a sense of both enchantment and anxiety.

In the second verse of 'Autumn Becomes' Pinter appears to seek such a landscape, one that can never be regained, and which perhaps never existed:

Here, as we open the small  
bridge and the ringed house of children,  
where I gave the key into the locked  
year, is rusted the summer door. We  
would open the passage to that room  
though miles away. In the inquiry of  
dark where I had no voice, and the  
grain of the moon slipped and fell.

The 'locked year', the 'rusted [...] summer door', suggests that the only hope of retrieval of that lost, enchanted domain, is through fantasy and dream. One version of the poem in the Archive gives 'thought miles away.' Pinter's letter of 31 March 1999 corrects 'thought' to 'though', but in either case, that place, distant in space and time can be seen

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<sup>107</sup> 'There never was such an object in the first place: the "lost object" never was; it is only constituted as lost after the fact, in that the subject is unable to find it anywhere other than in fantasy or dream life' (Bruce Fink, *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 94).

<sup>108</sup> Pinter quoted by Michael Billington, *The Life and Work of Harold Pinter* (London: Faber and Faber, 1996), pp. 58, 93.

to exist as an inner landscape. In the closing lines of the verse, the lack of vision (searching darkness), and lack of speech, invoke that acute point beyond all representation. The final line, where 'the/grain of the moon slipped and fell' creates a sense of unease, and the whole verse carries echoes of the passage from Rimbaud's 'Enfance', quoted above, which offers both an enchanted domain and a threat arising. It is this pattern which is emphasised in Pinter's structuring of the screenplays which create either a desired 'lost' object, or its obverse, the object which, coming too close, becomes a threat and danger. This pattern has a direct corollary in Lacan's *objet petit a*, which can turn from an object of fascination to one of overwhelming anxiety.

Here we have the key to the narrative of the majority of Pinter's screenplays, where the central character seeks out the object of his or her desire. Screenplays such as *Langrishe, Go Down* (1970),<sup>109</sup> *The Proust Screenplay* (1972), *The Last Tycoon* (1974), *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1978-79), *The Remains of the Day* (1990-91), leave that object eternally lost, and therefore desired. However, in by far the majority of the screenplays a threat emerges to remain extant as the screenplay ends. Perhaps the most evident of these narratives is that of *The Go-Between* (1969), where what Leo desires to see is revealed as he becomes an unwilling party to the primal scene. With no space for desire to operate, the object of desire comes too close, and becomes an overwhelming trauma. There is also a third scenario of desire, where the desired object is allied to an actual object in the real world, and, once achieved, will change. Of all Pinter's screenplays, only two fit this category, *Turtle Diary* (1983-84), where the turtles are released into the ocean as planned, and *The Handmaid's Tale* (1986), which ends with Kate about to be reunited with her daughter. The three narrative patterns of desire in the screenplays are: a sense of enchantment/desire that continues, the emergence of a threat, and the object which, once achieved, will change. These are the structures of desire for the Lacanian subject, and the structures Pinter creates for his spectator.

## THE STRUCTURES OF DESIRE

Michael Billington refers to a 'dream landscape that forms the permanent background to [Pinter's] work', one which lies beneath the passage of time and surface realities,<sup>110</sup> and it is just such a landscape that Pinter structures for the spectator. Among Pinter's

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<sup>109</sup> Pinter's 'First Draft' is dated 25 January 1970, but there is also a BBC script of 1976.

<sup>110</sup> Billington, p. 34.

manuscript papers on *The Proust Screenplay* we find the statement 'Only way to approach this film is as a dream [...] If dream nevertheless a dream which is finally shaped.'<sup>111</sup> As Žižek points out, the unconscious desire of the dream 'intercalates itself in the interspace between the latent thought and the manifest text.'<sup>112</sup> Rather than searching for that which is hidden behind its form, we have to examine the form itself, and it is to form that Pinter pays 'meticulous attention' :

The function of selection and arrangement is mine. I do all the donkeywork, in fact, and I think I can say I pay meticulous attention to the shape of things, from the shape of a sentence to the overall structure of the play. This shaping, to put it mildly, is of the first importance.<sup>113</sup>

In order to recreate the dream structure for the spectator, Pinter installs a central point of view.

Pinter's spectator is not led to identify with the character on screen, but through that central character's point of view, achieves a parallel object of desire. The majority of novels on which Pinter's screenplays are based are related by a single narrative voice, yet that narrator, as Michael Billington points out, is then banished from the scene.<sup>114</sup>

David Caute states that:

In *Accident* everything is experienced by Stephen; in *The Go-Between*, by the boy Leo. Having abolished Maugham's narrator [in *The Servant*] Pinter created a world where the only 'privileged' vantage point was the spectator's.<sup>115</sup>

In each screenplay Pinter installs the spectator in such a ' "privileged" vantage point', leading her to seek out her own illusory object of desire. How then does Pinter shape desire for the spectator? Three factors are at work here. The first is the embedding (as each screenplay opens) of an invisible object for the spectator (either of loss/desire or fullness/anxiety), and this will become clearer in the examination of the screenplays in

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<sup>111</sup> Undated handwritten notes on yellow paper, headed '1st thoughts on Proust', Archive, Box 45.

(Manuscripts of *The Proust Screenplay* are not listed by Gale and Hudgins, but their reference will be given, where available, throughout this thesis).

<sup>112</sup> Žižek, *Ideology*, p. 13.

<sup>113</sup> Harold Pinter, 'Writing for the Theatre', *Plays One*, p. xiii. Although Pinter is speaking about writing for the stage, the passage appears to have particular significance in Pinter's 'selection and arrangement' of novels he translates to screen.

<sup>114</sup> Billington, p. 150.

<sup>115</sup> David Caute, *Joseph Losey: A Revenge on Life* (London: Faber and Faber, 1994), p. 15.

the next chapter. The second is the movement of that object along the signifying chain of the screenplay; and the third, its return.

### The Drive - The Movement Along the Signifying Chain

Desire is essentially a search for something which is always lacking, but something that can never be satisfied since desire desires only to continue. 'Desire is fundamentally caught up in the dialectical *movement* of one signifier to the next, and is diametrically opposed to fixation.'<sup>116</sup> It is this movement of the object of desire between signifiers which finds articulation in Pinter's phrase, '*A figure glimpsed, moving through trees.*'<sup>117</sup> This phrase is given as camera directions in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, but variations occur throughout the screenplays like a hidden signature.<sup>118</sup> The line echoes Rimbaud's troupe of little actors glimpsed at the edge of the wood.<sup>119</sup> In *Silence* (written in 1968) Rumsey describes just such a scene, speaking of people walking towards him, 'disappearing, and then reappearing, to disappear into the wood [...] They are sharp at first sight ... then smudged ... then lost ... then glimpsed again ... then gone.'<sup>120</sup>

But it is in the screenplays that the phrase most often occurs. For example in *The Quiller Memorandum* (1966), Pinter gives the direction '*Shot through foliage [...] three men [...] are glimpsed through the trees, walking.*'<sup>121</sup> In *The Go-Between* (1969) the

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<sup>116</sup> Fink, p. 90.

<sup>117</sup> Harold Pinter, *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, in *The French Lieutenant's Woman and Other Screenplays* (London: Methuen, 1982), shot 56.

<sup>118</sup> It is significant that the phrase is clearly spelt out in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, since the author of that novel, John Fowles, has acknowledged his lasting debt to Alain-Fournier's *Le Grand Meaulnes*, one of the formative romance narratives of this century, and a paradigm for the concept of the 'lost domain' in 'literary discussion and psychology.' Alain-Fournier, in turn, has acknowledged his debt to Rimbaud's portrayal of 'enfance.' In both Fournier and Rimbaud, glimpses of an enchanted vision turn to threat.

See: John Fowles, 'A Personal Note', *The Ebony Tower*, 1974 (London: Granada, 1975), p.120; John Fowles, Afterword to Alain-Fournier's *The Lost Domain (Le Grand Meaulnes)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 298; Robert Gibson, Foreword and Introduction to Alain-Fournier's *Le Grand Meaulnes* (n.p. Harrap, 1968, repr. Walton-on-Thames: Nelson Harrap, 1984), p. 1.

<sup>119</sup> 'Il y a une troupe de petits comédiens en costumes, aperçus sur la route à travers la lisière du bois' (Rimbaud, p. 147).

<sup>120</sup> Harold Pinter, *Silence, Plays Three* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1978), p. 208.

<sup>121</sup> Harold Pinter, *The Quiller Memorandum*, in *The Servant and Other Screenplays* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991) p. 204.

camera directions at the start of the screenplay give 'A pony carriage drives by on the road, glimpsed only fragmentarily through the leaves. It passes./Silence.'<sup>122</sup> In *Langrishe, Go Down* (1970), an opening shot gives 'The camera looks through trees at the lodge gate cottage. The door is open./Silence.'<sup>123</sup> *Victory* (1982) has a 'building glimpsed through the trees' and 'Half seen through leaves, hands sharpening knives'<sup>124</sup> In *The Heat of the Day* (1988) the opening shots show that 'Robert and Stella disappear into the trees',<sup>125</sup> and in *The Handmaid's Tale* (1987), among the opening shots we find 'The family glimpsed at the edge of the wood, between trees.'<sup>126</sup> This is just a selection that spring to view. The pattern of the half glimpsed object within the screenplays echoes Pinter's fascination with the 'mystery' that lies behind the surface of things, 'what happens between the words, what happens when no words are spoken.'<sup>127</sup>

In Lacanian terms, Pinter's object of desire moving through trees, hidden, then found again, can be seen as a visual metaphor for the play of desire along the signifying chain. The pattern has a direct affinity with film form and with Lacan's essay on Edgar Allan Poe's 'The Purloined Letter' (1956).<sup>128</sup> In Poe's story an important and

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<sup>122</sup> *The Go-Between, The Servant and Other Screenplays*, p. 287.

<sup>123</sup> Harold Pinter, *Langrishe, Go Down*, in *The French Lieutenant's Woman and Other Screenplays*, p. 111.

<sup>124</sup> The first direction appears in the published screenplay for *Victory* in *The Comfort of Strangers and Other Screenplays* (London: Faber and Faber, 1990), p. 168. The second comes from the 'First Draft' of 11 June 1982, shot (3) with line through, omitted from the final printed text. Archive, Box 59.

Gale and Hudgins list this draft as item 10 in Box 59. In order to avoid repetition, box numbers will be included in Gale and Hudgins's reference, where quoted. Reference to the manuscript above would therefore read: (G&H 59/10) where the first number refers to the archive box number, the second to their own item number.

Most manuscripts are numbered throughout. I refer to these numbers as shots whereas Gale and Hudgins refer to scenes; the numbers are the same.

<sup>125</sup> Harold Pinter, *The Heat of the Day* (London: Faber and Faber, 1989), p. 1.

<sup>126</sup> *The Handmaid's Tale*, Archive, Boxes 62-64, Final Draft of February 1987, marked Daniel Wilson Productions, Inc., (G&H 62/3) among others.

<sup>127</sup> Harold Pinter speaking to John Russell Taylor on *Accident, Sight and Sound*, 35.4 (1966), 179-84 (p. 184).

<sup>128</sup> Freud's paper *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), describes the power of the 'unconscious repressed striving for expression' through the compulsion to repeat. Lacan 'linked the repetition of the unconscious repressed to the insistence of the signifying chain' outlined in his seminar on Edgar Allan Poe's 'The Purloined Letter' (1956) (Benvenuto and Kennedy, pp. 91-2 and following).

For the original story see Edgar Allan Poe, 'The Purloined Letter', 1845, in *The Fall*

compromising letter is stolen from the Queen which makes her vulnerable to the Minister who stole it. Although a rigorous search is made, it is nowhere to be found. Eventually it is discovered in full view in the Minister's apartment, disguised as a quite ordinary letter, by the only person apart from the Queen and the Minister who could recognise its importance. The letter in the story, 'fixates one character after another in a particular position: it is a real object, signifying nothing.' In psychoanalytic terms it is what is most real for the subject, the point of 'trauma and fixation' which forms 'a center of gravity around which the symbolic order is condemned to circle, without ever being able to hit it.'<sup>129</sup> The signifier (like Poe's letter) is in full view, but few can recognise its importance. Žižek explains that in the final years of Lacan's teaching, his perspective changed so that 'the letter which circulates among the subjects in Poe's story, determining their position in the intersubjective network, is no longer the materialized agency of the *signifier* but rather an *object* in the strict sense of materialized enjoyment.'<sup>130</sup> It is just such an invisible object of enjoyment (whether of desire, or anxiety), which emerges from Pinter's structuring of the screenplays.

In terms of film the spectator is engaged with that invisible letter in its progression along the signifying chain of the screenplay until it arrives at its destination in the final frames. As Žižek describes:

the entire film serves ultimately only to prepare for the final, concluding moment, and when this moment arrives, when (to use the final phrase of Lacan's 'Seminar On "The Purloined Letter" ') 'the letter arrives at its destination' the film can end at once. The film is thus structured in a strictly 'teleological' manner, all its elements point toward the final moment, the long-awaited culmination.<sup>131</sup>

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*of the House of Usher and Other Writings: Poems, Tales, Essays and Reviews* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986), pp.330-349.

<sup>129</sup> Fink, p. 28.

<sup>130</sup> Žižek, *Enjoy Your Symptom!*, p. 22.

<sup>131</sup> Žižek, *Enjoy Your Symptom!*, p. 3, quoting from Lacan's 'Seminar On "The Purloined Letter" ' in John P. Muller and William J. Richardson, eds., *The Purloined Poe* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1988), p. 53.

The 'Loop of Enjoyment'<sup>132</sup>

Lacan compares the first sight of the letter to the primal scene which a child is not able to describe until he 'can link the imaginary experience into the Symbolic Order.'<sup>133</sup> In the same way, the spectator of the screenplay is unable to formulate the importance of what she has seen until the Symbolic circuit of the screenplay is advanced, or completed. The object will mean nothing, will not be recognised, unless the spectator is made to see it through a look distorted by desire. However, because desire is installed in the gap between what we see and what we wish to see, it can be made to vanish, and the obverse of the desiring gaze is the awareness of something which sticks out, which does not allow us to cover it over with an object of our own desire, and so destroys desire and causes anxiety. This circular movement, within which the spectator is suspended, can be seen at work most clearly in Pinter's and Beckett's films for the Grove Press Project in the early 1960s.

Pinter refers to his script for *The Basement* (originally titled *The Compartment*) as the 'only original screenplay that he has written.'<sup>134</sup> It was to be a joint venture at the invitation of the American Grove Press, with Beckett and Ionesco, of which Beckett's *Film* was the only one made, although Pinter's contribution was eventually produced by BBC TV in February 1967.<sup>135</sup> *The Basement* has a two-fold bond with Beckett's *Film*, most evidently in the circularity of its structure, but also in the representation of a gaze.

Pinter's *The Basement* is, as Billington points out, a reworking of one of his earliest themes, that of the control of a room. The original manuscripts in the Pinter Archive show a treatment in red type headed 'The Compartment' where the speaker reports the ambiguous relationship between himself and the girl he finds in the apartment, while they both wait for Kullus to arrive.<sup>136</sup> As in Pinter's screenplay adaptations, *The Compartment* is given from the point of view of a central narrator.

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<sup>132</sup> This is Žižek's term for the circular movement of the object. (Slavoj Žižek, *Tarrying with the Negative: Kant, Hegel, and the Critique of Ideology*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), Part III).

<sup>133</sup> Benvenuto & Kennedy, p. 94.

<sup>134</sup> Pinter quoted by Gale and Hudgins, p. 104.

Given that *Night School* and *The Collection* were first produced for television in 1960 and 1961 respectively, Pinter appears to mean that *The Basement* was his only original treatment for the large screen.

<sup>135</sup> Billington, p. 191.

<sup>136</sup> This is the Kullus of 'The Examination', since the speaker states that 'It was not long

In *Film*, Beckett has subtitled his notes *Esse est percipi* (To be is to be perceived),<sup>137</sup> followed by an outline of the scenario which gives 'Search of non-being in flight from extraneous perception breaking down in inescapability of self-perception.' He then states that 'No truth value attaches to above, regarded as of merely structural and dramatic convenience.' At the end of the film it becomes clear 'that pursuing perceiver is not extraneous, but self.'<sup>138</sup>

In a shot which echoes the opening attack on the spectator in Buñuel and Dali's *Un Chien Andalou*, thirty years earlier, an eyelid fills the screen. The eye opens, it closes; it opens again, blinks twice. The spectator is perceived. The film consists of E (eye) - the camera/spectator - pursuing O (object) through the streets. On the way, E encounters characters who recoil in horror as E (the camera) approaches. Finally tracked to his room, O is awakened by the sensation of E's piercing gaze as he too finds himself trapped in the 'anguish of perceivedness', as he confronts his own self gazing back.<sup>139</sup> Beckett told the production crew that 'We're trying to find [...] a ... cinematic equivalent for visual appetite and visual distaste ... a reluctant ... a disgusted vision [O's] and a ferociously ... voracious one [E's].'<sup>140</sup> Beckett's statement parallels Lacan's description of the gaze, either as object of desire (something we wish to see) or else something that presses too close and forms an overwhelming fullness. In fact this short film can be seen as a metaphor for the Lacanian gaze, for Object hides his face from the camera and is not revealed until the final moments on screen. Object for the majority of the film is therefore something that we desire to see. However, the startled faces of those he passes, the man and woman, and the elderly flower seller who stares horrified into camera, align with his own final look of horror to form a gaze which overwhelms him, and create an alarming fullness for the spectator as desire turns to anxiety.

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before that I had invited Kullus to participate in an examination, which had, for my purposes, failed' (*The Compartment*, p.1, G&H 2/1).

<sup>137</sup> Linda Ben-Zvi notes that the quotation is from Berkeley. Linda Ben-Zvi, 'Samuel Beckett's Media Plays', *Modern Drama*, 28.1 (1985), p. 30.

<sup>138</sup> Samuel Beckett, Screenplay of *Film* (New York: Grove Press, 1969), p.11.

<sup>139</sup> Beckett, *Film*, pp. 11, 40-53.

<sup>140</sup> S. E. Gontarski in 'Film and Formal Integrity' in *Samuel Beckett: Humanistic Perspectives*, eds. Morris Beja, S.E. Gontarski, and Pierre Astier (Columbus, O: 1983), p. 135, quoted by Ben-Zvi, p. 30.

In Pinter's final printed text of *The Basement*, a semblance of that gaze also emerges. *The Basement* opens with two characters, Stott and Jane, arriving at Law's apartment. Law is lonely and readily welcomes them in.<sup>141</sup> The apartment then undergoes a series of unsettling changes in decor, mood and temperature, as the relationship between the three also changes. The play closes with the same scene repeated, only this time it is Law and Jane who wait in the dark and the rain for entry to Stott's bright, warm (but no doubt equally lonely) lair. Law and Jane will now unsettle Stott's comfortable existence. If we read *The Basement* in relation to Beckett's *Film*, Law can be seen to be placed in the uncanny position of seeing himself see himself. By placing Pinter's characters within the structure of the gaze we can find a place for Pinter's other intruders as gaze, as the 'anguish of perceivedness' comes home.<sup>142</sup>

This suspension of the subject in an ephemeral relationship through vision is discussed by Lacan in relation to Holbein's anamorphic painting of 'The Ambassadors'. Lacan gives an example of the object of desire in the gaze in his view of Holbein's portrait of the Ambassadors, 'two figures [...] frozen, stiffened in their showy adornments. Between them [...] the symbols of *vanitas*.' It is a picture of the accomplishment of worldly desires. But Lacan draws attention to the shapeless mark across the foreground of the painting, which he likens to 'that loaf composed of two books which Dali was once pleased to place on the head of an old woman.' The blurred streak across the centre of the painting echoes that invisible figure at the centre of '*L'Angélu*'; as in '*L'Angélu*' the figures in the picture cannot see what lies between them, yet it shapes their very being all the same. And, as Lacan points out, the object which shapes the figures in the painting shares its effect with the spectator:

Begin by walking out of the room in which no doubt it has long held your attention. It is then that, turning round as you leave [...] you apprehend in this form ... What? A skull.<sup>143</sup>

The living relationship between the subject and her object of desire is here reproduced in the spectator's response to Holbein's portrait. We cannot see the object of our desire. If we come to 'see it', to understand what it is that motivates us, desire will vanish and the meaning of the whole picture will change. But it can also come too close - as does the skull in the portrait. If the spectator looks at it in its fullest form, from beside the

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<sup>141</sup> 'I was feeling quite lonely, actually. It is lonely sitting here, night after night' (*The Basement, Plays Three*, p.156).

<sup>142</sup> Beckett, *Film*, p. 11.

<sup>143</sup> Lacan, *FFCP*, p. 88

painting, the ambassadors fade into the background, and all we can see is the skull, the death's head, which appears to obliterate all else. No longer a screen onto which we project our desire (to see, to know), the blurred space (the gap in the picture) emerges as a fullness which destroys our relationship with desire and becomes instead, a figure of anxiety. Lacan points out that in this portrait 'Holbein makes visible [...] the subject as annihilated' as the picture becomes 'a trap for the gaze.' In a footnote to this seminar he adds that only by stressing 'the dialectic of desire' can one understand 'why the gaze of others' (in this case the Other which is the artist) 'should disorganize the field of perception.'<sup>144</sup>

A figure similar to Holbein's death's head appears in Pinter's early plays, a figure of anxiety, representing a threat to the central characters' relationship with desire. That figure reaches its clearest form in *A Slight Ache*, discussed in chapter six, where the Matchseller acts as a blank space onto which Flora projects her desire, while for Edward, he becomes an unwelcome fullness.

Pinter's screenplays work to suspend the spectator in just such a vacillating relationship with desire. Pinter's opening images install a sense of lack or unknowing which creates a desire and a drive to see again and to know, to return for another look as the screenplay progresses. In *The Proust Screenplay*, it is a group of intense images which we desire to see again. Their meaning remains hidden until they return later in the screenplay, and when they do, the effect is acute, offering the spectator the sensation of 'revelation' or 'disillusion',<sup>145</sup> which finds an echo in Lacan's *jouissance* and death. In *The Remains of the Day*, it is an absence which greets us as the screenplay opens, and a voice which we feel bound to follow; in *The Handmaid's Tale*, the intense loss of a child. In *Victory*, the images return, but differently, so that something sticks out, and instead of desire, creates anxiety.

These are the structures of desire to be found in the screenplays, and which correspond to that of the gaze as *objet petit a*: the eternally lost object (which activates desire), the object which, aligned to a real object in the external world, will change, and the loss of

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<sup>144</sup> Lacan, *FFCP*, p. 88-89.

A similar view is recounted by Beckett in his essay on Proust, where Marcel surprises his grandmother when she is unaware of his presence. The affection which normally operates in his view of his grandmother 'has not had time to interfere its prism between the eye and its object', and he finds himself 'present at his own absence.' What emerges is a figure of horror as he realises that his 'real' grandmother was 'dead, long since' (Beckett, *Proust*, p. 27).

<sup>145</sup> Pinter's introduction to *The Proust Screenplay*, p. vii.

desire, when instead of a lack we encounter a fullness, something which presses too close, destroys that relationship with desire, and causes instead a deep anxiety. These three aspects of the object are given detailed examination in chapters three, four and five. What follows in chapter two is a resumé of all the screenplays to date, and the emergence of the three different forms of that acute, invisible object of desire.

## Chapter Two

### THE OBJECT AS GAZE IN THE SCREENPLAYS

In screenplay after screenplay, Pinter elicits an object of desire for character and spectator. This he achieves by reshaping the original narrative and by restructuring the work as a whole. Within the overall structure of the screenplay, fragmentations of time and narrative intensify the properties intrinsic to the medium of cinema where something extra emerges in the juxtaposition of shot and shot. It is in montage that the object as real emerges. As Slavoj Žižek explains, 'cinematic reality produces, through a kind of structural necessity, a certain leftover, a surplus that is radically heterogeneous to the cinematic reality but nonetheless implied by it, part of it.' This 'surplus of the real is, in the last resort, precisely the gaze qua object.'<sup>1</sup> While some screenplays (post-*Proust*, 1972) heighten the effect of montage, others emphasise a gap between voice and visual, but the constant factor to be found in Pinter's adaptations is the shaping of the overall structure in order to trap the spectator into a relationship of desire with that hidden object.

This object does not exist for a straight-forward look, but emerges only through a gaze distorted by desire; what Žižek terms an 'anamorphic gaze from aside,' or 'looking awry'.<sup>2</sup> As each screenplay opens, Pinter posts his letter down the signifying chain of the screenplay creating an invisible object of desire for the spectator by causing her to see 'awry', trapping her gaze in a relationship with desire, unaware of what it is for which she waits, or even the fact that she awaits its return.

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<sup>1</sup> Slavoj Žižek, 'Looking Awry,' *October*, 50 (1989), 30-55 (p. 45).

<sup>2</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture* (London: MIT Press, 1991), p. 13.

As already noted in chapter one, the object materialises for the spectator in three different ways. There is the lost object which enchants, and the object which, without losing any of its fascination, can turn from an object of 'pleasure' into an object of 'disgust and even to horror.'<sup>3</sup> In this case, instead of a gap where desire operates, a fullness arises which produces an overwhelming anxiety. There is yet another position; the object itself can never be grasped since it has no material form, but, it may coincide with an actual object. Where it does, and where that actual object is achieved, then the object of desire will change. These are the three positions of the object into which we can divide Pinter's screenplays.<sup>4</sup> What follows will look at Pinter's screenplays in chronological order from *The Servant* (1962) up to *The Dreaming Child* (December 1997), noting the developing structure of those works through which Pinter suspends his spectator in an ephemeral relationship with desire.

#### THE SCREENPLAYS UP TO 1971 (PRE-PROUST)

##### *The Servant* (1961-63)<sup>5</sup>

Because *The Servant* is Pinter's first screenplay, it is worth exploring in some detail. From this we can see that elements found in later screenplays (the paring down of action and dialogue, and the circularity of the whole), are already in place. As in the adaptations which follow, Pinter eliminates the intrusive narrator while offering the work

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<sup>3</sup> Bruce Fink, *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 60.

<sup>4</sup> There is also a fourth position, where the object itself disappears and we are left facing nothingness. However, although this reading can apply to characters within the screenplays, as in *The Pumpkin Eater* and *The Trial*, it does not apply to Pinter's structuring of the screenplays where the spectator is constantly engaged within a vacillating relationship of desire or anxiety.

<sup>5</sup> Pinter worked on the screenplay, first for Michael Anderson, and then for Joseph Losey, between 1961 and 1963 when it went into production (Michael Billington, *The Life and Work of Harold Pinter* (London: Faber and Faber, 1996), p. 150).

Based on the novel by Robin Maugham, *The Servant*, 1948 (London: Heinemann, 1964).

References to the printed screenplay are to Harold Pinter, *The Servant and Other Screenplays* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991).

References to manuscripts are to those in the Pinter Archive, The British Library Manuscripts Department, Loan 110, Box 52.

Where papers are listed by Gale and Hudgins, their listing will be noted with the archive box number followed by their item number, e.g. Box 1, their item 2 will appear as: (G&H 1/2). Their full list appears in Steven H. Gale and Christopher C. Hudgins, 'The Harold Pinter Archives II: A Description of the Filmscript Materials in the Archive in the British Library', *The Pinter Review* (1995 and 1995), 101-142.

from a central point of view. It is one of the few screenplays which follows a progressive time sequence. However, the linear structure reinforces the narrative, which opens with Barrett's arrival as manservant to the indolent Tony, and sees Tony's apparently helpless slide from mastery into utter dependence on Barrett. Tony wants a manservant, someone who will do everything for him, and he gets just what he wants. But the object of desire can turn from something exciting and pleasurable to one equally exciting but horrific, and in *The Servant* this is exactly what happens.

This first screenplay of Pinter's was the first of four highly acclaimed collaborations with the director Joseph Losey (followed by *Accident* (1966), *The Go-Between* (1969) and culminating in *The Proust Screenplay* (1972) which was never produced as a film). Pinter has referred to their 'meticulously detailed' working relationship where 'the final conception of the screenplay [is] a shared one.' He adds that 'I consider these works as written *with* Mr Losey. Our two minds are responsible for them.'<sup>6</sup> David Caute speaks of Losey being 'attracted' to Pinter's adaptation 'by new scenes not found in the novel from Barrett's rehiring to the final party', but he 'also wanted major changes'.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, in his production notes Losey states that 'the mark of Pinter is very strongly imprinted on the whole film, not just its dialogue.'<sup>8</sup>

Two important factors emerge from the successive manuscript drafts of this first screenplay: the elimination of extraneous dramatic incident, and the preview of Tony's end in his beginning, aspects which Pinter develops in tandem, achieving a subtle and dynamic final draft. That reshaping brings the structure of the screenplay (no doubt unintentionally) ever closer to a Lacanian reading. By placing an intimation of Tony's end in the opening, Pinter creates a gap that the spectator desires to see closed, and which sets off the movement of desire along the signifying chain of the screenplay.

Elia Kazan refers to a conversation he had with Pinter over work on *The Last Tycoon* (1974). When he first started working with Pinter, he asked 'why isn't this confrontation more upfront', telling Pinter that 'it's like it's all happening underwater.' To which Pinter

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<sup>6</sup> Harold Pinter, letter to *The Times*, 19 October 1972, p. 17.

<sup>7</sup> David Caute, *Joseph Losey: A Revenge on Life* (London: Faber and Faber, 1994), p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> Joseph Losey, 'Notes on the Film', *The Servant* (undated Production Notes, issued by Associated British-Pathe Ltd). Losey concludes with the statement that 'the story [...] is the story of Faust.'

replied 'Isn't that where things happen?'<sup>9</sup> With the elimination or reduction of dramatic events which take place in external (represented) reality, we come closer to an engagement with the dynamics of desire - that which is most real for the subject. Speaking about *Accident*, Pinter refers to 'this mystery which fascinates me: what happens between the words, what happens when no words are spoken.' He adds that 'In this film everything [...] has been pared down and down, all unnecessary words and actions are eliminated.'<sup>10</sup> It is this paring down which has been present from the beginning in Pinter's dialogue and structure for both stage and screen, and the mystery Pinter refers to is the unconscious at work.

Early drafts of *The Servant* show Pinter working to reduce dramatic action so that the drama exists in the emotional interplay between the two central characters. For example, Pinter has eliminated from the finished screenplay a scene in a bar where Tony pacifies a man aggrieved because he should have been served first. Also cut is the scene where two men outside the bar persist in attempting to drive Tony's sports car.<sup>11</sup> Cut too is an apparent fight between Tony and Sally's escort at the Dorchester.<sup>12</sup> (Sally changes to Susan in the printed screenplay.)

Although the manuscripts in the archive are undated, a progression is suggested in the changes Pinter has made to our first view of Tony. In the six-page, single-spaced outline (G&H 52/1c) Tony is 'cheerful' and active, coming to meet Barrett as he arrives at the house for the interview (shot 1). He drunkenly tries to make love to Sally by the dock wall, and is cheerful when rejected, afterwards telling a man who apparently makes a pass at Sally ('Man pass at Sally') that 'that's the girl I'm going to marry' (shot 2). He is accepted by the Temple in preparation for his Bar exams, shops with Sally for a picture,

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<sup>9</sup> Elia Kazan interviewed by Charles Silver and Mary Corliss, 'Hollywood Under Water', *Film Comment*, 13.1 (1977), 40-44 (p. 43).

<sup>10</sup> Harold Pinter interviewed by John Russell Taylor, '*Accident*', *Sight and Sound*, 35.4 (1966), 179-184 (p. 184).

<sup>11</sup> Shots 12-14 of single spaced typed draft, 33 pages (shots 1-131) (G&H 52/1d).

There are six undated items in Box 52 of the Archive: 2 loose handwritten sheets (G&H 52/1a); 5 loose handwritten sheets (G&H 52/1b); a 6 page single spaced typed outline (G&H 52/1c); 33 pages (G&H count 34) (G&H 52/1d); 82 page typescript (G&H 52/1e); and 18 pages of corrections (G&H 52/1f).

<sup>12</sup> The fight occurs at shot 32 in the 5 page draft (G&H 52/1b). It also occurs in the 6 page draft (G&H 52/1c). In this draft, as G&H note, the phrase 'Lady Duck Muck' appears, shot 31. The phrase surfaces in *Mountain Language*, where the sergeant asks 'What is this, a reception for Lady Duck Muck? Where's the bloody Babycham?' (Faber and Faber edition, 1988, p. 37).

and speaks of marriage at some (unspecified) future date ('Talk of marriage ahead.') (All at shot 4). We are therefore introduced to him as a healthy, virile and fairly ordinary (albeit privileged) young man.

In this draft, Tony's slide into servitude is created with broader dramatic strokes than in (what appear to be) the later drafts. This slide can be seen at work when Tony gives lunch at home to three fellow students. He stays behind when they leave to attend a lecture, saying he will follow, but Barrett gives him a brandy, and he decides not to go saying he is 'Too old for lectures' (shot 10). The following scene sees Barrett's uncanny eruption onto the scene of Tony's 'nervous, reluctant' attempt to make love to Sally (shot 11),<sup>13</sup> followed by Barrett's removal of Sally's flowers from Tony's sick room (shot 12) (both of which scenes remain in the final screenplay). In the next scene (shot 13), Barrett puts his own significant purchase of a picture in place of one of Tony's own (presumably the one Tony was seen buying with Sally earlier in the screenplay).

In this draft also, Barrett presses home his ascendancy by telephoning Sally to ask if she would like to join him and Vera 'in their flat for a drink and "bit of fun" ' (shot 39), but denies it when confronted by Tony, and Tony believes him (shot 41). However, when Sally calls at the house to attempt to take Tony away, Barrett invites her to join them, telling her that he has always fancied her (shot 45). This draft ends with Pinter's note:

Does she stay - or does she go?

High shot of tableau. Shadows, half light, shapes, music,

Sally and Barrett looking at each other.

Undated 6 page outline (G&H 52/1c), shot 45.

In this draft we can see Tony change from a young man of apparently free will, to the point at which every draft of the screenplay ends, that of total dependence on Barrett, and Barrett's concerted efforts to dominate Tony are evident. However, the presence of Sally in the final shot leaves open (a) the possibility that she too will succumb to Barrett, or (b) that by her staying, there is still some hope for Tony.

In what appear to be later drafts, Sally is rejected and ejected, and the final focus remains on Tony. In the 33 page draft (G&H 1d), Tony is introduced to the spectator as passive, vulnerable, and ready to be taken over. Here we encounter Tony from Barrett's viewpoint 'Half hidden in the long grass he can see a body' (shot 5) followed by 'In the garden. Tony's body in the grass. From grass we- see feet approach' (shot 6). Barrett

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<sup>13</sup> Klein refers to him 'uncannily interrupt[ing]' them (Joanne Klein, *Making Pictures: The Pinter Screenplays* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1985), p 15).

is therefore already dominant, Tony already vulnerable, passive and exposed (as he is in the final printed text, where Barrett finds him asleep in a deck chair in the empty house). As the screenplay closes, the final shot is again that of Barrett looking down at Tony:

lying in a pool of whisky, glasses tablecloth and bottles [...] asleep.

Barrett sits at table, lights fag, pours whisky [sic], drinks.

Undated 33 page draft (G&H 52/1d), shot 131.

In a carbon copy draft of 82 pages (G&H 52/1e), both opening and closure are similar, although the 'Half hidden' shot of the opening is crossed through (shot 4), and the screenplay ends with a more detailed description:

In the kitchen Tony is lying supine in a pool of drink and debris.

Barrett takes a glass from the shelf. He bends down, carefully selects a whisky bottle which still contains liquor, sets it on the table. He sits down, lights a cigarette, pours a drink and drinks.

Undated 82 page draft (G&H 52/1e), shot 148.

Once Tony is introduced to the spectator as passive, sleeping, Barrett's ascendancy is shown in less dramatic strokes. Barrett's purchase of a picture to replace Tony's is cut, as is the comatizing brandy after lunch, and Barrett's telephone call to Sally (G&H 52/1c). Also cut are scenes in the 33 page draft (G&H 52/1d), where Sally and Tony relax at a swimming pool (shot 21), while Barrett oversees the freshly decorated house (shots 22-23). We then cut to the dismal Kennington boarding house<sup>14</sup> and Barrett telling his landlady that he's 'going to a very secure job' (shot 24). We see him writing a letter, then posting it, before cutting back to 'Tony's house' with its 'luxurious' interior and Barrett firmly installed (shot 28). All these scenes are omitted from the final text and much subtler exchanges are installed in their place.

For example, when Tony commends Barrett on his knowledge of decorating (shot 10, G&H 52/1e), Barrett replies that 'I've always thought colours are very important. I think white is a very nice colour', a statement with which Tony agrees: 'It is. Very nice. We had a lot of it in Ceylon, of course.' Here, the colour is unprovocative and Tony has another reason for agreeing. However, in the final printed text Barrett's insidiousness is evident. It is Tony who suggests that 'the overall colour should be white', and Barrett who engages in battle:

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<sup>14</sup> 'Barrett living cheap by sleeping with his landlady' (Caute, p. 5).

BARRATT      Mandarin red and fuschia is a very chic combination this year, sir.

TONY            Not overall, surely?

BARRETT       No, no, no. Not overall.

TONY            Just a wall?

BARRETT       Oh yes, just a wall, sir, here and there.

Pinter, *The Servant*, p. 8.<sup>15</sup>

It is that last phrase 'here and there' which surreptitiously wrests control from Tony over interior design, as over other aspects of Tony's life.

With this paring down in successive scripts, we are able to engage with what is happening between the words, and in these gaps we come closer to understanding Tony's gradual slippage from someone able to operate in the real world, to someone abstracted from that world. Barrett dominates his master by providing everything the indolent Tony desires. In this way Tony becomes dependent on Barrett and isolated from the outside world, and successive drafts show that isolation. The scenes in the outside world which survive into the final screenplay - the visits to the Mountsets (almost indistinguishable from the surrounding statuary) and the restaurant (where the conversation of other diners heightens the distance between Tony and Sally) - work to show Tony as isolated and therefore vulnerable to the ministrations of Barrett.

It is through Pinter's paring down in action and dialogue that what is most real for the characters (and for the spectator) can emerge. And what is most real is Tony's desire. In the early draft quoted above Tony's rejected attempts to make love to Sally do not deter him at all.<sup>16</sup> However, in what appears to be a later version, Tony's final words in this scene after her refusal to make love are 'Oh I forgot to tell you, I've found a manservant.'<sup>17</sup> Tony's attempted acquisition of Sally, and his rejection, brings to Tony's mind another acquisition, in the form of Barrett, who *will* attend to his every need when required. Tony's unarticulated desire is therefore revealed to the spectator, while apparently remaining hidden from the character himself.

Tony's desire in the scene with Sally (someone to minister to his needs) is revealed in the gap between words, Pinter's silence 'when no word is spoken.' A similar desire is

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<sup>15</sup> Where shot numbers are missing from the printed text, page numbers will be given.

<sup>16</sup> 6 page typescript (G&H 52/1c), Shot 2.

<sup>17</sup> 33 page draft (G&H 52/1d), Shot 16.

embedded in the scene with the Irishman in the bar, which illustrates Pinter's other silence 'when perhaps a torrent of language is being employed' and which 'speak[s] of a language locked beneath it.'<sup>18</sup> The monologue, while hardly a torrent of words, is, nevertheless, a spoken silence which intensifies the silence between Barrett and Tony in adjoining bars. In this silence, their unspoken desire emerges. Here they meet for the first time since Tony threw Barrett out, after discovering him in bed with his supposed niece (sister in later drafts) who was also Tony's lover. Unable to cope by himself (we see the visual evidence), Tony's unstated (and possibly unacknowledged) desire, is to reinstate Barrett, and Barrett's, by his very presence in the local pub, his desire to be reinstated. Neither character is able to say this. Pinter has therefore interposed an obstruction (in the monologue of the stranger) which creates a bond between Barrett and Tony and enables conversation to begin once the obstacle has been removed:

MAN                    I had a bit of bad luck today.  
*There is no response. The BARMAN appears, polishing some glasses, looks vaguely for any further orders, withdraws.*  
                               I really had a bit of bad luck.  
*Silence.*  
                               It'll take me a good few days to get over it, I can tell you.  
*Pause. The man turns to TONY as if TONY had spoken.*  
                               Eh?  
*TONY is blank. The man finishes his drink and turns to go.*  
                               You're right, there.  
*He goes. Silence. BARRETT and TONY look at each other. TONY non-committal: BARRETT seems shabbier, uneasy, his breath laboured.*  
                               Might I buy you a drink?  
*TONY does not answer. BARRETT signals nervously to the BARMAN, points to Tony's glass.*  
 BARRETT            Scotch. Large scotch.

Pinter, *The Servant*, p. 45<sup>19</sup>

Barrett then talks Tony into taking him back, and Tony's fate is sealed.

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<sup>18</sup> Harold Pinter, 'Writing for the Theatre', 1962, *Plays One* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), p. xiii.

<sup>19</sup> This scene, with slight variation, appears in the 82 page typescript (G&H 52/1e) at shot 124.

What Tony wants is a manservant, one who will do everything for him:

TONY            Now apart from the cooking, I'll need ... well, everything  
                   ... *(He laughs.)* General looking after ... you know.

BARRETT        Yes, I do, sir.

Pinter, *The Servant*, p. 6.

And Tony gets just what he wants - and its attendant horror. The object he desires comes too close, blotting out all else and overwhelming him in the process, so that he succumbs to a kind of living death. For the spectator also, an object is created, for that opening image has returned in full horrific force. Žižek refers to the second murder in *Psycho*, that of the detective, Arbogast, where 'we endure the most brutal shock when we witness the exact realization of what we were looking forward to.' Žižek asks where our desire lies: in the knowledge that it will happen, or the belief that it may not? He concludes that 'the unconscious belief (that X could not actually happen) is ultimately a defence against the Real of desire.' It is 'what Freud calls "drive" [...] a name for the absolute "closure" where what actually happens corresponds perfectly to what one knows exactly will happen...'<sup>20</sup> This is what Pinter recreates in *The Servant*, where the object of both Tony's and the spectator's desire comes horribly close.

### *The Pumpkin Eater* (1963)<sup>21</sup>

Pinter's second screenplay concerns another character whose distance from the world around her reveals her as vulnerable. Jo, middle aged and on her third marriage, to a successful scriptwriter, cannot seem to stop producing children, as though babies will fill the space between herself and the world. The novel recalls the past into an immediate present for the benefit of her analyst. Pinter opens briefly with the estranged present before taking the story back ten years, filling in the background and progressing in

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<sup>20</sup> Slavoj Žižek, 'In His Bold Gaze My Ruin Is Writ Large', in *Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Lacan: But Were Afraid to Ask Hitchcock*, ed. by Slavoj Žižek (London: Verso, 1992), pp. 211-272 (pp. 230-31).

<sup>21</sup> Billington dates the writing of the screenplay as 1963 (Billington, p. 155). Based on Penelope Mortimer's novel *The Pumpkin Eater*, 1962 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964). The film is directed by Jack Clayton. References to the screenplay are to *The Pumpkin Eater* in Harold Pinter, *The Servant and Other Screenplays*.

There are no manuscripts in the Archive. Pinter explained to Susan Hollis Merritt that this and other manuscripts, including *The Room*, *The Dumb Waiter*, *The Birthday Party* (play), *A Slight Ache* and *A Night Out* disappeared from his house around the time that he separated from his first wife, Vivien Merchant (Susan Hollis Merritt, 'The Harold Pinter Archive in the British Library,' *The Pinter Review* (1994), 14-53 (p. 16) ).

chronological jumps to the present, which then continues with Jo's breakdown in Harrods, her abortion and sterilisation and her discovery of her husband's affair. Finally, Jo takes herself to the new house, the tower recently completed, in the country. Here she locks herself in, only to find the walls breached by husband and children, who come to claim her.

The novel opens with Jo's statement ' "Well," I said, "I will try. I honestly will try to be honest with you," and closes with her confirmation that 'Some of these things happened, and some were dreams [...] They are all real, as I understood reality.' <sup>22</sup> As with all Pinter's screenplays, the spectator is led to experience a parallel point of view. Noel King notes that in *The Pumpkin Eater* Pinter attempts 'a qualified form of *subjective* narration whereby the story clearly is told from Jo's point of view but without directing all sympathies towards her.' <sup>23</sup> In this screenplay, Pinter installs the fragmented structure found throughout his later work, recreating for both Jo and the spectator a more intense reality by intercutting the estranged present and the vivid past, to create a third, more intense reality.<sup>24</sup>

The screenplay opens with Jo in solitude in the old house, as her husband goes out to dinner, and ends with her surrounded by family in the new, and the offer of a beer, which she accepts. That acceptance appears to be an enactment of Jo's statement in the novel: 'I was no longer frightened of him. I no longer needed him. I accepted him at last, because he was inevitable.' <sup>25</sup> Although Jo's family cannot fill the space between her and the world, she has perhaps come to accept the fact that nothing can. This change in an awareness and acceptance of that gap places Jo in the position of the subject whose object of desire, once recognised, is dissipated. In order to cover over that gap, another object will arise; otherwise, she faces the anxiety of nothingness.<sup>26</sup> What emerges from this screenplay is an opening loss and emptiness which is barely ameliorated as the screenplay ends.

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<sup>22</sup> Mortimer, pp. 7, 158.

<sup>23</sup> Noel King, 'Pinter's Screenplays: The Menace of the Past', *Southern Review: Literary and Interdisciplinary Essays*, 14.1 (1981), 78-90, (p.83).

<sup>24</sup> Pinter, *The Pumpkin Eater*. The screenplay opens with the present scene, pp. 64-65, then moves to the past, pp. 65-80, with brief shots of the present intercut at pp. 69, 77.

<sup>25</sup> Mortimer, p. 158.

<sup>26</sup> Klein refers to Jo's 'magnified stasis, an absence of life' as the screenplay ends, for which the 'newly constructed, vacant house' is a metaphor (Klein, p. 29).

*The Quiller Memorandum* (1966)<sup>27</sup>

Pinter once again eliminates the first person narrator, but the spectator is nevertheless engaged through the central character of Quiller. In the uneasy world of the Cold War, Quiller knows little more than the spectator, and the unease relates directly to vision as, like Quiller, we question what we see. The storyline develops along a chronological path, but Pinter has made a major structural innovation by dramatising the death of Kenneth Lindsay Jones, the previous agent, at the opening of the screenplay.<sup>28</sup> He then cuts from this killing on a lonely foreign street to the comfort of a London club and Rushington and Gibbs at lunch, coolly discussing that death in the same terms as they discuss the pheasant one of them is eating. (Later, after Oktober gives orders to kill Quiller, we cut again to the London club with Gibbs off to the Lord Mayor's Banquet.) With this juxtaposition, Pinter not only makes a political statement but heightens the drama.<sup>29</sup> As the screenplay opens, Kenneth Lindsay Jones walks up the street in the Berlin Tiergarten, and, seeing no-one, enters a brightly lit telephone box - whereupon he is shot dead. This scene opens all three drafts in the archive, and all three repeat that scene later in the screenplay, this time with Quiller.<sup>30</sup>

In the earliest draft, Pinter originally placed the enemy in view as Quiller approaches the phone box. 'One man perching on wall in very middle of bridge' and 'Another man in shadows other side of road by trees'.<sup>31</sup> However, on the page opposite, Pinter has

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<sup>27</sup> *The Quiller Memorandum* is based on Adam Hall's novel *The Berlin Memorandum* (London: Collins, 1965). The film is directed by Michael Anderson.

References to the printed screenplay are to Harold Pinter, *The Quiller Memorandum in The Servant and Other Screenplays*.

References to manuscript papers are to Box 48 of the Archive.

<sup>28</sup> In the novel, Pol tells Quiller 'KLJ was found dead last night' (Hall, p. 15).

<sup>29</sup> Pinter, *The Quiller Memorandum*, pp 139, 175.

Billington speaks of Pinter's 'impressive [...] ability to see that the Western democracies in countering the evil of neo-Nazism operate with the same veiled coldness and indifference to the individual' (Billington, p 184).

Pinter uses food here to point up a vacuity at the heart of power, as he does later in *The Remains of the Day* and *Party Time*, and in his article, 'Breaking the chains: A state of war with unlimited duck in lime sauce for the victor', where he uses three images from Duncan Green's book *Silent Revolution* to contrast the plight of Bolivian villagers with the lifestyle of those who govern their fate (*Guardian*, 15 May 1998, p. 7).

<sup>30</sup> Box 48 of the Archive, contains three drafts :

Final Draft of April 1966, 'An Ivan Foxwell Production' (G&H 48/1).

Undated 51 page typescript, 136 shots, with alterations (G&H 48/2a).

Undated 92 page loose foolscap typescript, 139 scenes (G&H 48/2c).

<sup>31</sup> Shot 109, undated draft (G&H 2a).

written 'Repeat opening sequence. Don't see anyone till after he passes phone box.' As with that opening scene with Jones, in the final text neither the spectator nor Quiller see anyone. Unlike Jones, who assumes there is nothing in the shadows under the trees, Pinter's Quiller knows that even if there appears to be an emptiness, there is something very real there all the same. Quiller does not stop at the phone box - and survives.<sup>32</sup>

While all three drafts open with the death of Jones in the dark street, Pinter changes the ending. In an early draft, Quiller asks whether there was any shooting and is told, 'A girl started shooting away ... She's dead ...'<sup>33</sup> However, later drafts and the final published text give a different version. Here we have Quiller visiting the girl (Inge) back in place among the young children she is teaching.<sup>34</sup> This ending is discomfiting, with no fantasised clean sweep of the enemy. Inge, once the object of desire, is now revealed as undesirable, part of a larger and continuing (Nazi) threat that must be fought over and over in order that it shall not come too close. Like the dark spaces between the trees of the opening shot, Inge's bland exterior conceals a lethal threat. She therefore represents the object which remains worryingly extant for the spectator.

#### Accident (1966)<sup>35</sup>

The repetition within the circular structure of the screenplays, which was present in *The Servant*, hinted in *The Pumpkin Eater* and made explicit in *Quiller*, is emphasised in Pinter's next screenplay for Losey, which David Cate sees as achieving 'structural perfection'.<sup>36</sup> Set in Oxford, the screenplay opens with a car accident which involves two of Stephen Jervis's students, William and Anna.<sup>37</sup> In the accident William is killed.

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<sup>32</sup> Shot 103 of the 92 page draft (G&H 48/2c) and shots 108-112 of the final draft (G&H 48/1) appear to show figures appearing before he walks past the phone box. However, the final printed text follows Pinter's written instructions above: '*He walks straight past [...] and up the road. As he passes it a MAN, K, emerges from the shadow.*' (Pinter, *The Quiller Memorandum*, p. 202).

(In the film, a man stands in front of the phone box and stops him from entering).

<sup>33</sup> Speech by Hughes, shot 135 (G&H 48/2a).

<sup>34</sup> Pinter's draft (G&H 48/2c) follows Hall with Inga but the final draft (G&H 48/1) and printed text give 'Inge'.

<sup>35</sup> Based on Nicholas Mosley's novel, *Accident*, 1965, rev. edn (London: Minerva, 1993). The film is directed by Joseph Losey.

References to the printed text are to Harold Pinter, *Accident in The Servant and Other Screenplays*.

References to manuscript papers are to Box 1 of the Archive.

<sup>36</sup> Cate, p. 183.

<sup>37</sup> Anna is 'German' (shot 28, 'Late afternoon'), draft notebook labelled 'Accident 7/6'

The screenplay ends with its echo as though the impact will continue to reverberate throughout the lives of those involved. In the course of the narrative Stephen achieves the object of his desire, Anna, but only when she is in shock following William's death. In the process, Stephen faces not only the loss of William as friend and student, but the loss of himself as an honourable man. Once again, the object of desire has come too close and overwhelms the central character.

In this film also, the narrator is eliminated, yet, as Tom Milne points out, everything is filtered through Stephen's point of view.<sup>38</sup> In the novel Stephen speaks of 'an emptiness [...] a sort of gap between us and the world',<sup>39</sup> and Pinter has put this into effect in Stephen's scene with his old flame, Francesca, where dialogue is separated from speaker and action. Pinter's directions state that '*The words are fragments of realistic conversation [...] not thoughts [...] distributed over the sequence so as to act as a disembodied comment on the action.*'<sup>40</sup> The gap which the Stephen of the novel acknowledges between himself and the world becomes, in the screenplay, an overwhelming fullness. When we cut back to the past, now lost, now idyllic, containing the events leading up to the accident, we understand that Stephen's desire for Anna must also include a wish to eliminate William. And he gets just what he wants, although the spectator is left to fill in the gap between Anna and Stephen standing by a bed at night, and the next shot of them about to leave the house in the morning.<sup>41</sup> For the spectator, the desire to arrive at the moment of the crash for a second look forms the drive which runs throughout the screenplay.

Klein notes a point of irony in Pinter's structuring of the screenplay where he has introduced an intercutting of two scenes to produce an evident resonance between Stephen's visit to Charley's wife, and Stephen's visit to his own wife to whom he reveals Charley's affair with Anna. Klein points out that Stephen finds himself having to explain

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(G&H 1/1); 'Austrian' in the published screenplay, Pinter, *Accident*, p. 229.

<sup>38</sup> 'In a way, of course, being Stephen's recollection, the whole film (with the exception, naturally, of the accident and last scenes) is his fabrication, with Charley being beastly, Anna provocative, Rosalind patient, and William callow.' Milne notes 'the disparity between the dignified, hesitant Stephen of the flashbacks, and the man who virtually rapes Anna after the accident' (Tom Milne on *Accident*, 'Two Films', *Sight and Sound*, 35.2 (1967), 56-59 (p. 59) ).

<sup>39</sup> Mosley, p. 34.

<sup>40</sup> Pinter, *Accident*, p. 256.

<sup>41</sup> Pinter, *Accident*, p. 277.

and excuse Charley to both women, while hiding 'his own complicity in the affair and his envy of it.'<sup>42</sup> An early draft offers an aspect of irony which involves the spectator in Stephen's guilt through the resonance of William's death, and the fragile chance of life of his own son. As in the novel, Stephen's visit to William's father, Lord Codrington, is followed by his interview with the college Provost. Lord Codrington says how much William valued Stephen's friendship, concluding with 'It was kind of you to come.' We then cut to Stephen's interview with the Provost, who sees no cause for Stephen to resign. He asks after Stephen's fragile premature baby, and is told, 'No change. We don't know.' The 'Provost walks towards decanter, takes out handkerchief, wipes his nose, sniffs. He clears his throat and begins to pour sherry. END.'<sup>43</sup> In the novel, the child improves, '*will be all right*',<sup>44</sup> but in Pinter's screenplay, we only know that 'He isn't dead'<sup>45</sup> and the doubt is left to resonate with the death of William. Although Stephen had no hand in William's death, would not consciously wish him dead, he wanted him eliminated because he wanted Anna - that was the real of his desire, and to a certain extent the spectator is led to share both that desire and that guilt.

In the printed screenplay the final scene leaves us with the reverberation of the accident which opened the work, echoed fleetingly by the small girl falling in front of the house. In the closing shot we hear (without seeing) '*Sound of the car skidding. A sudden screech, grind, smash and splintering*' followed by '*Silence./Sound of ignition, ticking*'.<sup>46</sup> The fatal accident (most real because unseen) provides a pivotal point which traps the spectator's desire to return. When we do, we find that the object we desired to see, like the death's head in Holbein's painting, has come full circle and too close.

Working on *Accident*, Pinter eliminated 'all unnecessary words and actions'<sup>47</sup> allowing the real action to take place in personal, interior landscapes. It is after *Accident* that Pinter's stage work underwent a major change. His following plays, *Landscape* (1967) and *Silence* (1968), also take place within interior landscapes, recalling moments now lost, and therefore desired. In *Night* and *Old Times*, Pinter draws attention to the way

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<sup>42</sup> Klein, p. 68.

<sup>43</sup> These shots (352-356 'END') are contained in loose foolscap pages numbered 34-37, possibly part of (G&H 1/5) but otherwise difficult to match with their listing.

<sup>44</sup> Mosley, p. 190.

<sup>45</sup> Pinter, *Accident*, p. 280.

<sup>46</sup> Pinter, *Accident*, p. 284.

<sup>47</sup> Pinter speaking to John Russell Taylor on *Accident*, p. 184.

that desire covers over the loss, shapes it with an object of the character's (and spectator's) own. These plays are the beginning of a larger movement which ends with *Victoria Station* (1982), although within that period there is a further change of focus, which calls attention to the lack itself. What is important here is that Pinter's work on *Accident*, *Landscape* and *Silence* appears to intensify elements already present in his earlier work for stage and screen but clarified here in intense moments of loss and desire. Pinter's next screenplay, *The Go-Between*, juxtaposes time past and time present to intensify such moments for the spectator.

*The Go-Between* (1969)<sup>48</sup>

In this screenplay, Pinter and Losey's next collaboration after *Accident*, another object of desire comes too close. What the young Leo wants to see is revealed and he becomes an unwilling party to the primal scene, a scene in which, as Lois Gordon points out, death is part. The object of desire blots out everything else, overwhelming Leo so that his emotional life thereafter becomes a death-in-life.<sup>49</sup>

Intercut into the central narrative of the young Leo Colston's Edwardian summer (where idyll turns to tragedy) are shots of the elderly Colston, returning to the scene of his lost youth. Houston and Kinder suggest that the elderly figure might also be a projection forward from the 'present' of the Edwardian summer to the bleak emotional landscape of Leo's future. Billington also appears to take this view, since he refers to 'Pinter's flash-forward sequences.'<sup>50</sup> In effect, Pinter's structure situates the emotional reality for Leo outside of chronological time. Pinter says that he had at first 'concentrated on a

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<sup>48</sup> Based on L. P. Hartley's novel *The Go-Between*, 1953 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1958). The film is directed by Joseph Losey.

References to the printed text are to Harold Pinter's screenplay, *The Go-Between* in *The Servant and Other Screenplays*.

References to manuscript papers are to Box 21 of the Archive.

<sup>49</sup> Lois Gordon refers to his present 'life-in-death' adding that 'Pinter retains, in the film, the spirit of Colston's poignant admission [...] "Ted hadn't told me what it [spooning] was, but he had shown me, he had paid with his life for showing me, and after that I never felt like it"' (Lois Gordon, quoting from the novel in '*The Go-Between: Hartley by Pinter*', *Kansas Quarterly*, 4 (1972) 81-92 (p. 85)).

For Lacan, the death drive is 'the inertia of *jouissance* which makes a person's love of his or her symptoms greater than any desire to change them.' (Ellie Ragland, 'Lacan's Concept of the Death Drive' in *Essays on the Pleasures of Death: From Freud to Lacan* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 85).

<sup>50</sup> Beverle Houston and Marsha Kinder, 'The Losey-Pinter Collaboration', *Film Quarterly*, 32.1 (1978), 17-30, (p. 23).

Billington, p. 207.

straight dramatisation of the central story about the young boy and the lovers' but a gap of five years allowed him to rethink the structure and produce a new concept where time was annihilated: 'Now what I find most exciting about the subject is the role of time: the annihilation of time by the man's return to the scene of his childhood experience.'<sup>51</sup>

Pinter's undated manuscript notes indicate the way the structure is to be fragmented, for example :

(B) 'Split Epilogue into front and back'

past  
present

(C) 'Injection of present into boy's story - narration - voice - over solitary boy scenes',

(D) 'arrest proc. to outhouse - hit on old lady & man - back to final image.'<sup>52</sup>

It is this fragmentation which offers all time as eternally present. In the opening shot Pinter gives 'A pony carriage [...] glimpsed only fragmentarily through the leaves [...] *Silence*', over which we have the voice of the elderly Colston, and that famous opening phrase of Hartley's 'The past is a foreign country. They do things differently there.' That elderly voice recurs throughout the screenplay, over Marion and Leo in a trap on a country road 'You flew too near the sun and you were scorched.'<sup>53</sup> Or we hear the young Leo, '[I]t wasn't a killing curse, you see. There are curses and curses,' as his elderly self walks down the rainswept village street.<sup>54</sup>

In the fragmentary glimpse through leaves which opens the screenplay the spectator is led into a lost domain. In these camera instructions we have a visual metaphor for the object, half seen, glimpsed between words and visuals in its passage along the signifying chain of the screenplay. But as the screenplay ends, that return to the lost object finds the enchantment dissipated, the object of desire ordinary, vulgar. Marion's

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<sup>51</sup> Pinter quoted by John Russell Taylor, 'The Go-Between,' *Sight and Sound*, 39.3 (1970), 202-203, (p. 203).

<sup>52</sup> These handwritten notes on three yellow pages (G&H 21/5) materialise in the structure of the printed text but are reduced in the film, as for example the intercutting of the elderly man and woman (Colston and Marian). Note (D) does not appear on screen (see p.364 of printed text).

<sup>53</sup> Pinter, *The Go-Between*, p. 295.  
'You flew too near to the sun' (Hartley, p. 20).

<sup>54</sup> Pinter, *The Go-Between*, p. 297.

fantasy is exposed as she reveals herself blind to the devastation she has caused. Colston understands his emotional life has been destroyed for this. The metaphor is the hall, treeless '*The elms have been cut down*', and the view obscured by a cloud of dust.<sup>55</sup> For Colston, it was the object which came too close. For the spectator, Pinter creates through that return to the treeless hall just such an object, all enchantment gone.

Both Richard Roud<sup>56</sup> and Michael Billington see *The Go-Between* as leading directly to Losey and Pinter's collaboration on *The Proust Screenplay*. Billington notes that Pinter's work on *The Go-Between* 'which experiments with the structural possibilities of story-telling leads almost inevitably to *The Proust Screenplay* [...] about the power of involuntary memory and the notion of time past as something always within us.'<sup>57</sup> With *The Go-Between*, Pinter's focus is confirmed as the 'annihilation of time' and the privileging of desire.

*Langrishe, Go Down* (1970)<sup>58</sup>

There are echoes here of *The Go-Between* as the present bleak and wintry world is intercut with a lost golden summer. Aidan Higgins's novel deals with three lonely, impoverished and genteel Irish sisters. The story centres on the youngest sister, Imogen, living out the loss of her German lover, Otto Beck, who has used her, and left. The novel is in three distinct time-sectors: it jumps back from the wintry present of 1937 to the summer affair with Otto in 1932, before coming forward to 1938, the elder sister's funeral, and a bleak and lonely future for the surviving sisters.

One of the ways Pinter creates a gap within the overall structure of the screenplays is in the separation of voice and visual, one which the spectator attempts to close. This gap, which begins with the 'spoken silence' of the man in the bar in *The Servant*, is most

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<sup>55</sup> Pinter, *The Go-Between*, p. 367.

<sup>56</sup> Roud notes the 'heightened contradiction between apparent surface and true subject' and the way 'sensual details are so physically realised, you end up hearing the unsaid, seeing the unseen. If only they could tackle Proust now' (Richard Roud, 'Going Between', *Sight and Sound*, 40.3 (1971), 158-9 (p. 159) ).

<sup>57</sup> Billington, p. 205.

<sup>58</sup> Based on Aidan Higgins's novel *Langrishe, Go Down*, 1966 (London: Paladin-Collins, 1987). The film is directed by David Jones.

References to the printed screenplay are to Harold Pinter, *Langrishe, Go Down*, in *The French Lieutenant's Woman and Other Screenplays* (London: Methuen, 1982).

References to manuscript papers are to Box 29 of the Archive. (There is no listing by Gale and Hudgins for this screenplay.)

evident in *Accident*, *The Go-Between*, and here in *Langrishe, Go Down*. We see 'Lily behind windowpane' and hear Imogen speaking to Otto,<sup>59</sup> or see Helen alone in her room and hear Imogen's voice 'I love you. I love you',<sup>60</sup> so that we read a lack. Later still, as the affair between Imogen and Otto cools, the bickering between them is cut into Helen's birthday dinner where the three sisters together reminisce about happier times. 'They all continue to eat, and talk, spasmodically, but the sound ceases.'<sup>61</sup> Over this Pinter has placed Imogen and Otto's quarrelling voices. The effect is to heighten the bond between the sisters, but it is a bond of loneliness, to which Imogen, as the affair with Otto ends, will shortly return. For the spectator it is a space to inhabit, where what is most real emerges in the gap between image and word.

And Pinter establishes the timelessness of what is most real. He refers to the scene in the Dublin kitchen where time is 'dislocated' and characters 'suspended in time', describing it as '*constructed in order to indicate a passage of time passing and, with it, the effect of drink on the characters [...] characters will appear suspended in time [...] Time, although dislocated, has progressed by the end of the sequence.*'<sup>62</sup>

That dislocation operates throughout the screenplay. Although early drafts open with the wintry present, final drafts and the printed text open with the fullness of summer, before cutting quickly to winter and the loss of the idyll.<sup>63</sup> As in *The Go-Between*, Pinter's opening shot hints both visually and aurally at a hidden and lost domain, through the visual metaphor of the partly glimpsed object, combined with the silence that attends moments of acute emotion. The opening shot of the printed screenplay gives '*The CAMERA looks through trees [...] Silence.*' This is immediately followed by winter present, shot 2, before returning, shots 3-6, to summers past, and back to winter, now established as the bleak present. With one more flash of summer, shot 27, it is not until shot 61 that we return to the central story of the summer affair between Imogen and

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<sup>59</sup> Pinter, *Langrishe*, shot 256.

<sup>60</sup> Pinter, *Langrishe*, shot 280.

<sup>61</sup> Pinter, *Langrishe*, shot 299.

<sup>62</sup> Pinter, *Langrishe*, shot 169.

<sup>63</sup> Drafts which open with winter present: Undated white A4 typescript ; Draft of 24 handwritten yellow pages.

Later drafts open with a brief glimpse of summer, which is then lost as the wintry present is revealed: BBC 2 Script ('to be filmed on location weeks 23-27 1978') ; First Draft, 25 January 1970 ; First Second draft (as first with handwritten alterations).

Otto. As the screenplay ends, a happier past briefly returns. Not the near-past with the discredited Otto, but glimpses of the golden summers of the sisters' childhood. As in *The Go-Between*, the seasonal changes owe more to emotional change than to chronological time. The screenplay ends, as it began, with the bleak present and a sense of loss: the death of Helen, the lost Otto and the eternally lost summer.

#### SUMMARY OF SCREENPLAYS PRE-*PROUST*

This brief review of archive material and final printed screenplays up to *The Proust Screenplay* shows that, from the first, Pinter has created a circular pattern. As each screenplay opens, Pinter installs an object of desire - or anxiety - which we follow along the signifying chain of shots, and which returns as the screenplay closes. Within that circular structure, there is an increasing tendency to fragmentation, both of time, and narrative.

The chronological progression of *The Servant* reinforces that apparently inevitable slide from mastery into servitude experienced by the central character, Tony. It is with *The Pumpkin Eater* that Pinter begins the process of fragmentation, opening in the present, then jumping back to a chronological progression of the past, into which are intercut two brief scenes of the present. Arriving at the present, the narrative continues. In *Quiller*, an action thriller, sequential time operates throughout. In *Accident* the screenplay opens in the present, before backtracking to the summer and the events which lead up to the accident, then past it, ending the film with the repetition of that traumatic moment. In *The Go-Between* Pinter intensifies the fragmentation of time, intercutting views of the bleak and rainy present into the lost domain of the Edwardian summer. Neither do those intercuts appear in chronological order; they are also fragmented, and so must be pieced together by the spectator. *Langrishe, Go Down* opens with a loss of plenitude as the happiness of summers past gives way to the bleakness of winter present, before filling in the central story of summer love and loss, and closing with glimpses of the lost domain of childhood summers, to end with winter present. There is therefore a general increase in the complication and manipulation of time to the point where chronological time is 'annihilated,' and time itself becomes a metaphor for lost emotional states. By the juxtaposition of one timescale with another a sense of a lost object emerges which is further increased through Pinter's fragmentation within the narrative.

Within the narrative of each screenplay, fragmentation intensifies the properties of montage, already present in the juxtaposition of shot and shot. In *The Servant*, Pinter creates the gap which the spectator closes, in the speech of the Irish man in the bar, a spoken silence in which the spectator reads the underlying desire of the central characters. In *The Pumpkin Eater*, the estranged silence in which we first encounter Jo, and which is cut into the narrative of the past, is at odds with the tumult of Jo's family life, so that we read the gap between Jo and the rest of the world. In *Quiller* the juxtapositions are those of place, and Pinter cuts between Berlin and London (twice) so that the spectator is led to read the political ironies of the situation. In *Accident* a gap emerges in the split between image and dialogue, in the conversation between Stephen and Francesca in the restaurant, and in the cross-cutting of Stephen's visit to his wife, and Charley's wife (the latter visit yet to take place). This gap is intensified in *The Go-Between*, where a voice from the past speaks across images of the present, or the present voice speaks across images of the past. In *Langrishe, Go Down*, separations of voice and image also create a gap which the spectator is led to cover.

Through such fragmentations within a circular structure, the spectator is engaged with an acute, invisible object. Pinter's next screenplay intensifies that process. From here onwards, time has become fragmented to the extent that divisions of past, present, and future are 'obliterated.' What emerge are the vivid fragmented images of the unconscious and of dream as Pinter creates, through an intensification of the properties of cinematic form, an object of desire (or anxiety) for the spectator.

#### *The Proust Screenplay* (1972)<sup>64</sup>

Proust's great work *A la recherche du temps perdu* is a journey into time lost yet restored in intense moments of involuntary memory. Pinter's manuscript notes in preparation for the screenplay refer to time as 'obliterated', and with time obliterated we are in the realm of the unconscious and of dream:

Only way to approach this film is as a dream [...]  
If dream nevertheless a dream which is finally shaped.

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<sup>64</sup> Based on Marcel Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past (A la recherche du temps perdu)*, 1913-1927, trans. by C. K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin, 3 vols. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983). No film has been made of this screenplay.

References to the printed screenplay, written in collaboration with Joseph Losey and Barbara Bray, are to Harold Pinter, *The Proust Screenplay: À la Recherche du Temps Perdu* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1978).

References to manuscript papers are to Boxes 45, 46, 47 of the Archive. (There is no listing by Gale and Hudgins for this screenplay.)

The characters are trapped in time but <sup>above all</sup> [there exists\*]  
<sup>a</sup> perception ~~also~~ into where & how time can be and is obliterated.

\* [handwritten in the margin for insertion here]  
 [ ~~at th~~ crossed through under 'above all'] <sup>65</sup>

Pinter's statement on time echoes a line from Beckett's essay '*Proust*': 'Time is not recovered, it is obliterated.'<sup>66</sup> Among the manuscript notes on the screenplay is one which reads simply 'Proust - Beckett - to Joe.'<sup>67</sup> From this (together with Pinter's acknowledgement of Beckett's influence on his work) it seems more than likely that Pinter has read Beckett's essay on Proust.

Both Beckett's and Pinter's statements on the obliteration of time approach a description of the Lacanian Real, as that essential and acute object beyond representation. Beckett describes the experience of reduplication in Proust, an experience which:

is at once imaginative and empirical, at once an evocation and a direct perception, real without being merely actual, ideal without being merely abstract, the ideal real, the essential, the extra-temporal.<sup>68</sup>

In his published introduction to the screenplay, Pinter states that 'The subject was Time', but time itself becomes that acutely experienced lost object as the 'long forgotten' bell of Marcel's childhood 'is suddenly present within him [...] more real, more acute than the experience itself.'<sup>69</sup> It is that acute experience which parallels Proust's involuntary memory and one which Pinter duplicates for the spectator.

In his essay on *Proust*, Beckett describes the difference between voluntary and involuntary memory, explaining how 'Voluntary memory (Proust repeats it ad nauseum) is of no value as an instrument of evocation, and provides an image as *far removed from the real* as the myth of our imagination.' (My italics). Beckett concludes that 'There is only one real impression and one adequate mode of evocation. Over neither

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<sup>65</sup> Box 45. Handwritten notes on 8 yellow clipped pages, starting: '1st thoughts on Proust.'

<sup>66</sup> Samuel Beckett, *Proust*, 1931 (London: John Calder, 1965), p. 75.

<sup>67</sup> Presumably the 'Joe' referred to is Losey. Note on one of five pale yellow handwritten pages, part of a larger group of forty-two handwritten pages starting 'Combray pursues him' (Box 45).

<sup>68</sup> Beckett, *Proust*, p. 75.

<sup>69</sup> Pinter, *The Proust Screenplay*, p. viii.

have we the least control.' <sup>70</sup> Pinter's acute moment, like Proust's 'involuntary memory,' is what is most real for the subject and it belongs to the unconscious. And, as Freud states, the unconscious is 'timeless.' <sup>71</sup>

The screenplay opens with thirty-four shots which preview what we are to see in the narrative that follows (the first eight of which are quoted in chapter one, above). Images dart between years and jump decades in a seemingly chaotic pattern which echoes the image representation of dreams. With no suggestion of narrative, no musical score to colour what is seen, no dialogue, no screen persona to inhabit the space instead of us, these inchoate images are given to the spectator to make her own. Notes in the archive state that 'One hypothesis might be to start with the images, taking their time, staring at us, still.' <sup>72</sup> (It is not clear whether these typed notes are Pinter's own or those of Losey or Bray.) When these images return later in the screenplay, the shock of recognition provides those equivalent moments of Proust's involuntary memory.

The repetition of images creates not only an awareness of a gap between one image and another, but the creation of something extra, as in the following sequence which works through association and juxtaposition:

25. *MARCEL, in his twenties, in his hotel room at Balbec, bending over his boots, grief-stricken.*
26. *Three church steeples, seen from a moving carriage, at sunset. They seem to be dancing together in the last rays of the sun.*
27. *Three trees, seen from a moving carriage, at noon. Although the carriage is moving away from them, the trees give the impression of following it.*
28. *MARCEL bending over his boots.*
29. *The trees.*
30. *The steeples.*

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<sup>70</sup> Beckett, *Proust*, pp. 14-15.

<sup>71</sup> '[U]nconscious mental processes are in themselves "timeless". This means in the first place that they are not ordered temporally, that time does not change them in any way and that the idea of time cannot be applied to them' (Sigmund Freud, 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle', 1920, in *On Metapsychology*, trans. under the editorship of James Strachey, The Penguin Freud Library 11, (Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1984, repr. Penguin, 1991), pp. 269-338 ( p. 299) ).

<sup>72</sup> Box 45. Page A of two pages of typed notes on white A4 (marked A and B) dated 7.3.1972 and headed 'Recap of our phone conversation last week about opening sequences.'

In the interaction of these images, something is created which has no specular image, and yet is most real.<sup>73</sup> The shots of movement and excitement 26, 27, are in direct contrast to the enclosing shots 25 and 28 and (within the wider span of this opening sequence) to the silent, still railway carriage of shots 2 and 19 and to shot 23, where Marcel 'in his room at a sanatorium, [sits] motionless as an owl.' As already noted in chapter one, Pinter's introduction speaks of the 'contrasting principles' on which the work is based, the movement of one 'towards disillusion' and the other 'towards revelation.'<sup>74</sup> It is a movement which echoes the twin attributes of the Lacanian Real, which drive the subject forward towards inexpressible enjoyment (*jouissance*), or beyond *jouissance*, to death.<sup>75</sup>

As within the screenplay as a whole, in the juxtaposition of sequence and sequence, shot and shot, and those contrasting movements towards disillusion and revelation which Pinter describes, something emerges which is invisible but most real. It is this invisible object of which Proust speaks. Catherine Millot quotes Proust on the truth in art, where 'The writer will accomplish with his words what involuntary memory does spontaneously: his task consists in extracting the common essence of two sensations by "reuniting them to each other, liberated from the contingencies of time, within a metaphor".'<sup>76</sup> Pinter escapes from metaphor, but in the clash of words and images creates an invisible object from which the spectator is suspended in a vacillating relationship between anxiety and desire.

Pinter juxtaposes the first four images of the screenplay with a blank screen. Only at shot 22 does the camera pull back 'to discover that the yellow screen is actually a patch of yellow wall in a painting. The painting is Vermeer's *View of Delft*.'<sup>77</sup> In a browned

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<sup>73</sup> Proust also links steeples and trees to achieve a sense of excitement, of *jouissance* (Proust, Vol. 1, pp 770-71) .

<sup>74</sup> Pinter, Introduction, *The Proust Screenplay*, p. vii.

<sup>75</sup> Freud speaks of two instinctual drives, one sexual, towards life, the other beyond sexuality, towards death (Freud, 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle', p. 318).

Lacan's 'Beyond the Reality Principle' (1936) 'elaborate[d] a more complete and complex theory of the subject' throughout his later work (Bice Benvenuto and Roger Kennedy, *The Works of Jacques Lacan: An Introduction* (London: Free Association Books, 1986), pp. 63-74 (p. 74) ).

<sup>76</sup> Millot quoting from Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*, trans. by C. K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin (New York: Random House, 1981) Vol. 3 (page number not stated). Millot says that she has 'modified translations when necessary' (Catherine Millot, 'The Real Presence', trans. by James B. Swenson, Jr., *October*, 58 (1991), 109-137, (p.132) ).

<sup>77</sup> Pinter, *The Proust Screenplay*, pp. 4-5.

photocopy of the First Draft of this screenplay, dated 'May 11.72' (Box 47), the screen is originally white. 'White' has subsequently been crossed through, by hand, and 'yellow' written above references to the screen. Pinter's original intention appears to interpose the blank whiteness of the cinema screen, awaiting the play of images, or the blank white canvas awaiting the brush of the artist. But there were difficulties. Losey's Notes of 3 July 1972, note 3,<sup>78</sup> state that he has 'already expressed' his 'technical worries about getting a pure white screen, because of dirt, scratches and vibrations from the projector.' He adds that they 'may have to think in terms of a single or pastel colours.' This is the case, since the final screen is that patch of yellow, linked to Proust's favourite painting.

This emphasis on the screen reinforces the Lacanian view that it is what lies beyond representation which is most real, and which initiates the spectator's desire. As Copjec explains, 'beyond everything that is displayed to the subject, the question is asked, "What is being concealed from me?" [...] This point at which something appears to be *invisible*, this point at which something appears to be missing from representation, some meaning left unrevealed, is the point of the Lacanian gaze.' This gaze which is 'the object-cause of desire, is the object-cause of the subject of desire in the field of the visible.'<sup>79</sup>

As the screenplay ends Marcel's boyhood comes flooding back to him as he meets the young Gilberte. '*Suddenly all the sounds in the room die*', and the sound of the garden gate bell, which led into the central narrative as the screenplay opened, leads into the closing images of the screenplay, to end with the yellow screen and Marcel's voice over, 'It was time to begin.'<sup>80</sup> For Marcel, and for the spectator, that endless circulation of desire continues. Millot quotes Proust on the role of the artist, that 'We would like to have him give us answers, when all he can do is give us desires.'<sup>81</sup> And she concludes that 'The desire he awakens thus does not exempt us from the task of deciphering it in our turn, but helps us to read our own desire, which echoes it.' Millot states that 'All of

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<sup>78</sup> Box 45. First of six typed foolscap pages.

<sup>79</sup> Joan Copjec, 'The Orthopsychic Subject: Film Theory and the Reception of Lacan' in *Read My Desire: Lacan against the Historicists*, (London: MIT Press, 1994), pp. 15-38 (pp. 34-35).

<sup>80</sup> Pinter, *The Proust Screenplay*, pp. 165-166.

<sup>81</sup> Marcel Proust, *On Reading Ruskin*, ed. and trans. by Jean Autret and others, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), p. 114, quoted by Millot, p. 136.

the *Remembrance* is [...] constructed upon the impossibility of an encounter of desires,<sup>82</sup> and it is this which Pinter duplicates for the spectator, a hidden, irretrievable object of desire.

We have no direct evidence of Pinter reading Freud, but there is a link between Pinter and Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams*, through the Surrealists, since it was this work on which the Surrealists based their attempts to bring the dream world into everyday life. Furthermore, Losey was familiar with this work, since he once gave a copy to a lover.<sup>83</sup> In Pinter's early screenplays, and particularly the collaborations with Losey, we can see a definite and progressive fragmentation of structure which duplicates the intense, fragmented images of the unconscious and of dream, and which, from *The Proust Screenplay* onwards, emerges as a focus on desire through vision.

#### THE SCREENPLAYS POST-PROUST

Pinter's stage and screenplays after *Proust* saw a renewed emphasis on loss and the lack which exists beyond all representation, as in *Monologue* (1972), which draws attention to the missing figure in the empty chair, *No Man's Land* (1974), *Betrayal* (1978) and *Other Places* (1980-1982).<sup>84</sup> It is that sense that all representation is suspect which dominates Pinter's following screenplays and is particularly evident in *The Last Tycoon*.

#### *The Last Tycoon* (1974)<sup>85</sup>

In *The Last Tycoon* Pinter develops the notion of the screen established in *Proust*. Based on F. Scott Fitzgerald's unfinished novel about the movie producer Monroe Stahr, Pinter's aim was twofold: 'I've [...] tried to show that the boundary between film & reality

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<sup>82</sup> Millot, pp. 136, 109.

<sup>83</sup> Caute, p. 150.

<sup>84</sup> *Other Places: Family Voices* written (1980), *A Kind of Alaska* (1982), *Victoria Station* (1982), later replaced by *One for the Road* (1984).

<sup>85</sup> Based on F. Scott Fitzgerald's unfinished novel *The Last Tycoon*, 1941 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1960). The film is directed by Elia Kazan.

References to the printed screenplay are to Harold Pinter, *The Last Tycoon* in *The French Lieutenant's Woman and Other Screenplays*.

References to manuscript papers are to Boxes 30, 31, 32 of the Archive.

is not a hard and fast one. I've also tried to show that we're also making a film.'<sup>86</sup> Elsewhere in notes headed Music, Statements and Exchanges, Pinter's insights clarify not only his approach to this film, but his approach to film in general. 'The whole thing to do with dream and reality.' At the centre of the dream factory, Monroe Stahr fabricates his dream world, finding in the screen images of his dead wife a truly elusive object of desire. When Kathleen appears, the re-embodiment of his wife, she takes on the role of object. As Pinter says in his notes, 'He wants her desperately but he'll never get her.'<sup>87</sup> She is, therefore, the perfect living equivalent of that lost object.

As the screenplay opens, Pinter establishes both loss and desire; both the empty place and the object with which Stahr covers over his loss. For example, undated handwritten notes give a shot of:

Flowers dropping into grave.

(K's v o - I just wanted to see you once more)<sup>88</sup>

Early drafts (up to 1 July 1974) place the opening shot in the skeleton of Stahr's Malibu beach house - a visual metaphor for his empty, incomplete emotional existence.<sup>89</sup> The opening sequences of these early drafts intercut Minna and Kathleen. For example in the draft of 1 July we see Minna combing her hair and hear Kathleen's voice over, 'I do hope we'll meet again', while over a shot of Minna's empty bedroom we hear *her* voice 'You'll come back tomorrow?', followed by Minna arranging flowers and Kathleen's voice, 'I just wanted to see you once more'.<sup>90</sup> As in the complex figures in dream, the two women merge.

However, a later draft of 11 November 1974, together with the printed text of the screenplay, opens with a shoot-out in a restaurant which turns out to be a film within the film as we discover that these are rushes that Stahr is watching.<sup>91</sup> This opening

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<sup>86</sup> Box 32, handwritten notes on yellow foolscap in blue-green folder (possibly G&H 32/3d).

<sup>87</sup> Notes/ Music, Statements and Exchanges (G&H 32/1a), pp. 7, 8.

<sup>88</sup> Box 32, handwritten notes on yellow foolscap in blue-green folder (possibly G&H 32/3d).

<sup>89</sup> 1. 'HP First Draft' 91 page typescript with handwritten alterations (G&H 31/1).  
2. Draft dated 5 March 1974 (G&H 31/2 also found in Box 20 : G&H 30/1).  
3. Draft dated 31 May 1974 (G&H 31/3).  
4. Draft dated 1 July 1974 (G&H 31/4).

<sup>90</sup> Draft of 1 July 1974 (G&H 31/4) shots, 4, 5, 6.

<sup>91</sup> Foolscap carbon copy draft of 11 November 1974 (G&H 32/2), and Pinter, *The Last Tycoon*, p. 193.

changes the focus from personal loss to the idea that all representation is suspect. We are presented with the patently 'unreal' film within the film, and the apparent diegetic 'reality' of the film in which it is presented, and are led to question what is truly real. As Pinter explains, 'Kathleen is real, but because real, elusive. (Reality being elusive whether it's actual or fabricated!) But the fabricated reality of films is a much easier one to master and control; actual facts are clearly far more slippery.'<sup>92</sup> To these suspect realities on screen we must add the physical world from which we view, for what is truly real is that which exists beyond all representation, the real of desire. And that is the object which we are following here.

Scott Fitzgerald's novel contains the story that Stahr creates for the writer Boxley, to show him what it means to be 'making pictures'. It is based on the everyday world that Boxley recognises - his own office, and 'a pretty stenographer' who comes into the room without seeing him, while Boxley watches:

She takes off her gloves, opens her purse and dumps it out on a table  
[...] She has two dimes and a nickel - and a cardboard match box. She  
leaves the nickel on the desk, puts the two dimes back into her purse  
and takes her black gloves to the stove, opens it and puts them  
inside.<sup>93</sup>

Pinter was so 'taken with the image in Stahr's story to Boxley of the typist with the nickel' that he wanted to 'consider starting the film with this totally unexplained sequence.'<sup>94</sup> In fact none of the drafts appear to start with this scene, but contain the scene in the body of the script, and use it at the close.<sup>95</sup> In each draft, and the final printed screenplay, Stahr first tells his story to Boxley. However, a change occurs in the second telling of the story at the close of the screenplay. While the undated draft (G&H 31/1) and the draft of 5 March (G&H 31/2) give Stahr's story intercut with repeats of other voices, other moments from Stahr's world (Brady, Popolos, the Redhead, etc), drafts from 31 May onwards, and the final printed text, show that as Stahr begins to tell his story we then see Kathleen apparently enacting the story. However, there is one more

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<sup>92</sup> Grey-green folder containing typed Notes of 1 January 1974, marked 'Harold Pinter' bottom right hand corner, p. 7 (G&H 32/1), covering 'Music, Statements and Exchanges' (G&H 32/1a).

<sup>93</sup> Scott Fitzgerald, p. 40.

<sup>94</sup> Notes of 1 January 1974 (G&H 32/1), p. 8.

<sup>95</sup> Drafts in Box 31: Undated (G&H 31/1); 5 March (G&H 31/2); 31 May 1974 (G&H 31/3); 1 July 1974 (G&H 31/4). Box 32: 11 November (G&H 32/2).

fascinating twist to the tale, the fact that while Stahr recounts the earlier story of the girl burning her gloves, what we see is Kathleen burning a letter, presumably from Stahr. The object of his desire is hidden from Stahr as he tells a different story. The letter is lost, as Kathleen herself becomes a lost object.

As the screenplay ends, Stahr's words of loss echo over the final scene, speaking for himself, and for the spectator in relation to the object of desire. A draft of 1 July ends with Stahr speaking into the camera, 'I don't want to lose you', followed by shots of Minna happy, laughing, being filmed, before the film runs out.<sup>96</sup> In a brief, undated fragment, the film breaks,<sup>97</sup> and in another early draft of 5 March, Boxley's voice slowly runs down and grinds into silence.<sup>98</sup> All of these shots draw our attention to the fact that there is nothing there beyond the cinematic make-believe of voice and image. Drafts of 31 May (G&H 31/3) onwards show the empty studio, as in the draft of 11 November (G&H 32/2): 'The studio is deserted. Padlocks on doors. Roads overgrown'. Here the spectator is shut out from the cinematic dream, and it is that mechanically constructed dream which we now accept as artificial and unreal. However, in the published screenplay Pinter comes closer to a Lacanian reading. Pinter's directions show that Stahr '*walks into the blackness*' of a sound stage, over which his words echo '*I don't want to lose you.*'<sup>99</sup> Stahr is no longer able to cover over his loss with his Imaginary images, but comes face to face with that lack which exists beyond all representation. For the spectator left facing the blank screen, we become aware that Stahr too is a representation. He has shaped the spectator's parallel object of desire throughout the screenplay, and as he withdraws deeper into the frame his final words speak for us, in relation to our own object. Desire seeks not satisfaction but its own continuum, and for desire to operate loss must remain, as it does here. As the loss embedded in the opening shots returns, Stahr disappears, drawing the spectator into the blankness which elicits her own acute relationship with desire.

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<sup>96</sup> Draft of 1 July (G&H 31/4), shots 158-159.

<sup>97</sup> Handwritten note on small section of white paper (G&H 32/3d).

<sup>98</sup> Draft of March 5 (G&H 31/2) shot 145. Gale and Hudgins quote this ending on pp. 125-6.

<sup>99</sup> Pinter, *The Last Tycoon*, shot 162.

*The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1978-79)<sup>100</sup>

Here is another film about the making of pictures and the construction of desire through what lies beyond vision. In the novel, Fowles states, 'This story I am telling is all imagination. These characters I create never existed outside my own mind.'<sup>101</sup> In the interplay between the Victorian story of Charles's infatuation with Sarah Woodruff, her disappearance and his search for her, and the present day actors in that film-making scenario, Pinter and Reisz find not only an answer to Fowles's complex structure where the writer constantly comments on the action of the story he is writing, but also an answer to Fowles's great fear of the translation of his novel to screen. In his introduction to the screenplay Fowles states his concern that his 'readers' imaginations (a vitally *creative* part in the total experience of the book) will be pinned down and manacled by a set of specific images.'<sup>102</sup> But Pinter recreates just such an imaginary object in the resonance between images of the Victorian story and those of the present day.<sup>103</sup> Between the symbolic codes of the two narratives, what emerges is a real object of desire for the spectator.

In an early draft, Pinter places a scene between Charles and Sarah after they have made love. Charles asks Sarah why she lied to him about the Frenchman, and she replies 'I don't know. It was ... a dream', a reply that Pinter has omitted from the printed text of the screenplay.<sup>104</sup> The fact that Sarah's story (about the French Lieutenant) is a construct is irrelevant, because for Sarah that is what, for her, is truly real. For Lacan, 'it does not matter [...] if it has "really occurred" in so-called reality; the point is simply that

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<sup>100</sup> Based on the novel by John Fowles, *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, 1969 (London: Panther-Granada, 1970). The film is directed by Karel Reisz.

References to the screenplay are to Harold Pinter, *The French Lieutenant's Woman and Other Screenplays*.

References to manuscript papers are to Boxes 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 of the Archive.

<sup>101</sup> Fowles, *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, p. 85.

<sup>102</sup> John Fowles, Foreword, Harold Pinter *The Screenplay of The French Lieutenant's Woman* (London: Jonathan Cape/Eyre Methuen, 1981), pp. xiv.

<sup>103</sup> Leslie Garis states that 'the modern component was conceived by Reisz' (Leslie Garis, 'Translating Fowles into Film', *New York Times Magazine*, 30 August 1981, pp. 24, 48, 50, 52, 54, 69 (p. 24)).

Kenith L. Simmons notes that Reisz is the editor of 'the classic textbook, *The Technique of Film Editing*' in which he states that 'The tradition of expressive visual juxtaposition [...] has been largely neglected since the advent of sound' (Kenith L. Simmons, '*The French Lieutenant's Woman* as Metaphor: Karel Reisz's Non-Plot Centered Editing', *New Orleans Review*, 11.2 (1984), 17-21 (p. 17)).

<sup>104</sup> Handwritten draft on yellow pad dated 6 June, beginning, shot 169. The dots have been added above the line (G&H list among papers at 17/3c). The revised scene appears in the printed text of the screenplay at shot 173.

it produces a series of structural effects (displacements, repetitions, and so on.)'<sup>105</sup> What is real is the fact that trauma anchors the subject in a continual movement around this point. It is a point which has direct relevance for the spectator, for Pinter constructs within every screenplay, the trauma - whether loss or horror - around which the desire of the spectator circulates. The structure of the screenplay, with its interaction of Victorian and present day narratives, creates a constant circulation around a central loss, as point of desire. The repeated return to a central point is 'always connected to a lost object - it is an attempt to refind the lost object yet, in so doing, to miss it [...] It is not repetition that is important, but what is missed.'<sup>106</sup> The drive to return to the narrative of Sarah and Charles becomes, for the spectator, the equivalent of Sarah's desire for the lost Frenchman, against which the present narrative 'reality' pales into unreality.

As the screenplay opens, Sarah is presented as an already 'lost' object. We read 'Dawn. 1867', which is immediately displaced by '*A clapperboard*' on which is written the title of the film and 'SCENE 1. TAKE 3.' The actress then walks along the Cobb and into the central narrative of 1867. She is therefore presented through a veil of representation.

Klein notes that as the narratives progress, and 'Charles and Sarah converge, Mike and Anna begin to draw apart, due to Pinter's introduction of their external commitments.'<sup>107</sup> In this way, the circulatory movement of desire continues. Whereas in the film within the film, the Victorian heroine (that paradigmatic will o' the wisp glimpsed between trees),<sup>108</sup> is united with Charles; Anna, already achieved and taken, must be lost to Mike for desire to continue as the screenplay ends. This is Pinter's ending in the published screenplay, with desire extant. (Evidently Fowles suggested the ending whereby Mike calls from the window as Anna's car drives off, and instead of calling 'Anna!' he calls 'Sarah!')<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989), p. 162.

<sup>106</sup> Jacques-Alain Miller, 'Context and Concepts' in *Reading Seminar XI: Lacan's Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, ed. by Richard Feldstein, Bruce Fink, Maire Jaanus (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), pp. 3-15 (p. 14).

<sup>107</sup> Klein, p. 165.

<sup>108</sup> '*A figure glimpsed, moving through trees.*' Pinter, *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, shot 56, quoted in chapter one.

<sup>109</sup> Shoshana Knapp, 'The Transformation of a Pinter Screenplay: Freedom and Calculators in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*', *Modern Drama*, 28.1 (1985), 55-70 (p. 65).

Box 16 contains a third draft of 26 April (G&H 16/3), which ends at shot 219 with Mike calling 'Anna?' A white foolscap typescript (Box 18) has Mike calling 'Anna!' (with

Reisz has added a final scene under the credits, of Sarah and Charles on the sunlit lake. It is a repeat of shot 234 in the printed screenplay, after Charles and Sarah are reunited, but extends it with the camera following the boat onto the open lake in the sunshine. This appears to leave Mike in the world which is most real for him, the world of fantasy. (Reisz has cut an earlier shot giving Anna's statement that everyday life is 'unreal' in comparison to the film they are making.)<sup>110</sup> But Pinter's ending, with Mike calling into the darkness, makes that ending most real not only for Mike but for the spectator also. Fowles recalls a remark that Pinter made to him during the writing of the screenplay. 'He said "I'll do anything, but don't ask me to write a happy scene."' <sup>111</sup> Desire is always a sense of loss; to write 'a happy scene' is to dissipate the core of Pinter's creativity. With Mike calling into the darkness, the object of desire (veiled within the film making process as the screenplay opens) remains live.

Victory (1982) <sup>112</sup>

In Pinter's next screenplay, *Victory*, Pinter has installed, through the gaze, a palpable sense of threat, which will be discussed in detail in chapter five. Heyst and Lena attempt to escape from the eyes of the world, to hide themselves away in an island paradise. But the gaze of the world, in the guise of Jones, Ricardo and their servant, comes too close and obliterates them all. Pinter duplicates that sense of threat in the structure of the screenplay. Once again, a set of disparate images open the screenplay. However, unlike the revelatory moments produced in *The Proust Screenplay*, the images either return, but return differently, or do not return at all. The result is an unsettling fullness and the creation of an invisible object as threat.

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a line through it), and handwritten beneath it 'Sarah!' (Possibly (G&H 18/1) except that they count 28 typed loose pages, while my count gives 32).

<sup>110</sup> Pinter, *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, shot 165.

<sup>111</sup> Fowles quoted by Garis, p. 50.

<sup>112</sup> Based on Joseph Conrad's novel *Victory*, 1915, rev. edn with an Introduction by Tony Tanner, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986). The screenplay was written for Richard Lester to direct, but no film has been made.

References to the screenplay are to Harold Pinter, *Victory*, in *The Comfort of Strangers and Other Screenplays* (London: Faber and Faber, 1990).

References to manuscript papers are to Box 59 of the Archive.

After *Victory*, which poses questions of personal freedom, Pinter's stage work altered focus to concentrate on overtly political statements, concerns which have dominated his stage work and underlain the majority of his screenplays up to *Lolita* (1994).

*Turtle Diary* (1983-84)<sup>113</sup>

The screenplay of *Turtle Diary* returns to an object of desire (rather than threat), an object achieved as the screenplay ends. Russell Hoban's novel is composed of alternating extracts from the diaries of two lonely people, William G. and Neaera H., who come together to release captive turtles from the confines of their small tank in the zoo. The film opens with a shot of 'GIANT TURTLES SWIMMING IN THE SEA [...] towards a tropical beach' before the 'Camera pulls back to reveal that the film is on a video display in an aquarium. Camera pans to turtles in a tank. Soaring, dipping and curving.'<sup>114</sup> The ecstatic freedom of the turtles on film is contrasted with the frenzied circulation of the turtles in captivity. It is the sudden awareness of the loss of that freedom which initiates the spectator's desire for their release. This is also William and Neaera's desire. When they first discuss the subject William tells Neaera :

William            I have a dream. Perhaps.

                          But that's not a plan.

Neaera            I have a dream too.

                          They stare at each other.

                          What would you need - to make it real?<sup>115</sup>

In the printed text, Neaera does not admit to her own dream, but there remains an interesting connection here between 'dream' and 'real.'

When they first discuss the subject Neaera speaks of the turtles as 'in prison', to which William replies, 'They're not alone in that.'<sup>116</sup> Ronald Knowles notes the clearly 'allegorical implications' of the novel, that 'individuals should resist life becoming

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<sup>113</sup> Based on Russell Hoban's novel *Turtle Diary*, 1975 (London: Picador-Pan Books, 1977). The film is directed by John Irvin.

References to the screenplay are to Harold Pinter, *Turtle Diary* in *The Comfort of Strangers and Other Screenplays*.

References to manuscript papers are to Box 57 of the Archive.

<sup>114</sup> Pinter, *Turtle Diary*, p. 103.

<sup>115</sup> Found among 10 handwritten yellow pages dated 14 October 1983 (G&H 57/4b). The scene in the printed text gives Neaera's response as: 'Well ... a dream' (Pinter, *Turtle Diary*, p. 118).

<sup>116</sup> Pinter, *Turtle Diary*, p 119.

confined to an aquarium.'<sup>117</sup> Through the achievement of their dream to release the turtles, William and Neaera are released from the stagnation of their present lives into a future that they are able to face with equanimity. They have escaped the fate of lonely Miss Neap, who commits suicide, an event Pinter places in the immediate aftermath of the release of the turtles rather than a week later, as in the novel. Both Hoban and Pinter place close to her the *Book of Common Prayer*, open at '*For the Burial of the Dead at Sea*'.<sup>118</sup> Knowles notes that 'In despair's boundless sea the neap is the lowest tide, while with hope the turtles were freed at high tide.'<sup>119</sup> And yet, with Miss Neap's death there is also a sense that she too has been released, albeit into a different ocean.

Both life and death are stationed within the narrative in Pinter's additions, among which are two scenes which have been cut from the final printed text.<sup>120</sup> Both scenes appear in Pinter's handwritten draft of 29 October. In the first scene William talks to the park keeper about the fountain which the vandals have torn out:

Keeper            Got a little dog?  
William            No.  
Keeper            Well, don't bring it out here on the Common. They'll chop it up  
 [& have it] for breakfast.<sup>121</sup>

The second scene which Pinter cut takes place in the bookshop where William and Harriet both work. Harriet, who is angling for a permanent relationship with William, asks him if he likes the country:

William            What?  
Harriet            Do you like the country?  
William            The country, yes. I used to, yes.  
Harriet            Used to? (~~You're not dead are you?~~)  
                          Well, what do you like now?<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Ronald Knowles, *Understanding Harold Pinter (UHP)* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1995), p. 167.

<sup>118</sup> Pinter, *Turtle Diary*, p. 160.  
 Hoban gives '*At the Burial of the Dead*', p. 181.

<sup>119</sup> Knowles, *UHP*, p. 167.

<sup>120</sup> The word 'murderers' has also been cut from the exchange between William and the lorry driver on the road to the coast. The man tells them, 'You'd be surprised the kind of people you meet on the road sometimes [...] ~~Murderers, you ... know~~' (Handwritten draft of 13 pages dated 14 January (G&H 57/5) ). The final text leaves in a reference by the man to the turtle crates as 'coffins' (Pinter, *Turtle Diary*, p. 146).

<sup>121</sup> Handwritten yellow pages, dated 29 October (G&H 57/10), shots 16-17.

The first exchange gives a sense of the world as shark-like, while in the second, the deleted question 'You're not dead are you?' is something William must ask himself about his present life. Neither of these scenes appear in the final text, but what does appear is Mr Meager's news that Penrose has died. Penrose is known only to William and Meager; it is the fact of the death which is important, and it appears as a hidden warning before William has agreed to release the turtles. Later, we cut into a scene where Meager tells William that 'he' (presumably Penrose) hasn't died after all. Pinter places news of this 'remarkable recovery' from death immediately after William has committed himself to releasing the turtles, having booked the van to take them to the sea.<sup>123</sup> It is William's own 'remarkable recovery' from a state of inaction close to a living death that is hinted here.

The resonances within the novel between Neaera and William and Miss Neap create a sense of a collective unconscious, one great universal ocean. Towards the end of the novel William reads from Eliot's *Four Quartets*, 'Out at sea the dawn wind/Wrinkles and slides. I am here/Or there, or elsewhere. In my beginning.' (And it is this book which, in the novel, is found in Miss Neap's room, together with *The Book of Common Prayer*.)<sup>124</sup> As the novel closes, William leaves Neaera at the Aquarium celebrating with George Fairbairn the keeper, and he takes a taxi (in celebration) back to the bookshop. Pinter's screenplay ends with: 'Long shot. WILLIAM walking towards the exit' with 'THE GIANT TURTLES, SWIMMING IN THE OCEAN.' In each case, there is a sense of release, from the confines of little lives, into a wider ocean. (In the novel, after the release of the turtles, Neaera makes the statement that 'I was in my ocean, this was the only ocean there was for me, the dry streets of London'.)<sup>125</sup> Pinter has recreated the sense of rebirth, in that final shot of the giant turtles swimming free. Pinter omits all references to Eliot in his screenplay, but the circular movement of death and life in Eliot's poem, 'In my end is my beginning,' is recreated by Pinter within the structure. It is this circularity, 'In the beginning is my end',<sup>126</sup> which informs all Pinter's screenplays, trapping the spectator into a relationship with desire.

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<sup>122</sup> Handwritten yellow pages, dated 29 October (G&H 57/10), shot 29.

<sup>123</sup> Pinter, *Turtle Diary*, pp. 110, 134.

<sup>124</sup> Hoban, pp. 160, 181.

<sup>125</sup> Hoban, p. 170.

<sup>126</sup> Both quotations at Hoban, p. 160.

*The Handmaid's Tale* (1986-1987)<sup>127</sup>

This screenplay is of particular interest and will be discussed in chapter four. Here again there is a sense of release, this time from the debilitating gaze of a corrupt patriarchal society. In Pinter's reworking of Margaret Atwood's dystopian future, overt themes of patriarchy, the feminine situation within patriarchy, and the imposition of a regulatory state gaze, allows a re-reading of those themes through the real of desire for both the central character and for the spectator.

The novel is the journal of a woman captured in her attempt to escape from the fundamentalist state of Gilead. Her husband and daughter lost to her, she is put to service as Handmaid for the state, sent to the home of one of the ruling minority, where she is to act as surrogate womb for the conception of new life. The state attempts a panoptic survey of each citizen, imposing a central regulatory gaze to monitor and direct the actions of each citizen. Aligning itself with the name of God to boost its omnipotence, it attempts to penetrate each subject through fear of that ever watchful eye.

Pinter's unpublished screenplay diverges from both novel and final film, and offers itself readily to a Lacanian reading. For this summary, what is important to note is that Pinter has once again set in motion an object of loss and desire as the film opens, within a fragmented form. But whereas early drafts establish loss of political freedom in exchange for the acute constrictions of fundamentalism, later drafts, and the final drafts of February 1987, focus on the loss of Kate's husband, more particularly her daughter. The lost child is both Kate's real lost child and her fantasy object - an object the spectator is led to share.

*Reunion* (1987-88)<sup>128</sup>

*Reunion* is the story of the young Jewish boy, Hans Strauss, during the years of Hitler's rise to power. He is sent to safety in America by his parents who remain behind, and

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<sup>127</sup> Based on Margaret Atwood's novel *The Handmaid's Tale*, 1985 (London: Virago, 1987). The film is directed by Volker Schlöndorff.

References are to Pinter's unpublished screenplay and other papers in Boxes 62, 63, 64 of the Archive.

<sup>128</sup> Based on Fred Uhlman's novel *Reunion*, 1977 with an Introduction by Arthur Koestler (London: Flamingo-Fontana, 1985). The film is directed by Jerry Schatzberg.

References to the printed text are to Harold Pinter, *Reunion*, in *The Comfort of Strangers and Other Screenplays*.

References to manuscript papers are to Boxes 49, 50 of the Archive.

perish. Years later, the elderly Hans (now Henry, a successful lawyer) returns to dispose of his parents' possessions still held in store. In the process he intends to find what happened to the lost friend of his youth, the aristocratic Konradin von Lohenburg, who had great hopes for Hitler's Germany.<sup>129</sup>

Once again Pinter fragments the form, installing in the opening shots, an unseen letter/object for the spectator which anticipates what is to come.<sup>130</sup> This object contains a threat. The first two shots are black and white film of a prison yard:

*A line of men marching towards a door [...] naked to the waist, some holding their trousers up. German guards accompany them [...]*

INT. EXECUTION ROOM. DAY

*The room is bare. Two windows at the back. Winter sunshine slanting in. A rafter along the ceiling in front of the window.*

*Butcher's hooks hanging down.*

*A tall man in SS uniform stands straight-backed by the window.*

*The men file in and stand along the wall.*

*The door closes with a clang.*

(Pinter, *Reunion*, p. 55).

These two opening shots are followed by a silent shot of a small girl on a swing (1932) and a schoolroom (1932) day, 'Silent shot' as Konradin enters and everyone looks up. Over this the 'Sounds of Central Park gradually grow on the soundtrack. Barking dogs.' In Central Park, two large dogs knock over Henry's granddaughter who cries.<sup>131</sup> The execution room hangs as a threat over the little girl on the swing, just as the sound of barking dogs unsettles the shot of the classroom and erupts as a present threat in the contemporary scene. From the first moment, therefore, Pinter creates a threat that exists beyond each shot. And within the overall structure of the screenplay something stands out, for while the little girl on the swing, the scene in the classroom, and the scene in Central Park, all have a context within the narrative which follows, those opening shots of the prison do not. The little girl on the swing is one of the Bauer family

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<sup>129</sup> Pinter has changed the family name which is given as Schwarz in the novel, where Hans's father introduces himself to Konradin (Uhlman, p. 55).

In the novel Henry does not return to Germany, but the screenplay brings him back. Pinter speaks of this change as 'The most important decision Jerry and I made - which affected the whole structure of the film' (Pinter interviewed by Michel Ciment, 'Visually Speaking', *Film Comment*, 25.3 (1989), 20-22 (p. 21)).

<sup>130</sup> Knowles refers to a 'proleptic serial montage' as in *The Proust Screenplay and Victory* (Knowles, *UHP*, p. 171).

<sup>131</sup> Pinter, *Reunion*, p. 55.

who will die with her brothers and sisters when the house is burnt down. And the scene in the classroom is Hans's first view of the enchanting Konradin.

It is the execution scene which is not accommodated within the narrative and which returns as the final shot of the screenplay, where it stands alone with only the headmaster's voice explaining the fate of Konradin von Lohenburg, 'implicated in the plot against Hitler. Executed.'<sup>132</sup> This final shot duplicates part of the second shot of the opening sequence. But this time, instead of the men filing in, the door closing with a clang, the spectator is brought face to face with what they too are facing as:

*The butchers hooks glint in the light from the window.*

The object of anxiety is therefore brought home to the spectator in all its nauseating fullness.

The printed text prepares for this ending with shots of the People's Court in Berlin (1944), intercut with Henry's visit to his parent's grave. In court, one man then another is harangued by Judge Freisler: 'The German people spit on you. [...] You stinking traitor! Your soul runs with pus!'<sup>133</sup> Pinter then cuts to the school with Henry asking about Konradin, and the screenplay closes with that disturbing shot of the butcher's hooks in the empty execution room. In the first draft of 2 September 1987 (G&H 50/2), Konradin is in court (shots 103-104), telling the judge that his oath (to the Fuhrer) 'no longer [...] meant anything', and he is then sentenced to death. In the second draft of 13 October 1987 (G&H 50/10), three unknown men are in court for treason. However there is also an 'Alternative Ending' of the same date and marked as such. This alternative gives Konradin in court (shot 110), following Henry's visit to the school, and before that final shot of the execution room, which repeats the first shots of the screenplay. In that final scene, the men file in to stand along the wall, except that this time, Konradin has been added to their number. Finally, '*the door closes with a clang.*'<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Pinter's last lines repeat the last lines of the novel, followed by that menacing visual: '*The butcher's hooks glint[ing] in the light*' (Pinter, *Reunion*, p. 99) (Uhlman, p. 93).

<sup>133</sup> Pinter, *Reunion*, pp. 96-97.

<sup>134</sup> This alternative ending is given on 4 pages (97, 98, 99 plus cover sheet). Gale and Hudgins reproduce part of this alternative ending in their listing at G&H 50/10.

There is yet a third ending which was discussed in a letter from Jerry Schatzburg to Pinter dated 7 February 1988.<sup>135</sup> In the letter he says that he likes the idea of ending the film with Henry and refers to the coin (that Konradin gave him when they were young), as forming 'a bond between them'. Pinter has dramatised this ending in a draft of 22 February 1988, placing it after the execution room scene. Henry, on the plane home, is seen with a large coin, 'the Corinthian coin given to Hans by Konradin.'<sup>136</sup> It is the only thing he has kept to bring home.

However, the published version which closes in the execution room actually combines the complex emotions of both suggested endings, where the friendship between Hans and Konradin is restored in the knowledge of his sacrifice, and intensified by his loss, which resonates for both Henry and the spectator. At the same time, the final image of the execution room is revealed for what it is. It is this image which has been waiting to overwhelm the spectator from the opening moment of the screenplay.

The fact that we do not see Konradin in court, that the final view of the execution room is empty, causes the spectator to make that link between the place of execution and his sacrifice as one that is most real. And Pinter is concerned with what is most real. Early in the screenplay, on Henry's arrival in Germany, the hotel television shows Laurence Olivier as Henry V urging his troops to battle, followed by Judge Freisler in court and a voice asking viewers to say whether he is acting or whether he is 'the real thing?' Later, we see newsreel of events in Germany in 1932: Hitler arriving in Berlin, Nazis marching.<sup>137</sup> We are led to question the reality of what is represented. But what is truly real lies beyond representation. And nothing is quite as real as the gap that we are forced to fill in for ourselves as the screenplay ends. The fact that we do not see the men, that the execution room is bare, creates another gap that the spectator is forced to inhabit.

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<sup>135</sup> Gale and Hudgins date this letter as 7 September (G&H 50/7).

<sup>136</sup> Box 50, draft of 22 February 1988, shot 118. This draft does not appear to be listed by Gale and Hudgins.

<sup>137</sup> Pinter, *Reunion*, pp. 58-59, 86.

*The Heat of the Day* (1988)<sup>138</sup>

Elizabeth Bowen's novel *The Heat of the Day*, set in wartime London, is a love story centred around spying. Vision and desire are inextricably linked, as they are within the narrative and, through Pinter's restructuring, for the spectator. The element of spying applies to all three central characters, Stella, her lover Robert and their watcher, Harrison. Harrison intrudes on Stella's love affair with Robert with the information that Robert is a German spy, saying that he will keep silent if Stella will give herself to him. The information naturally changes the way that Stella sees Robert. When she finally tells Robert that he is suspected and watched, the consciousness that he is perceived (by the gaze of the law) causes Robert to change his movements, and give himself away. In the traumatic ending of the story, the effect of that gaze has fatal consequences.

Vision is linked to being, and that crucial link is carried into the screenplay through Pinter's use of the still photographic image, reinforcing the theme of the gaze and the way that the spectator is involved in the process of looking. Pinter's handwritten notes of 25 January (Box 22) give: 'H. has photos of her?', while a draft of 27 February shows that opening sequence in detail, with 'A man at a table sifting through photographs.'<sup>139</sup> It is these shots which open the printed text of the screenplay with a series of still black and white images, most of which include a man we shall later identify as Robert. We see him 'with fellow officers', then alone, or with a 'civilian at bus stop' or 'with two men at a street corner' (the 'street corner' already hinting at subterfuge). The last of these photographs are of:

*ROBERT and STELLA lying on grass, asleep [...]*

*STELLA lying on the grass. Eyes open.*

Throughout these fifteen stills, a hand has at intervals removed those pictures which contain Stella, pinning the third and final photograph of Stella alone to the wall. Then the camera enters the park in which the final pictures were taken, to find:

*ROBERT and STELLA walking towards trees.*

*They pass a man sitting on a bench. It is HARRISON.*

*ROBERT and STELLA disappear into the trees.*

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<sup>138</sup> Based on Elizabeth Bowen's novel *The Heat of the Day*, 1948 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1962). The film is directed by Christopher Morahan.

References to the screenplay are to Harold Pinter, *The Heat of the Day* (London: Faber and Faber, 1989).

References to manuscript papers are to Boxes 22, 23 of the Archive. (There is no listings by Gale and Hudgins for this screenplay.)

<sup>139</sup> Box 22. Handwritten draft on yellow pad, starting with opening sequence of photographs.

Immediately followed by 'INT. ROOM' as:

*The man at the table stands abruptly. Switches out the light.*

Pinter, *The Heat of the Day*, pp. 1-2.

This is the letter that Pinter posts for the spectator, the object that we cannot identify until it returns. That 'letter' contains Harrison's desire which, through the sequence of photographs, shows the capture of Stella and the elimination of Robert from the picture. While Harrison spies on Robert and Stella, Pinter draws the spectator's attention to the fact that the spectator spies on all three, for Harrison is as still and as isolated as if in one of his own photographs. Yet Harrison also has power, for he has been able to put himself into the frame, a position he will hold throughout the narrative. Furthermore, by his ability to switch those images on and off, Pinter, through Harrison, shows the spectator's desire also trapped within the structure of the gaze. The photographs appear to set up an alternative truth to the narrative in which they are set, as if another gaze operates outside the scene.

Bowen links seeing with being through the notion of acting. Robert may be acting as lover and loyal citizen, and will act differently if known to be watched; which Pinter incorporates in the screenplay. Within Bowen's narrative, the photographic image acts as symbol. There is the photograph of Robert which falls from the mantelpiece just before Robert also falls, or leaps, to his death (a point in novel and screenplay which is left uncertain).<sup>140</sup> More importantly there is the wall of photographs in Robert's room at home, from which he feels himself excluded. As he explains to Stella, 'Each time I come into [this room] I'm hit in the face by the feeling that I don't exist. That I never have existed' Pinter follows Bowen but he has also added the line 'Gives me a kind of vertigo' - the disequilibrium caused by looking.<sup>141</sup> The wall of photographs of Robert's early life is just that, a wall, shutting Robert out and leaving no space for him to inhabit. The photographs overwhelm him with their completeness, in the same way that the spectator in the cinema, faced with an explicit storyline, has no real connection with that story - the gap that creates the drive is missing.

The climax comes when Robert attempts to make his escape over the rooftop. Half seen images intercut:

*A figure standing [...]*

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<sup>140</sup> Pinter, *The Heat of the Day*, p. 94. Bowen, p. 278.

<sup>141</sup> Pinter, *The Heat of the Day*, p. 38. Bowen, p. 117.

*Figure on the roof [...]*

*Roof empty. A man running. A thud.*

CLICK OF A CAMERA

*Photograph of ROBERT, spreadeagled in basement, still.*

Pinter, *The Heat of the Day*, p. 99.

That last photograph, which Pinter intercuts into the narrative, completes the sequence that began at the opening of the screenplay. In Harrison's desire to see Robert eliminated from Stella's side, and himself installed in his place, the spectator has also participated. We have been led to expect it, and our expectations are satisfied; although we may have led ourselves to believe that the death would not take place, that belief is 'ultimately a defence against the Real of desire.'<sup>142</sup>

The final shot of the screenplay finds Harrison and Stella side by side in silence. Robert has been displaced and Harrison has installed himself. Pinter eliminates any other love interest on Stella's part and so simplifies and intensifies the ending.<sup>143</sup> We may not believe that she will accept him, all we need know is that the view of Harrison and Stella alone together in the final frame ameliorates the opening view of Harrison as outsider in the park. The letter posted by Pinter at the opening of the screenplay, which states Harrison's desire and sets up the drive for the spectator, has finally arrived at its destination.

#### *The Comfort of Strangers* (1988-1989)<sup>144</sup>

In Pinter's adaptation of Ian McEwan's novel, two young English lovers, Colin and Mary, come to Venice to restore a flagging romance. There they encounter two Venetians, Robert and Caroline, whose friendship is a lethal trap. There are striking similarities in the original texts of this screenplay and *The Heat of the Day*, on which Pinter worked within a year of each other. In each novel the central character, Robert, is acting out an early oedipal encounter. In *The Heat of the Day*, Robert's response to the inadequacy of his own paternal law, and that of his paternal country, lead him to look elsewhere for a

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<sup>142</sup> Žižek, 'In His Bold Gaze', p. 231.

<sup>143</sup> In the novel, she thinks she will marry a 'cousin of a cousin.' (Bowen, p. 321).

<sup>144</sup> Based on Ian McEwan's novel *The Comfort of Strangers*, 1981 (London: Picador-Pan Books, 1982). The film is directed by Paul Schrader.

References to the printed text are to Harold Pinter, *The Comfort of Strangers and Other Screenplays*.

References to manuscript papers are to Boxes 8, 9, 10 of the Archive.

strength that will represent a true law. In *The Comfort of Strangers*, another Robert feels compelled to re-enact the vicious paternal authority to which he was subjected as a child. Each act leads to death, but while Bowen's Robert falls or leaps to his own death, McEwan's Robert kills. While Bowen's Robert intends to escape the overbearing strength of his mother, McEwan's young Robert seeks comfort in his mother's arms until he finds a surrogate. One other factor which the two books hold in reflection of each other is a wall of photographs. In Bowen's novel, the wall of photographs in Robert's bedroom excludes him from any sense of self. In McEwan's novel, the wall of photographs is not of Robert, but of Colin, whom Robert intends to trap. While the wall of photographs presents Bowen's Robert with an unwelcome fullness (an uncanny double), McEwan's Robert attempts to merge with a mirror image of perfection, in the form of the young Englishman. This Robert attempts to close the gap between himself and Colin, with Colin's murder as prelude to sexual climax.

Once again, Pinter embeds his object as the screenplay opens. And here too, Pinter draws attention to the role of the spectator in the entrapment of Colin and Mary in a series of still photographs within the screenplay. But, unlike *The Heat of the Day*, it is not that photographic trap which opens the screenplay. While McEwan's novel opens with the lovers, Colin and Mary, Pinter's filmscript opens with Robert's apartment:

INT. ROBERT'S APARTMENT: VENICE. EVENING

*A long gallery [...] Dark oil paintings. Dark mahogany cabinets, carved and polished, cushioned in velvet. Two grandfather clocks in a recess, ticking. Stuffed birds and glass domes, vases, brass and cut-glass objects [...]*

*The camera pans to a man's hand carefully setting a needle on to a record. The record starts. It is Gigli, singing an aria [...]*

Pinter, *The Comfort of Strangers*, p. 3.

This is where we begin. The camera does not come in from outside, we are placed here. This is our dark centre.

The focus is then displaced as '*The camera pans away, across a Nikon camera with a zoom lens and strips of developed film on a shelf.*'<sup>145</sup> The reference to the late twentieth century momentarily breaks contact with the romantic past, setting up a lack which is only briefly satisfied as the camera returns to dwell among the treasures of the apartment.<sup>146</sup> Over these images we hear Robert's voice, beginning to tell his story of

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<sup>145</sup> However, as Knowles points out, this effect, together with some of the references to photography, is lost in the final film (Knowles, *UHP*, p. 175).

<sup>146</sup> The objects are elevated to the iconic, like dream objects whose meaning is

his father, his mother, his sisters and himself. McEwan confines Robert's story to a single recounting when he first meets Colin and Mary, but Pinter has woven the disconnected strands of the story throughout the screenplay, and it is Robert's voice alone which opens the screenplay, like a spider constructing its web:

ROBERT (*Voice over*) My father was a very big man. All his  
 life he wore a black moustache. When it turned  
 grey he used a little brush to keep it black, such  
 as ladies use for their eyes. Mascara.

Pinter, *The Comfort of Strangers*, p. 3.

At the end of this first passage of Robert's story, Caroline is seen to come out of the apartment while '*The camera reaches the glass doors and goes through on to the terrace, losing her. Sounds of concertinas and singing from below.*' The camera therefore appears to act independently, leaving her to the dark centre of the apartment to go in search of Colin and Mary whom it locates across an expanse of water. Passing Colin on the balcony, the camera enters their hotel room, to find Mary struggling to reach England by telephone. Meanwhile, Colin is framed in a viewfinder and we encounter '*A zoom lens moving*' [...] '*Colin standing. Sound of a zoom lens.*' Colin and Mary are presented as already vulnerable (Pinter adds the disintegration of the typescript Colin is reading as it falls to the floor), and trapped by the camera, as they are later, in the dark interior of a church, and again as they emerge, caught in a frozen long shot by the side of the canal.<sup>147</sup> It is as though the camera has taken the picture for us, on our behalf, increasing our complicity with the unseen voyeur.

Pinter draws attention to the nature of authorised and unauthorised watching as Colin and Mary ask two women to take their photographs. As they pose for the photograph we hear '*The click of another camera offscreen.*'<sup>148</sup> Because we know more than Colin and Mary we identify with them to the extent that we are made anxious for them and participate in their vulnerability. In this way we too are trapped, but the fact that we know more than they also effects a complicity between the spectator and that other voyeur, the disembodied voice of the unwinding story. This is where our desire lies; this

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significant yet latent. Louis Aragon saw in the power of the movie camera the ability 'to confer a dignity and poetic value on common objects, to render them into what Freud called "thing-representations", indices of the unconscious' (Paul Hammond, 'Available Light' in *The Shadow and its Shadow: Surrealist Writings on the Cinema*, ed. by Paul Hammond, 2nd edn (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1991), pp. 1-50, (p. 8)).

<sup>147</sup> Pinter, *The Comfort of Strangers*, pp. 5-6.

<sup>148</sup> Pinter, *The Comfort of Strangers*, p. 7.

is the story we really wish to know. Here we have the effect of the voice as object of desire, what Michel Chion terms '*La voix acousmatique*, the voice without bearer, which cannot be attributed to any subject and thus hovers in some indefinite interspace'<sup>149</sup> where it belongs to the spectator.

Drafts, together with the final printed script, interweave key moments of the story in voice over until Robert's recounting of the whole story in his bar, on his first meeting with Colin and Mary. (For the spectator it is, of course, both a completion and a re-telling of that story.) By the time we encounter Robert and hear his story, late at night in his bar, and recognise the voice and the story as his, that split between voice and character has been established. When the voice speaks, it already speaks for us.

The central story that Robert tells is a story of childhood malice and parental brutality. Believing his father all-seeing and all-knowing, he is led to tell him of his sisters' games in his mother's bedroom. For this they are harshly beaten while he is forced to watch. In retaliation they tell him they forgive him; they ply him with all that a small boy might desire in the way of (forbidden) chocolate, cream cakes and sweet drinks and lock him in his father's study where the results are spread about that austere room 'like a farmyard'.<sup>150</sup> He too is beaten and suffers a trauma from which he never recovers.

Something very interesting has happened to the structure of this screenplay between drafts and printed text. After Robert's recounting of his story in his bar, drafts in the archive offer visuals of key moments of the story, intercut to resonate with the central narrative. For example, a shot of the father taking his belt out of a drawer echoes the movement of the rope as the boat draws away, leaving Colin and Mary on the quayside near the apartment before their final, and fatal, encounter with Robert and Caroline.<sup>151</sup> An undated draft of 136 pages intercuts flashes of the story at shots (74) (77) (79a) (83).<sup>152</sup> For example, shot (74) gives:

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<sup>149</sup> Michel Chion, *La voix au cinéma* (Paris: Cahiers du cinéma/Éditions de l'Étoile, 1982), pp. 116-123, quoted by Žižek, in *Looking Awry*, p. 126.

<sup>150</sup> McEwan, p. 38.

<sup>151</sup> Handwritten draft on 7 loose yellow pages, dated 9 April (G&H 8/9). Note gives: '(75a) Ferry going away. Rope unleashed./Dad taking belt out of drawer.'

<sup>152</sup> Undated typed draft of 136 pages (G&H 9/5).

Silent shot. Italian Embassy London.

Robert (ten) sitting on a bed. Eva and Maria (fifteen and fourteen) pulling on stockings, making up etc, giggling.

This shot is inserted into the sequence where Robert parades Colin in the street for his compatriots to see, before he takes him back to his apartment, to his death. Drafts of 7 February (revised at 9 February) 1989 (G&H 9/2, 9/3), both marked 'First Draft', also follow this sequence of intercut shots with only small variations. The visual intercuts appear again in drafts of 24 April 1989 (G&H 10/1) and in the final draft of 17 July 1989 (G&H 10/2), shots 69, 73, 77, 81 and 85. What is interesting is that between the final draft of 17 July and the printed script, these visuals are lost.<sup>153</sup>

The clue appears to lie in the fact that every single one of these shots is marked as silent, a method Pinter uses to show intense feeling.<sup>154</sup> What we have instead in the published screenplay is a story without visuals, leaving that picture entirely open to the spectator to make her own. Pinter sets up the desire to see and to know by omitting any visualisation of Robert's story from the final screenplay, and it is through these gaps in vision (what we do not see) that the real of the spectator's desire becomes live.

Through Pinter's structure, the drive towards that fatal ending is also made both invisible and live. In a fax to Pinter, Paul Schrader refers to the sequence where Mary and Colin get off the boat near Robert and Caroline's apartment. Schrader wonders whether it is in fact clear enough that 'they are being drawn back to the palazzo. This is not happenstance, coincidence. They want, need to return.'<sup>155</sup> Pinter does make this clear as we can see from the final printed text, by placing first Mary's and then Colin's voice over separate shots of the apartment, and placing the sound of Gigli singing (which is the apartment sound) over shots of Colin and Mary on the boat. It is as if the apartment ensnares them, as if they are powerless to act in any other way. They do not speak of Robert and Caroline, yet there appears to be a tacit agreement that their route will take them past the apartment.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> This is not made clear by Gale and Hudgins in their notes on the draft of 17 July 1989, as they say 'there was not time to compare it very carefully with the published script' (G&H 10/2), pp. 114-15.

<sup>154</sup> For example, the silent shot of the little girl on a swing in *Reunion* (p. 55); the first time Stahr sees Kathleen in *The Last Tycoon* (shot 28); and those intense silent images which open the Proust screenplay.

<sup>155</sup> Fax from Schrader to Pinter dated 7 July 1989 (G&H 10/3b).

<sup>156</sup> Pinter, *The Comfort of Strangers*, pp. 39, 40-41.

Pinter structures a sense of Colin and Mary's entrapment. Before their first encounter with Robert, the disembodied voice appears to offer them as gifts to the spectator. We see Colin and Mary in a speedboat on the Grand Canal:

EXT. LAGOON. DAY

*COLIN and MARY in a speedboat, going fast. They are hanging on to the rails. The speedboat approaches the Grand Canal.*

*Sound fades.*

ROBERT (*Voice over*) And Maria said, 'Look, darling, this is all for you.'

Pinter, *The Comfort of Strangers*, p. 10.

Christopher Hudgins refers to the 'uninflected cut' of an earlier sequence where Robert's voice over tells of his sisters calling, telling him to come quickly, that they have a treat for him. And we then cut to Colin and Mary. In this way, as Hudgins points out, Colin and Mary are also presented as 'another forbidden treat.'<sup>157</sup> The shot given above shows how, as Colin and Mary are drawn closer into that fatal final encounter, the intercutting becomes tighter until voice and visuals converge. Pinter offers Colin and Mary to the spectator, trapping us into complicity with what follows where Mary, drugged and silent, is forced to watch the death of her lover, just as the spectator is also engaged in watching that same scene.

Pinter's drafts end variously, with the final shot of the printed text showing Robert recounting his story of his father for the detectives who have arrested him. Once again, the spectator is drawn into that mesmerizing story, which, unvisualised, causes her entrapment in an Imaginary object of her own.

However, it appears that the original intention of this final scene brought Mary back to England.<sup>158</sup> While drafts of 7 February and 9 February (G&H 9/2, 9/3) end after the death scene with 'Mary sitting still' (shot 90 in each case), drafts of 25 February, 14 March, 24 April and 17 July,<sup>159</sup> show Mary on her return home, with her children, walking along the lockside at Sonning. In the later drafts (24 April, 17 July) as they walk

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<sup>157</sup> Pinter, *The Comfort of Strangers*, pp. 7-8.

Christopher C. Hudgins, 'Harold Pinter's *The Comfort of Strangers*: Fathers and Sons and Other Victims,' *The Pinter Review* (1995 and 1996), pp. 54-72 (p. 55).

<sup>158</sup> Hudgins quotes Pinter as saying that 'these scenes of his own invention were not filmed primarily because of budgetary considerations, but the difficulty of getting the film crew and Richardson back to a British location' (Hudgins, *The Comfort of Strangers*, p. 68).

<sup>159</sup> Gale and Hudgins list as 8/6 : 8/8 : 10/1 and 10/2 respectively.

beside the lock, Mary calls out to her young son to be careful not to fall into the water.<sup>160</sup> Christopher Hudgins sees this alternative ending as 'faithful to [Pinter's] vision of Mary' exerting 'a renewed passion for the vigilant care for her children's lives, and for her own.'<sup>161</sup> But it is doubtful that this is Pinter's intention. Pinter fades out the sound of the 'Water pouring into the lock' and brings in the sound of Venice, as in that final draft of 17 July where 'The sound fades. Sound of gently lapping water. Creak of gondolas. The voice of Gigli singing.' It seems to suggest that Mary is aware of a different danger, which, like the water pouring into the lock, is certainly lethal and yet infinitely fascinating. Once again, as in Venice, there is the inexorable pull as if the apartment reaches out across the water. This is the Real of Mary's desire, and that constructed for the spectator, and this is where the real danger lies.

There is one more factor to consider. A handwritten note on a yellow pad, dated 19 February, contains an oddity. That brief note gives Mary's Mother asking her 'Did Colin enjoy it?' and Mary's reply 'yes.' Gale and Hudgins also note the exchange, and the fact that 'her kids [are] in the background', as if her reply is a necessary masking of the truth from them (G&H 8/5). For Mary too, we might suspect that the real truth is masked, a hidden point of horror, but also fascination. (Earlier in novel and screenplay, Mary also buries the fact that she had seen a picture of Colin, taken without their knowledge, in Robert's apartment. But it emerges in a nightmare.) As Žižek explains:

As soon as we take into account that it is precisely and only in dreams that we encounter the real of our desire, the whole accent radically shifts: our common everyday reality, the reality of the social universe in which we assume our usual roles of kind-hearted, decent people, turns out to be an illusion that rests on a certain 'repression', on overlooking the real of our desire. This social reality is then nothing but a fragile, symbolic cobweb that can at any moment be torn aside by an intrusion of the real.<sup>162</sup>

Hudgins is right to assume that 'her horrific experience in Venice' will be a 'constant presence.'<sup>163</sup> That traumatic moment will return again and again as the object exerts its terrible fascination.

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<sup>160</sup> Drafts of 24 April and 17 July (G&H 10/1 and 10/2), shot 100 in each case.

<sup>161</sup> Hudgins, *The Comfort of Strangers*, p. 68.

<sup>162</sup> Žižek, *Looking Awry*, p. 17.

<sup>163</sup> Hudgins, *The Comfort of Strangers*, p. 68.

*The Trial* (1989)<sup>164</sup>

In this screenplay another unwelcome fullness threatens. Kafka's novel describes the plight of Joseph K., who wakes one day to find that for no apparent reason he is under arrest. Pinter's screenplay (which, as Francis Gillen points out, is 'extraordinarily faithful to Kafka's text in what he includes, in the order of events, and even in the language itself')<sup>165</sup> follows the linear construction of the novel, which slides almost imperceptibly from the ordinary into nightmare, and death. Pinter speaks of Kafka's world where:

the nightmare takes place in the day. It's certainly not abstract or fantastic; it is very, very plain and proceeds in a quite logical way. Although it ceases to be logical, when you try to examine it, you don't really know where the natural flow of events slips into something which is totally inexplicable.<sup>166</sup>

In a letter to Louis Marks Pinter refers to that progression of events as 'remorseless and inevitable' speaking of 'a sense of a constant and implacable force [...] a constant and implacable presence.'<sup>167</sup> That presence emerges as a gaze to threaten our fantasy relation with the world, and it is this gaze which Pinter recreates for the spectator.

Pinter installs that gaze as a blank, impenetrable threat, by which the central character K. suddenly understands himself to be perceived. We find K. in bed, asleep, opening his eyes to see that he is already being stared at. From his point of view, which the spectator shares, we find 'An old woman [...] looking across the street into his window.'<sup>168</sup> And from this point onwards, K.'s world turns upside down, for he can no longer impose his own view (his own meaning) on the world. Where before, he viewed the world awry, distorted by his own personal and desiring fantasies, now that view begins to slide. Beginning with small irregularities such as the lack of breakfast, the

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<sup>164</sup> Based on Franz Kafka's novel, *The Trial*, 1925, trans. by Willa and Edwin Muir (London: Minerva, 1992). The film is directed by David Jones.

References to the printed text are to Harold Pinter, *The Trial* (London: Faber and Faber, 1993).

References to manuscript papers are to Boxes 54, 55, 56 of the Archive.

<sup>165</sup> Francis Gillen, 'From Novel to Film: Harold Pinter's Adaptation of *The Trial*', in *Pinter at Sixty*, ed. by Katherine H. Burkman and John L. Kundert-Gibbs (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), pp. 137-148 (p. 138).

<sup>166</sup> Harold Pinter quoted by Francis Gillen, in 'Harold Pinter on *The Trial*', *The Pinter Review* (1992), 61-62 (p. 61).

<sup>167</sup> Harold Pinter quoted by Louis Marks, 'Producing Pinter,' in Burkman and Kundert-Gibbs, pp. 18-23 (p. 18).

<sup>168</sup> Pinter, *The Trial*, p. 1, follows Kafka, p. 7.

murmuring voices from the next room, events gradually develop into the bizarre with the interrogation by unknown agents, the call to judgement by a court which is patently corrupt, and the revelation that all those he encounters are both subjects and instruments of that court. Through this progression K.'s former view of world and self is gradually revealed as lost.<sup>169</sup>

Francis Gillen refers to Pinter's 'repeated visual images which refer to eyes and living one's life in the eyes of others' concluding, finally, that K. is 'a petty bureaucrat more intent on how he is perceived than on the reality of his situation.'<sup>170</sup> The perception of self is, of course, the reality of the situation. Lacan places the subject's perception of the gaze in the realm of the unconscious, and threatening because it can destroy the subject's sense of self.

The central point in the story is K.'s meeting with the priest in the darkening cathedral. Pinter has emphasised the Priest's question to K., which in the novel is 'Can't you see anything at all?' and Pinter repeats as 'Can't you see what is going to happen to you?/Can't you see what is staring you in the face?'<sup>171</sup> The Priest tells him that he is deluding himself about the Court, and explains this delusion with his story of the door-keeper at the door of the Law. In this story, a man from the country begs the door-keeper 'for admission to the Law. But the doorkeeper tells him that he cannot grant him admission now' and the man must wait. He waits for years and years until he is close to death. Weak and frail, he asks the doorkeeper why, during all those years, had no-one else entered? The doorkeeper tells him that the door was intended only for him, adding that he would now go and shut it.<sup>172</sup>

Žižek explains that the door of the Law loses its power when the man from the country finds that it is meant for him and no other, as though it has been 'gazing back at him all along, addressing him' :

The whole spectacle of the Door of the Law and the secret beyond it was staged only to capture his desire. If the power of fascination is to produce its effect, this fact must remain concealed. As soon as the

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<sup>169</sup> The director, David Jones, says that 'Insofar as I had a guiding light during the shooting, it was Buñuel because he can make the most bizarre things happen and yet pretend that nothing strange is happening' (Jones quoted by Billington, p. 350).

<sup>170</sup> Gillen, 'Pinter's Adaptation of *The Trial*', pp. 139, 147.

<sup>171</sup> Pinter, *The Trial*, p. 60. Kafka, p. 233.

<sup>172</sup> Pinter, *The Trial*, pp. 60-63. Kafka, pp. 235-244.

subject becomes aware that the other gazes at him (that the door is meant only for him), the fascination is dispelled.<sup>173</sup>

The gaze negates his fantasy view of himself in relation to the world.

Both Kafka and Pinter show K. looking out of his window, just before he is taken to his death, seeing babies 'In a lighted window across the street [...] playing in playpens, stretching their hands out between the bars.'<sup>174</sup> Gillen sees this as 'the normal life that K. now seems forever separated from or an image of a prison into which all are born.'<sup>175</sup> That prison can be read as the Symbolic (law and language) which speaks through us and creates a split between self and world which thereafter initiates desire.

In other screenplays, as noted in chapter one, Pinter installs a metaphor for that object of desire, as something half-glimpsed between trees. There is a similar metaphor here, but rather than an object of enchantment, it is darker, uncanny. Pinter's directions for K.'s final march towards his death show him being taken arm in arm with his executioners as they walk, 'passing from the light of street lamp into shadow, into light and into shadow.'<sup>176</sup> The pattern draws attention to the signifying chain, and the void between words and images that we cover (as subject and spectator) with an object of our own. When the gap itself is lost, we find ourselves facing an unwelcome fullness, which causes anxiety. As Lacan explains in relation to Holbein's death's head, the emergence of that unpleasant object cancels our relationship with desire and in doing so 'reflects our own nothingness.'<sup>177</sup>

The death of Joseph K. in both Kafka and Pinter is very similar. Each presents that death on the waste ground outside the city, as a knife in Joseph K.'s heart. His last words to his killers are 'Like a dog!' while they, cheeks touching, gaze down on him, blank and impassive. In novel and screenplay, that blank gaze which entered his room as the narrative opened now penetrates to his heart.<sup>178</sup> We have watched the central

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<sup>173</sup> Žižek, *Looking Awry*, p. 114.

<sup>174</sup> Pinter, *The Trial*, p. 64. Kafka, p. 245.

<sup>175</sup> Gillen, 'Pinter's Adaptation of *The Trial*', p. 144.

<sup>176</sup> Pinter, *The Trial*, p. 64.

<sup>177</sup> Lacan, *FFCP*, p. 92.

<sup>178</sup> Gillen notes the parallel between the figure at the window at the start of the film, and the figure at the window at the end (Gillen, 'Pinter's Adaptation of *The Trial*', p. 144).

character slide from a fantasy relationship with the world (a relation distorted, set awry by his own desiring view) to one where he is forced to acknowledge a fullness, that presses too close and cancels the fantasy. A parallel is created for the spectator, for in that remorseless slide the equivalence of a gaze emerges, as fullness, which denies the spectator the chance to impose a fantasy object of her own.

*The Remains of the Day* (1990-1991)<sup>179</sup>

This screenplay, which will be discussed in detail in chapter three, is based on the journal of an elderly butler, Jim Stevens, and his service at Darlington Hall during the first half of this century. We are presented with three desiring subjects: Lord Darlington, who wishes to take on the role of peacemaker by mitigating the worst excesses of the Versailles Treaty; Miss Kenton, the housekeeper, who wishes to remain with Stevens at the Hall, and Stevens himself, who wishes to gain the dignity and respect accorded to the greatest of his profession in helping his lordship in his great political task. All three fail. By the aftermath of the second world war Lord Darlington is branded traitor, Miss Kenton, still dreaming of a return to Darlington Hall, is married to an ex-footman, and Stevens finds his judgement has, all along, been blind. For this screenplay, Pinter posts his letter through an unseen voice as the screenplay opens, installing an object of loss and desire which returns as the screenplay ends.

*Lolita* (1994)<sup>180</sup>

Here again, we are in the territory of the object which, forever lost, remains forever live. As an adolescent, Humbert Humbert suffers the trauma of an intense love thwarted at the moment of climax and then lost forever in death. The trauma fixes him in a love affair with the adolescent which by its nature (he is now grown) remains

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<sup>179</sup> Based on the novel by Kazuo Ishiguro, *The Remains of the Day*, 1989 (London: Faber and Faber, 1990). Pinter wrote a script for direction by Mike Nicholls, but the project was acquired by Columbia who turned it over to James Ivory and Ismail Merchant, and the script was re-written by Ruth Praver Jhabvala (Billington, p. 324).

References are to Pinter's unpublished screenplay and other papers in Box 51 of the Archive.

<sup>180</sup> Based on Vladimir Nabokov's novel *Lolita*, 1955 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1995). Pinter wrote the screenplay of *Lolita* in 1994. The following year he learned 'that the company behind it, Caralco, was going bust', and later still that David Mamet had been asked to write the script. Mamet was dropped in turn and the script was eventually written by Stephen Schiff (Billington, pp. 358, 361).

References are to Pinter's unpublished screenplay and other papers in Boxes 65 and 66 of the Archive.

There is no listing by Gale and Hudgins for this screenplay.

unconsummated, until he meets Lolita. Through a series of events fortuitous to Humbert's plans (particularly the sudden death of her mother) he is left in sole charge of Lolita and free to roam.

Once again, the object that Pinter sets in motion along the signifying chain of the screenplay is carried by a voice which speaks close to the spectator. In his notes, after a first reading of Pinter's script, Adrian Lyne refers to the way that Pinter implicates the spectator in the point of view of the central character.<sup>181</sup> Pinter does this by splitting our view of that central character (Humbert Humbert) from the voice which tells us:

My name is Humbert. You won't like  
me. I suffer from moral leprosy. I  
am not a nice man. I am abnormal.  
Don't come any further with me if  
you believe in moral values. I am a  
criminal. I am diseased. I am a  
monster. I am beyond redemption.

Pinter, *Lolita*, final draft of 26 September 1994, shot 1.

The statement creates two disjunctions: the gap between voice and visual, and the statement to come no further; setting up the desire of the spectator to make just such a journey. Through that disembodied voice Pinter once again creates the voice that speaks for us and within us.<sup>182</sup>

As Pinter explains to Lyne, he will not use voice over which 'comment[s] on what we are actually seeing' believing that 'the action speaks for itself.'<sup>183</sup> Elsewhere Pinter tells Lyne that 'I believe the principle of voice over as a reflective and slightly detached commentary is workable and appropriate.'<sup>184</sup> In this 'reflective and slightly detached commentary' a space is created for the spectator, as we read behind the words. Through this gap the spectator's view is distorted, causing her to see awry, and creating the desire to follow that voice to its tragic end.

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<sup>181</sup> Lyne likes the way Humbert's statement ' "Don't come any further with me if you believe in moral values" manages to implicate the reader/viewer.' (Page 1 of Lyne's 'initial response' to the script. Box 66, part of fifteen pages of single spaced typed notes from Lyne, in two sections. Section one (5 pages) is headed 'Notes for letter to Harold Pinter', section two (10 pages) gives Lyne's comments under 'initial response').

<sup>182</sup> Chion's *voix acousmatique*, already noted, quoted in Žižek, *Looking Awry*, p. 126.

<sup>183</sup> Photocopy of Pinter's letter to Lyne of 18 July 1994, covering first draft of 15 July 1994. Box 65.

<sup>184</sup> Pinter, letter to Lyne of 31 August 1994, Box 66.

The fact that it is a tragedy is hinted as Humbert opens the glove compartment of his car and takes out a revolver which he puts in his pocket. Then 'he notices something glinting [...] a bobby pin with dust on it. He blows the dust away, puts the pin back and closes the compartment.'<sup>185</sup> The revolver, of course, prefigures death and the pin, long parted from its owner, signifies loss and possibly also death. And there are many deaths along the way. There is the fortuitous and partly comic death of Lolita's mother, crossing the road to post a letter, and setting in train the achievement of Humbert's desire. Her death is partly echoed in the tragi-comic death of Quilty at the end of the story (whom Humbert kills because he stole Lolita away and then abandoned her).<sup>186</sup> In that last draft of 26 September we are also told of the deaths of Humbert and Lolita. The final shot gives two captions on screen announcing the death of Humbert, 'Humbert died of a coronary thrombosis on November 16 1952,' and 'Lolita died in childbirth on Christmas Day 1952.'<sup>187</sup>

Beside this final and tragic loss of Lolita's life is the earlier loss of the youthful Lolita. Part way through the screenplay, after they have made love for the first time, Humbert looks at her sitting beside him in the car and realises that 'It was like being with the small ghost of somebody you had recently killed.'<sup>188</sup> At the end of both novel and screenplay, that realisation returns as, with Lolita lost to him (married and pregnant), and nowhere to run (the police have caught up with him for killing Quilty), he stands above a wooded valley and hears 'a melody of children at play.'<sup>189</sup> For Nabokov's Humbert it was not her absence from his side, but 'the absence of her voice from that concord' which was 'the hopelessly poignant thing.'<sup>190</sup> It is this loss of innocence, represented by the dusty symbol of childhood, which Pinter posted for the spectator at the beginning of the screenplay, and which Pinter leaves live at the end.

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<sup>185</sup> Final draft of 26 September 1994, shot 2, Box 66.

<sup>186</sup> Lyne refers to the way Pinter has written a scene for Quilty's death which 'emphasizes a kind of dignity in his dying, and a kind of courage' (Lyne, 'Notes for letter to Harold Pinter', p. 3, Box 66).

<sup>187</sup> Final draft of 26 September 1994, shot 251. Box 66.  
Nabokov leaves Humbert in prison anticipating sentence of death (Nabokov, p. 308).

<sup>188</sup> Humbert's voice over, draft of 26 September, 1994, shot 131, Box 66.

<sup>189</sup> Final draft of 26 September 1994, Shot 251. Nabokov, p. 308 gives 'the melody.'

<sup>190</sup> Nabokov, p. 308.

There is one more screenplay to be considered, which has not yet been deposited in the Pinter Archive, but which thanks to the kindness of both the curator, Mrs Sally Brown, and Harold Pinter himself, arrived for me to read as I was finalising this thesis. This screenplay, Karen Blixen's *The Dreaming Child*, will be added as a postscript. It is particularly important since it reinforces the focus of Pinter's work and the subject of this thesis, that the world of unconscious desire is more real than the world of everyday reality.

## CONCLUSION

Looking at these screenplays in chronological order, it is possible to attempt certain conclusions. From the first (*The Servant*, 1962), the drama of external events has been reduced, and both voice and image have been pared down, creating what is most real for character and spectator through what is unspoken and unseen. The circular structure of desire is also in place in this first screenplay. Within the opening shots Pinter embeds an invisible object, which causes the spectator to see 'awry' with a look ' "distorted" by desire.'<sup>191</sup> This desire creates the drive towards resolution - the return of that object - as the screenplay advances or closes. In this way, the spectator's gaze is suspended in a relationship of desire with that unseen object.

With few exceptions, the screenplays after *The Servant* have been progressively fragmented, ostensibly in time; for example, *The Go-Between* (1969) and *Langrishe, Go Down* (1970), where the lost domain of a golden summer is intercut with a cold grey present. However, because the seasonal changes reflect an emotional landscape, we can also question the division into past and present. Instead, we can substitute a reading of desire, that eternally lost object which can never be grasped but which is most real for the subject and shapes her every move. Time, like happiness, is the ultimate lost object. In the screenplays from *Proust* onwards, time is negated in a reading of desire through vision.

Following *Proust*, Pinter draws attention to the screen and the cinematic process, and in doing so emphasises the suspect properties of all representation. In *The Proust*

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<sup>191</sup> Žižek, 'Looking Awry', *October*, p. 34.

*Screenplay* (1972) Pinter foregrounds the screen, and the fragmentation of images which parallel the intense, chaotic images of the dream. As in dream, it is what lies beyond the image which is most real. In *The Last Tycoon* (1974), the process of making pictures is emphasised, leaving us, as in *Proust*, with a blank screen, drawing attention once again to the lack beyond representation. The emphasis on making pictures continues in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1978-79), leading us to question what is real, as in the intercut newsreel fragments in *Reunion* (1987-88), where another reality intrudes into the diegetic reality. This alternative reality operates in the still photographs intercut into *The Heat of the Day* (1988) and the operation of a clandestine camera in *The Comfort of Strangers* (1988-89), which causes a hiatus and fragmentation of the central narrative. But where the stress on the photographic is missing, other elements emerge. *Victory* (1982) (discussed in chapter five) has a fragmented opening sequence which returns, but differently, as the screenplay progresses. *The Handmaid's Tale* (1986-87) (chapter four) has a series of intense images cut into the central storyline. All of these juxtapositions of different realities, different times, different places, different narratives and different points of view create a resonance between one image and another. Such fragmentations create both a gap and a fullness, as Pinter recreates in film form the structures at work in the unconscious in Lacan's *objet petit a*.

Where there are exceptions to the fragmented form, that sequential chronological narrative reinforces the inner journey of the central character(s). Pinter speaks of *The Trial* (1989) as progressing in a 'remorseless and inevitable' trajectory towards death;<sup>192</sup> a description which might equally apply to *The Servant* (1962). *The Trial* has, as its central theme, seeing and being, and follows Kafka in opening and closing the narrative with a blank, impassive, gaze.

As the *Proust Screenplay* marked a turning point towards an increased fragmentation and attention to gaze and screen in the screenplays which followed, so *The Trial* seems to mark another turning point. *The Remains of the Day* (1990-91) returns to a simpler format which opens and ends in the present, with the past revealed in two major narrative segments, into which we have only two brief intercuts of the present scene. In *Lolita* (1994) the narrative follows the novel in opening and closing in the present,

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<sup>192</sup> Letter from Harold Pinter to Louis Marks of August 1989, accompanying the first draft of *The Trial* (quoted by Marks in 'Producing Pinter' in Burkman and Kundert-Gibbs, p. 18).

cutting briefly to the distant past, with the whole central narrative taking place in the near past to arrive at the present. However (as will be seen from the postscript) in *The Dreaming Child* (1997), Pinter returns to the intense fragmentation found in *The Proust Screenplay*, and the complex resonances of the dream.

What also appears to be emerging is an increasing separation of voice and visual. It is this separation which plays such a significant part in *The Comfort of Strangers* (1988-89), where Robert's story, the central object of desire for character and spectator, has no visualisation. In early drafts of *The Last Tycoon* (1974), and in Pinter's unpublished screenplay of *The Remains of the Day*, the free floating voice as the screenplay opens creates a lure for the spectator. In *Lolita*, the voice of Humbert also creates a lure. As in the films pre-*Proust*, that split between voice and image creates a gap for the spectator. Through the circulatory structure of the screenplay, from the first posting of that invisible letter to its arrival as the screenplay ends, Pinter creates a true object of fascination for the spectator, forming a gap in representation which causes her to see awry, and leads her to cover over that gap with an invisible object of her own. As Lacan has stated:

The real has to be sought beyond the dream - in what the dream has enveloped, hidden from us, behind the lack of representation [...] This is the real that governs our activities more than any other.<sup>193</sup>

From this brief overview of each screenplay, it is possible to see Pinter constructing what is most real for the spectator, her own object of fascination, whether desire or anxiety. The form of that object is dictated by the narrative on which each screenplay is based, and allows a division of the screenplays according to three positions of the object - the object of desire which is eternally lost and around which the subject's desire constantly circulates; the object which is aligned with an object in the external world, which, once achieved, will change; and the object that comes too close and causes anxiety.

Screenplays which fit the first category, the object which is eternally lost and therefore live, are *Langrishe, go Down*, *The Proust Screenplay*, *The Last Tycoon*, *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, *The Remains of the Day*, and *Lolita*. *Reunion*, also fits this category, while the final image projects an object which, for the spectator, comes too close.

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<sup>193</sup> Lacan, *FFCP*, p. 60.

There are fewer screenplays which follow the second category, the object which (aligned with an actual object in the external world) once achieved, will change. In *The Handmaid's Tale* (1986), Pinter stops the screenplay just before Kate reclaims her daughter and her freedom. And it is the object as freedom which is (re)claimed in *Turtle Diary* (1983-84). In *The Pumpkin Eater* (1983) the achievement of the object is less certain, although Jo appears to have reached a tentative accommodation with the external world. However, her understanding of the human condition as one of lack, places that screenplay within the next category, as an unwelcome presence which destroys desire.

By far the largest category is the third, the object which comes too close. Of Pinter's first six screenplays between 1962 and 1971, five fit this group. In *The Servant*, the desired object overwhelms and in *The Quiller Memorandum* (1966) that final view of Inge, surrounded by a new generation, leaves the neo-Nazi threat extant. In *Accident* (1966) the unseen crash reverberates across the close of the film to stand as a fullness. In *The Go-Between*, Leo's object of desire comes destructively close, while for the spectator the object is one of loss. The narrative of *Langrishe, go Down* might also be included in this category since Imogen's memory of Otto keeps her chained to a traumatic loss around which her desire constantly circulates, so that she is unable to move on, or take action for herself (although, here again, the effect for the spectator is that of loss.)

Pinter's next scenario of anxiety is the screenplay of *Victory* (1982), and in the three following screenplays, *Reunion*, *The Heat of the Day* and *The Comfort of Strangers*, he stresses the photographic image to create an intense extra-diegetic threat. In *The Comfort of Strangers* the non-visualisation of Robert's story (centrepoint of Robert's desire, the spectator's desire, and the action which follows) also carries a threat. In *The Trial* we experience a fullness, the lack of a gap in the slide from K.'s personal fantasy of himself in relation to his world, to the destruction of that fantasy and a sense of anxiety for the spectator, a structure which echoes that of Pinter's first screenplay, *The Servant*.

The three films chosen for close examination are works from the 1980s and 1990s which reveal the patterning of Lacan's *objet petit a* for the spectator under the three different guises given above: (1) the object which, eternally lost is eternally live: *The Remains of the Day* (1990-91); (2) the object which achieved will change: *The Handmaid's Tale* (1986-87) and (3) the object which comes too close and causes

anxiety: *Victory* (1982). Of these three screenplays, *The Handmaids' Tale* and *The Remains of the Day* have not been published, and therefore each text remains hidden from general view. These two screenplays show significant and important differences between the films which finally reached the screen and Pinter's creation of a true object of desire.

## Chapter Three

### THE REMAINS OF THE DAY

Pinter's screenplay for *The Remains of the Day* is deposited in the Pinter Archive at the British Library. However, the film, directed by James Ivory, is based on Ruth Praver Jhabvala's script. It is therefore possible to assess the substantial difference in approach between the two. Allowing for the inevitable disparities between the form of the different works (the novel,<sup>1</sup> Pinter's screenplay on the page<sup>2</sup> and the Merchant/Ivory/Jhabvala film on screen<sup>3</sup>) important differences do nevertheless emerge. While Jhabvala shows and tells, Pinter's restructuring of the novel (here, as throughout his work for the screen) elicits an object of desire for each central character, while recreating a parallel object for the spectator within the overall structure of the screenplay.

Ishiguro's novel is in the form of a journal kept by an elderly butler, Jim Stevens, as he travels to the west country to find a former housekeeper at Darlington Hall. In the course of this journey we learn of his service to Lord Darlington in the inter-war years, and his relationship with the housekeeper, Miss Kenton. The novel presents us with the desires of the three central characters: Lord Darlington, who believes that Britain should act with magnanimity towards a vanquished foe and alleviate the crippling conditions in Germany after the First World War; Miss Kenton, whose unstated desire is to remain

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<sup>1</sup> Kazuo Ishiguro, *The Remains of the Day*, 1989 (London: Faber and Faber, 1990). Further references to the novel will be given within the text.

<sup>2</sup> Pinter's unpublished screenplay and other papers in the Pinter Archive, Box 51.

<sup>3</sup> Columbia/Merchant Ivory (Ishmail Merchant, Mike Nichols/John Calley) production of *The Remains of the Day*, directed by James Ivory for Columbia Tristar, 1993, with a screenplay by Ruth Praver Jhabvala.

Mike Nichols was to direct, but 'Columbia who finally acquired the rights, turned the project over to the production team of Ismail Merchant and James Ivory, who brought in their own regular writer, Ruth Praver Jhabvala, to do a new version' (Michael Billington, *The Life and Work of Harold Pinter* (London: Faber and Faber, 1996), p. 324).

with Stevens at the Hall; and Stevens himself, whose ideal of dignity through service leads him to a blind dedication to his lordship to the exclusion of all else. During the course of the story, which closes after another great war, we learn of the loss of that object of desire for each character. Miss Kenton is unhappily married to an ex-footman, Lord Darlington has died, branded a traitor, and Stevens finally realises that he has been serving the wrong man, a service which has led him to ignore a different and happier life with Miss Kenton.

#### DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PINTER'S SCREENPLAY AND THE NOVEL

The novel invites the reader to read behind, and in many cases against, what the narrator is saying. Meaning is built up through little clues as the novel progresses, and this is particularly evident in Stevens's relationship with Miss Kenton. But while the reader gradually comes to know the person behind the language, that language, full of small pomposities, also forms a barrier. For example, Stevens, preparing for his motoring trip, considers 'such matters as accommodation, meals, and any small snacks I might partake of on my way' (Ishiguro, p. 10). Suitable clothes also form a problem: 'unless I were to don the suit passed on by the young Lord Chalmers during the war, which despite being clearly too small for me, might be considered ideal in terms of tone' (Ishiguro, p. 11). The language of the establishment hangs as uneasily as the hand-me-down clothes, and screens off what is most real for Stevens and the reader/spectator. Here is the corresponding exchange in the screenplay:

<u>Farraday</u>	Listen Stevens, I have to ask you something. Where the hell did you get that suit?
<u>Stevens</u>	It belonged to Lord Darlington, sir. He gave it to me. <sup>4</sup>

Deference and pride are still there in Stevens's voice, but in Pinter's reshaping of the language something extra emerges, a deference and pride that spring from affection. It is that unstated emotion which is most real for the spectator.

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<sup>4</sup> Pinter's Final 'Revised' draft of 24 January 1991, shot 8. Unless otherwise stated, quotations will be taken from this draft, referred to as 'Final draft', which Gale and Hudgins list as item 1 of Box 51, and which will be shown as (G&H 51/1). Other references to their listing will be given where available.

Gale and Hudgins's full list can be found in: Steven H. Gale and Christopher C. Hudgins, 'The Harold Pinter Archives II: A Description of the Filmscript Materials in the Archive in the British Library', *The Pinter Review* (1995 and 1996), 101-142 (p. 135).

Ishiguro's Stevens is a modern Malvolio, an overly-dignified buffoon who hides in the rhododendron bushes, ready to spring out and inform young Mr Cardinal of the facts of life (Ishiguro, p. 89), and who cannot resist the temptation to impress the villagers of Moscombe with his involvement (albeit in an unofficial capacity) in foreign affairs before the war (Ishiguro, pp. 187-88). Blind to everything but the ideal of dignity through service, his greatest test comes on the night of the great conference at Darlington Hall, when his father lies close to death upstairs. He continues serving while his father dies, telling the reader at the end of this stressful evening that he recalls it 'with a large sense of triumph' (Ishiguro, p. 110). Pinter's Stevens makes no statement of triumph over loss - loss is allowed to stand free.<sup>5</sup> In Pinter's screenplay, after the death of his father, the next shot shows him in 1954, his car broken down by the side of the road as steam pours from the radiator - a visual comment on what has passed, as 'Stevens stares helplessly' (Final draft, shot 81). Through what is unstated, and unseen, what is most real emerges in the gap between shot and shot. It is through montage that the cinema most effectively reproduces the equivalence of Lacan's *objet petit a*, creating the blank space beyond representation which elicits our desire, and causing us to cover over that gap with an object of our own.

#### DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PINTER'S SCREENPLAY AND THE FILM

Pinter's screenplay stands in marked contrast not only to the novel, but also to the film directed by James Ivory, with a screenplay written by Ruth Prawer Jhabvala. While Pinter creates a gap which the spectator is drawn to fill in for herself, the Ivory/Jhabvala screenplay creates a wall of words and images. As Mike Nichols has said, 'Pinter's approach was more austere and had more mystery. Jhabvala filled us in completely.'<sup>6</sup>

The Jhabvala screenplay opens with the voice of Miss Kenton (now Mrs Benn) running endlessly across the opening credits, explaining everything: the death of Lord Darlington, the sale of the Hall, Darlington called 'traitor' by the press. Nothing is hidden. The list goes on, and shortly afterwards we see Stevens setting off in his car,

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<sup>5</sup> Although Pinter's handwritten notes (6 loose pages dated 23 January, G&H 51/10) give 'His "triumph" after Dad's death - state', that triumph over loss has not been included in the final draft dated the following day, 24 January 1991.

<sup>6</sup> Mike Nichols, quoted by Caryn James, 'Just Don't Call It "Unfilmable"', *New York Times*, 14 November 1993, p. 13.

over which *his* voice speaks the contents of a letter which he has written to her. We know who it is for since we see her ascending the long steps of a boarding house, and receiving and opening a letter.

Pinter has said that 'There are still seven or eight scenes in the finished film that I wrote.'<sup>7</sup> Yet even here, Jhabvala extends. For example, when Pinter's Lord Darlington entertains his blackshirt friends to dinner, it is enough that their leader, Sir Geoffrey Wren,<sup>8</sup> speaks of 'the problem' that 'stares one in the face' (Final draft, shot 90). The allusive, simple statements are interleaved with silence from the other diners before Wren changes tack to neutral ground with a question of the day's pheasant bag. Afterwards, Pinter shows Stevens enter the empty dining room and stand looking at the table. Jhabvala's Sir Geoffrey spells it out, speaking of 'Jews', 'gypsies', 'negroes' and the 'racial laws of the Fascists as a sanitary measure much overdue.'<sup>9</sup>

Even where Jhabvala concentrates on a single image, that image, full of dramatic symbolism, draws attention to itself as image and screen, as in the parting of Stevens and Miss Kenton. As her bus pulls away in the darkness their hands are pulled apart and Stevens's hand remains, backlit, filling the centre of the screen. And while both the novel and Pinter's screenplay leave Stevens alone on Weymouth Pier, Jhabvala's screenplay takes him back to Darlington Hall, happily 'bantering' with his new master (a point of difficulty for Stevens in the novel, which he intends to practise)<sup>10</sup> while they await the arrival of a new housekeeper. A bird trapped in the fireplace is released to fly free, and a window frames a view of the house in strong, vibrant colours. Ishiguro has explained that this scene was substituted as they could not re-shoot the final scene as they wished.<sup>11</sup> Even so, this Stevens appears to speak the truth when he says he was 'too busy serving to listen to the speeches' (Jhabvala), for that final bright image in

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<sup>7</sup> Billington, p. 324.

<sup>8</sup> Pinter originally follows Ishiguro with 'Mosley' (Ishiguro, p. 137), but later changes the name. A handwritten draft gives 'Mosley arriving in black shirt' (shot 75, yellow pad containing shots 57-96 (G&H 51/8) ).

In shot 85 of Pinter's draft of 18 October 1990 (G&H 51/2), 'Geoffrey Wren' is written above 'Sir Oswald Mosley.'

<sup>9</sup> My transcript from the film.

<sup>10</sup> Ishiguro, p. 245.

<sup>11</sup> Evidently the scene with the man on the pier was shot but later dropped, and the bird was improvised (my conversation with Kazuo Ishiguro, 22 May 1995).

the window is a metaphor for the whole: we cannot see through it. Here, everything is stated and shown, and therefore *less* real for the spectator.

#### PINTER'S SHAPING OF THE OBJECT WITHIN THE NARRATIVE

The novel lends itself to a reading of the three Lacanian subject positions where all three characters attempt to cover over the split between themselves and the Symbolic, those inescapable structures of language and culture which shape the subject. In *The Remains of the Day* the all-embracing power of the Symbolic is symbolised in the might of the British Establishment, concealing its self-perpetuating strength behind a screen of chivalry. However, Lord Darlington, seeing that ideal of chivalry fade, turns to the seductive ideal of a new and vigorous Germany. Lord Darlington attempts to cover over that gap between self and Symbolic (Other) with his fantasy of honour, as peace-maker on the world stage, Stevens through service to his Lordship, and Miss Kenton with her fantasy of belonging both to Stevens and to Darlington Hall. All three characters attempt to bind themselves to a power structure from which they are forever split. In effect, we could say that all three characters wish to cover the blank gaze which arises from that lacking space, a gaze which will never validate the subject and which can only (but unfailingly) initiate desire.<sup>12</sup> What follows will show how Pinter reveals the object of desire for each character and makes it real for the spectator.

It is through Darlington's desire that the political theme emerges, and Pinter has agreed with Edward T. Jones's statement that it is 'an intensely political book, if indirectly handled.'<sup>13</sup> In the novel, Darlington is moved by the conditions in Germany and the suicide of a German friend to host an international conference in an attempt to alleviate the conditions there (Ishiguro, pp. 73-75). However, in Pinter's screenplay, Herr Bremann is alive and present at the discussions. By eliminating the personal tragedy of a friend, Darlington's initial objectivity is made clear: 'I fought that war to preserve justice in the world. I wasn't taking part in a vendetta against the German race' (Pinter's Final draft, shot 25 follows Ishiguro, p. 73). Yet during the course of both novel and screenplay we see Darlington turn from an honourable man aiding a down-trodden

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<sup>12</sup> See Joan Copjec, 'The Orthopsychic Subject: Film Theory and the Reception of Lacan', in *Read My Desire: Lacan against the Historicists*, (London: MIT Press, 1994), pp. 15-38, (p. 36).

<sup>13</sup> Edward T. Jones's, 'Harold Pinter: A Conversation,' *Literature/Film Quarterly*, 21.1 (1993), 2-9 (p. 8).

nation, to one who rejects the rights of the individual in the service of that nation's leaders. The turning point comes in the early 1930s when Darlington has two Jewish maids dismissed from the staff. In the novel Stevens refers to it as a 'very minor episode' when Lord Darlington was briefly under the influence of the 'blackshirts', which he later rejected (Ishiguro, pp. 137, 151). However, Pinter's screenplay gives considerable weight to this event, and in doing so leads us to question the notion of honour rather more thoroughly than does the novel.

Pinter has not only added a scene of the maids' arrival, but the fact that they come from Germany, two well-bred girls who speak good English. And he shows Darlington so eager to practise his German that he fails to recognise that he is insisting on speaking the language of the country from which the girls have been forced to flee (Final draft, shot 84). Showing their arrival makes their subsequent dismissal all the more poignant, and at the same time shows a lack of insight on the part of Darlington which will have wider consequences. When young Cardinal says, 'He's out of his depth. The Nazis are manipulating him like a pawn', we have every reason to believe it.<sup>14</sup> Darlington's attempt to gain justice is therefore revealed as delusion.<sup>15</sup> Pinter reveals the fantasy (the Imaginary relation) with which the character attempts to cover over the gap between himself and the centre of power, and makes it real for the spectator.

At the same time, Pinter reveals Stevens as the true man of honour. In the novel there is only brief reference to the dismissal of the Jewish girls with 'good references' (Ishiguro, p. 149), but in Pinter's screenplay the references are upgraded to 'excellent', Stevens has found them a new post, somewhere to stay overnight in London, and a gift of his own money (Final draft, shot 107). While the establishment is blind to the consequences (and Pinter spells out those consequences in Miss Kenton's statement that 'if they have no work, they could be sent back to Germany' (Final draft, shot 106), it is Stevens who shows honour at work, yet at this point Stevens still imagines he serves a greater man.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Final draft, shot 131. Ishiguro gives 'manoeuvring him' (Ishiguro, p. 222).

<sup>15</sup> Darlington later attempts to find the girls, saying he would 'like to recompense them somehow' because 'It was quite wrong, what occurred.' These statements, which follow Ishiguro, p.151, are reproduced by Pinter in shot 93a of a handwritten draft, yellow pad (shots 57-96) (G&H 51/8), although they appear crossed through. No such regret appears in the final draft.

<sup>16</sup> Jhabvala follows Pinter's scene of the maids arriving, but omits Pinter's scene of their departure.

Pinter reveals the vacuity at the centre of power through the expansion of a brief reference in the novel. Darlington meets secretly with Foreign Office officials and the German Ambassador, Herr Ribbentrop. As the meeting begins a Foreign Office official tells the German Ambassador, 'Yes, I'm very fond of those very long, very thin sausages. What are they called? Had some in Dusseldorf last May.' To which the Ambassador replies 'Frankfurters?' (Final draft, shot 125). The patronising question not only appears to be an oblique manoeuvring for power, but leads us to recognise the emptiness at the heart of that power.<sup>17</sup>

While Ishiguro's Stevens clings to a narrow concept of dignity (while appearing often *undignified*) Pinter's Stevens is a different man; not only innately dignified but according a dignity to those around him. For example Pinter has cut part of Stevens's admonition to Miss Kenton for calling his father by his christian name. The novel gives: 'you may come to see the inappropriateness of someone such as yourself talking "down" to one such as my father' (Ishiguro, p. 53). Pinter's Stevens states that 'For someone of your age to address him as "William", is inappropriate' (Final draft, shot 22). This emphasis on seniority of years and experience reveals a respect and affection not only for his father, but also for Miss Kenton. In Pinter's screenplay Stevens emerges as inherently dignified, a man of honour, integrity and deep emotion made all the more real for the spectator through what is unspoken.

It is significant that of the three stories told in the servants hall to illustrate dignity, Pinter has chosen to dramatise the one where no words are spoken.<sup>18</sup> In the screenplay a fellow butler tells of Stevens senior driving guests of his employer after luncheon. They are drunk, and in their drunken state they take to shouting abuse of their (absent) host.

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<sup>17</sup> The novel gives: 'When a few minutes later I was called in to provide refreshments, the four gentlemen were discussing the relative merits of different sorts of sausage, and the atmosphere seemed on the surface at least quite convivial' (Ishiguro, p. 217).

It is interesting to note the gradual progression of this scene through subsequent drafts. In the handwritten yellow pad (shots 57-96) (G&H 51/8), we have only the arrival of the German ambassador at shot 81.

Shot 106 of a handwritten draft, yellow pad of 9 September (G&H 51/5) gives almost the full scene except for Ribbentrop's answer which appears as 'R. (answers).'

In shot 125 of Pinter's final draft (24 January 1991), the scene is complete with 'Frankfurters' making a nice juxtaposition with 'Dusseldorf' in the previous line.

<sup>18</sup> The other two stories are those of a tiger shot beneath a foreign dining table, and his father's service to an officer whose blunders had killed his son, Stevens's brother (Ishiguro, pp. 36-42).

Pinter's draft of 24 July (G&H 51/4) includes a note on both the tiger and the car scene: '2 Butler Tales. 1. Tiger [...] 2. Car.' But there is no tiger story in the final draft and it is the scene with its unspoken climax which remains.

In the Jhabvala screenplay Stevens senior tells the tiger story.

We see Stevens senior stop the car in a country lane, open the back door and stand silently blocking the frame. There is silence until the passengers falteringly apologise. Pinter has emphasised the point with 'Didn't have to say a word, you see. He was born with it' (Final draft, shot 36).

The two major crises in Stevens's life are moments of acute loss, the death of his father and the loss of Miss Kenton (when she announces her engagement to Benn). Each loss coincides with important events at Darlington Hall, the Peace Conference of 1923, and the secret meeting with the German Ambassador in the late thirties. In the novel, Stevens's concern with dignity at all costs leads him to silence at points when it is crucial that he speak. However, in Pinter's screenplay it is possible to see a man who cannot speak, whose emotions overwhelm him into incoherence.

This acute incoherence is most evident in the last exchange between Stevens and his father as the old man silently pleads for some sort of forgiveness: 'I hope I've been a good father to you.' Both Ishiguro and Pinter have Stevens dismiss this attempt at communication, saying that they can 'talk again in the morning', an opportunity which, inevitably, never comes (Ishiguro, p. 97) (Final draft, shot 69). But Pinter adds a phrase which Stevens cannot avoid - yet it is one to which it is impossible for him to respond:

Father            There's something I have to tell you. [...] I fell  
                          out of love with your mother. Your mother was  
                          a bitch. I loved her once but love went out of  
                          me when I found out what a bitch she was.  
                          Your mother was a bitch.

Silence.

Stevens        I'm glad you're feeling better.  
                          He leaves the room.

Final draft, shot 69<sup>19</sup>

Rather than a failure of emotional response, Pinter's Stevens reveals, through his silence, an emotion so acute that no words are possible.

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<sup>19</sup> The phrase '~~She never loved me, ever~~' has been deleted from a draft of 5 August (G&H 51/7). There is no mention of Stevens' mother in the novel.

Jhabvala follows this scene but omits 'bitch' and adds 'when I found her carrying on', losing the intensity and closing the definition, whereas Pinter leaves it open for the spectator to fill in.

Through the building of silence at moments of emotional tension, we come to know the Stevens of the screenplay rather well. When Miss Kenton makes one last effort to sound out his feelings for her we can almost hear them, dammed up inside:

Kenton            You must be a very contented man. You're at the top of your profession. You have everything under control. I can't imagine what more you might wish for in life.

A short silence.

Stevens            I'd like to discuss next week. We have the party from Scotland --

Final draft, shot 116.

In the novel, Stevens's reply closes off emotion though we might suspect it is there behind his wall of words: 'As far as I am concerned, Miss Kenton, my vocation will not be fulfilled until I have done all I can to see his lordship through the great tasks he has set himself' (Ishiguro 173).<sup>20</sup> In Pinter's silence we read that which is most real, leading the spectator to cover the gap with an object of her own.

As in the novel, Miss Kenton's desire is to remain with Stevens at Darlington Hall, a desire which remains unstated until the meeting with Stevens at the end. Of each of the three central characters, Pinter's treatment of Miss Kenton most closely matches the novel, and it is through Stevens's intense, unarticulated relationship with Miss Kenton that Pinter creates an object of desire for the spectator within the overall structure of the screenplay.

## PINTER'S SHAPING OF THE OBJECT WITHIN THE OVERALL STRUCTURE OF THE SCREENPLAY

### The Lack

While Lacanian theory offers a way of reading all film, Pinter's work emphasises the structure of desire, engaging the spectator with that which is most real because unstated and unseen. In screenplay after screenplay, Pinter's opening shots install a lack which the spectator desires to see filled, and which creates the drive throughout the work. In order to achieve this, Pinter focuses his screenplays through a central point of view

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<sup>20</sup> Jhabvala gives the gist of this speech to Stevens when talking to Mr Benn, a fellow butler.

which allows the spectator to participate in that character's desire. We do not (as earlier film theory supposes) identify with the character, or the image on screen, but are led, through that central character, to construct a parallel object of desire.<sup>21</sup>

Pinter's screenplay opens with an image of the Hall and park, over which a woman's voice speaks the words of a letter which Pinter has honed from the novel<sup>22</sup>:

It is seven years since I last wrote to you. I have  
left my husband. I am staying with a friend in Little  
Compton.

Final draft, shot 1.

And the voice continues over a shot of Stevens alone in a dust-sheeted bedroom: 'I often think of you', a phrase which Pinter has added (Pinter, Final draft, shot 2), and which speaks for both the unknown voice and the listener. In an earlier draft, Pinter had placed the voice over a shot of Stevens in his car,<sup>23</sup> but placing that voice in the empty house places it at the point of loss and desire for them both. Pinter creates the effect of the voice as object, Michel Chion's '*voix acousmatique*', the 'free-floating voice' which seems 'uncannily close to us, as if its origins were within us'.<sup>24</sup>

This is the invisible 'letter' that Pinter posts for the spectator, and which initiates the spectator's desire, causing her to see 'awry' with a look distorted by desire. It is this acute and invisible object which she is led to follow along the signifying chain of the screenplay. Žižek explains that 'if we look at a thing straight on, i.e., from a matter-of-fact, disinterested, "objective" perspective, we see nothing but a formless spot.' However, once our desire is engaged, an object emerges. Lacan's *objet petit a* cannot be perceived except 'by the look "distorted" by desire' since it '*does not exist for*

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<sup>21</sup> In this screenplay all but two scenes either contain Stevens or are able to be seen from his point of view. The two scenes without him (where Miss Kenton sits with Stevens senior after his fall, and the arrival of the Jewish maids) are scenes in which Stevens has either a familial or professional interest, and would be likely to gain details from Miss Kenton. In the Jhabvala screenplay, the focus is dissipated by the addition of scenes which will by their nature be kept from Stevens's knowledge, such as Miss Kenton coming across Lizzie and Charley kissing, or her evening in the pub with Mr Benn.

<sup>22</sup> Ishiguro gives: 'Miss Kenton states unambiguously that she has now, in fact, taken the step of moving out of Mr Benn's house in Helston and is presently lodging with an acquaintance in the nearby village of Little Compton' (Ishiguro, p. 48).

<sup>23</sup> Shot (1) of a handwritten draft of 22 June (G&H 51/9) gives 'Stevens driving.'

<sup>24</sup> Michel Chion, *La voix au cinéma*, (Paris: Cahiers du cinéma/Éditions de l'Étoile, 1982), pp 116-123, quoted by Slavoj Žižek, in *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture* (London: MIT Press, 1991), p. 126.

an "objective" look.' Objectively it is 'nothing at all, nothing of the desire itself which, viewed from a certain perspective, assumes the shape of "something."' <sup>25</sup> That unseen object/letter is a point of 'fixation [...] a center of gravity around which the symbolic order' [and here we can read the signifying chain of shots] 'is condemned to circle.' <sup>26</sup> It is a point to which both central character and spectator desire constantly to return.

### The Drive

Pinter intensifies that point of loss and desire by cutting from Stevens's imagined past, which is lacking because lost, to an empty, lacking present, each break renewing the spectator's desire to return. After that opening encounter with the lost object, Pinter transports us back to 1923 and Miss Kenton's engagement at Darlington Hall, and the constant bickering between herself and Stevens, behind which we read (as in the novel) evidence of suppressed emotions on both their parts. For example, in shot 37 she comes to tell Stevens that the decorative Chinaman stands in the wrong place, and she knows (without saying), as Stevens must also know, that it has been misplaced by Stevens's increasingly forgetful father. She tells Stevens that he must recognise what is happening before his father 'commits a major error':

Stevens            I'm afraid you can't talk to me like this, Miss Kenton.  
Miss Kenton        I'm afraid I can, Mr Stevens. I am the housekeeper in this  
                                  house. I am giving you serious advice.

Final draft, shot 38.<sup>27</sup>

Although she is the housekeeper, we can also read an emotional equality in the confrontation, as something emerges extra to concerns of their housekeeping.

Shots 81-2 cut back to the (lacking) present of 1954, before plunging us back (shots 83-116) to the development of Miss Kenton's relationship with Stevens, and Darlington's political blindness. Leaving the 'romance' theme at the beginning of Miss Kenton's relationship with Mr Benn, Pinter cuts to the present, and Stevens's journey towards her, as he hears her voice once more:

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<sup>25</sup> Slavoj Žižek, 'Looking Awry', *October*, 50 (1989), 30-55 (p. 34).

<sup>26</sup> Bruce Fink, *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 28.

<sup>27</sup> The scene appears in Ishiguro at pp. 57-59.

Is the view from the first floor bedroom the same? The lawn,  
the summerhouse, the Downs in the distance? It was magical.  
I was enchanted by it.

Final draft, shot 116d <sup>28</sup>

Once again, that voice is a lure onwards towards a resolution. In the next section (shots 119 - 135) she is lost to him in the past, as she announces her engagement to Mr Benn. But the true loss comes with the meeting in the present where she tells him that she has returned to her husband, and both as real person and fantasy object she becomes irretrievably lost, and therefore a true object of desire.

Within the resonance of shots, that object also emerges, so that the spectator's view of Stevens, evidently fascinated by the sight of Miss Kenton walking by the lake (Final draft, shot 99-102), recalls earlier shots when they walked there together (Final draft, shot 92). Elsewhere, Pinter uses tight intercutting to reveal unstated emotion. As the great Conference begins, Stevens and Miss Kenton are found arguing on the back stairs, intercut in a sequence of five shots with the arrival of the first guest. Stevens cannot know of the approaching arrival, but the spectator's knowledge creates an equivalence of Stevens's preoccupation with greater matters. And yet he stands as one transfixed, unable to move until Miss Kenton walks away (Final draft, shots 51, 51a, 51b, 51c, 52). A brief indication of this scene is given below.

The argument takes place at shot 51 and appears to be over, but she turns and calls him:

Miss Kenton Mr Stevens!

51a. Car arriving. The House.  
Lewis gets out.

51b. Backstairs corridor.  
Miss Kenton walks down the corridor to Stevens.

Miss Kenton From now on I would prefer it if you did not speak to me  
directly at all.

Stevens What are you talking about?

51c. Ext. The house.  
Lewis walking towards the front door.

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<sup>28</sup> Ishiguro gives : 'I was so fond of that view from the second-floor bedrooms overlooking the lawn with the downs visible in the distance.' (Ishiguro, p. 49, repeated at p. 180)

Pinter's phrase is also repeated: shots (5) and (116d), and first used as camera directions at shot (3) 'The lawn. The summerhouse. The Downs in the distance,' so that it has an added resonance for the reader of the screenplay.

52. Backstairs corridor.

Miss Kenton If it's necessary to send a message to me, please do it through a messenger. Or else write me a note.

The front doorbell rings.

I am sure our working relationship will be a great deal easier.

Stevens Miss Kenton --

Miss Kenton Thank you so much.

She walks away.

Her dialogue is based on that given by Ishiguro (p. 80), but the intercutting is Pinter's. In a bound draft of 29 October (G&H 51/3), the whole argument takes place at shot 51 and we then see the arrival of the first guest, shot 52. But an arrow points upwards from this shot, and a note 'overlap' suggests Pinter's intention to intercut here. Pinter can be seen to be fragmenting the form in order to intensify the effect of cinematic montage where, in the clash between shot and shot, something extra emerges. In the field of vision it emerges as 'the gaze qua object',<sup>29</sup> that invisible point from which the spectator is suspended in a relationship of anxiety or here, in *The Remains of the Day*, of desire.

The climax of novel and screenplay is the meeting at the end of the journey, when Miss Kenton tells Stevens that she has returned to her husband. But she adds that sometimes she thinks 'about a different life, a better life [...] For instance, I get to thinking about a life I might have had with you, Mr Stevens' (Ishiguro, p. 239) (Final draft, shot 142). In the novel Stevens tells the reader that his 'heart was breaking', but in the screenplay no such statement is needed, for we read it for ourselves:

143. Close up. His face.

144. The bus shelter. Rain.

### The 'Loop of Enjoyment' <sup>30</sup>

There is one more vital element to add to Pinter's restructuring of the novel, and that is the circular movement present in all the screenplays, where the invisible object of desire comes home. It is here in the overall structure of every screenplay that Pinter effects a return to the point at which his letter, his lost object, was first launched along the signifying chain of the screenplay.

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<sup>29</sup> Žižek, 'Looking Awry', *October*, p. 45.

<sup>30</sup> This is Žižek's description, Slavoj Žižek, *Tarrying with the Negative: Kant, Hegel, and the Critique of Ideology* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), Part III.

This narrative, which began at a point of loss, arrives at a point of reclamation which effects a greater loss. Had she been willing to return to Darlington Hall, Miss Kenton would have guaranteed Stevens's future happiness, but his object of desire would have been lost; it would change. Here, however, she becomes that eternally lost object on which the romance scenario is based, forever out of reach.

Stevens now faces both the loss of his articulated fantasy of dignity and greatness through service to Lord Darlington, and that acute, unstated loss of Miss Kenton. In effect, he must face the Real, that which exists beyond the fantasy construction of desire and which is the true centre of being. As Žižek emphasises, *'the "subject" is precisely the void that remains after all substantial content is taken away.'*<sup>31</sup>

In an early draft, Pinter has incorporated the speech given by Stevens at the end of the novel saying how he had trusted Lord Darlington: 'I can't even say I made my own mistakes' (draft of 9 September (G&H 51/5), shot 121). The novel adds: 'what dignity is there in that?' (Ishiguro, p. 243), a phrase which Pinter has omitted. However, in Pinter's final draft of 24 January 1991, all that remains is Stevens's repeated statement that he has given everything in the service of Lord Darlington. It is the speech of the stranger, sitting beside Stevens on the pier, that truly illuminates his plight:

Listen mate. Take my tip. Stop looking back. Looking back'll get you nowhere. Why don't you look forward? Look forward to the evening. [...] The evening's the best part of the day.

Final draft, shot 145.<sup>32</sup>

Knowing Stevens's story as we do, we have no need of further explanation from him. What the stranger is saying therefore stands clear, and it is through the contentment and tranquillity of the stranger's speech that we can see most clearly the loss and loneliness of Stevens's situation. Once again Pinter causes us to see 'awry', and in the gap between Stevens's desire and the speech of the stranger, a real object of loss and desire is revealed. Stevens comes face to face with the fact that his fantasy of 'dignity'

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<sup>31</sup> Slavoj Žižek, 'Grimaces of the Real, or When the Phallus Appears', *October*, 58 (1991), 45-68, (p. 64).

<sup>32</sup> The novel gives: 'Now, look, mate [...] Don't keep looking back all the time [...] you've got to keep looking forward [...] You've done your day's work. Now you can put your feet up and enjoy it. That's how I look at it. [...] The evening's the best part of the day' (Ishiguro, p. 243-44).

through service to Lord Darlington has created a sort of death-in-life, what Lacan calls a 'second death' when the object of desire obliterates all else.<sup>33</sup>

This sense of loss is further increased by the change of the final shot. In shot 121 of Pinter's draft of 9 September (G&H 51/5), our last sight of Stevens shows him tapping his foot to the music from the pier - as if he is making an attempt to integrate with the life around him, a new start, following the man's advice. However, Pinter's final draft (of 24 January) gives an altogether different reading:

The lights suddenly go on on the pier. Cheers from the onlookers [...] The crowd moves up the pier. Groups of girls and groups of boys call to each other. Some of them, laughing, chase each other through the crowd.

Stevens sits still. He suddenly stands and looks at the brilliantly-lit pier. He slowly walks towards the pier, gives a coin to the attendant in his booth, goes through the turnstile and walks away from the camera along the pier until he is lost in the crowd.

Stevens is not part of the crowd, but 'lost' in it, alone.<sup>34</sup> If we remember that Pinter is familiar with *Les Enfants du Paradis*<sup>35</sup>, we find a visual reference to one of the screen's most classic metaphors. The final frames of *Les Enfants du Paradis* find Baptiste separated from the object of his desire (Garance) in the great stream of humanity sweeping down the Boulevard du Crime, separating him further and further from a love which is already lost. In *The Remains of the Day* the scale is smaller, English domestic, the seaside pier; but for Stevens, lost in the holiday crowd, knowing his dreams are shattered, his future cast away, it is no less grave. No longer attempting greatness,

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<sup>33</sup> For Lacan the death drive is 'the inertia of *jouissance* which makes a person's love of his or her symptoms greater than any desire to change them.' Ellie Ragland, 'Lacan's Concept of the Death Drive' in *Essays on the Pleasures of Death: From Freud to Lacan* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 84-114 (p. 85).

<sup>34</sup> This change occurs in Pinter's draft of 29 October (G&H 51/3), where a line has been drawn through Stevens tapping his foot, and Pinter has handwritten the basis of the closing shot as it appears in the final draft, ending 'He walks slowly down pier and disappears [until he is lost] into the crowd.'

<sup>35</sup> Pinter quotes a fragment of dialogue in the *Turtle Diary* screenplay: Harold Pinter, *Turtle Diary*, in *The Comfort of Strangers and other Screenplays* (London: Faber and Faber, 1990), p. 127.

Stevens merges his plight with that of everyman in his inevitable progression into the dark, and in acceptance of that void, Stevens finally gains the true dignity he seeks.

But the void is not nothing. The Real invokes desire, and desire will continually circulate around that dynamic gap in a vain attempt to cover it over. Through Stevens's loss, a parallel 'object' is created for the spectator. In this screenplay Pinter intensifies that lack which exists beyond representation, engaging the spectator in the unconscious desire to cover it over with an hallucinatory object of her own.

## Chapter Four

## THE HANDMAID'S TALE

Pinter's screenplay of *The Handmaid's Tale* is particularly interesting, since it lends itself to a reading of Pinter's own political concerns, and the power struggles which critics have long noted in his work.<sup>1</sup> And yet Pinter has structured the screenplay so that what emerges most strongly from Atwood's dystopian feminist setting, is the shaping of an object of desire. This shaping has made Pinter's screenplay uniquely his, setting it apart from Atwood's novel,<sup>2</sup> and Schlöndorff's final film,<sup>3</sup> which differs substantially from Pinter's screenplay.<sup>4</sup> Pinter's treatment shows that the most repressive state, the most

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<sup>1</sup> Pinter has supported *Red Pepper*, a magazine concerned with 'green, socialist and feminist themes' (Subscription flier, *Red Pepper*); and see Pinter's article 'Caribbean Cold War', *Red Pepper*, 24 (May 1996), pp. 26-27.

The magazine was first published on 1 May 1994 and the date of its publication invites a connection with the underground organisation Mayday in Atwood's novel, formed to fight against a totalitarian state.

<sup>2</sup> Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale*, 1985 (London: Virago, 1987).

<sup>3</sup> Film of *The Handmaid's Tale*, made by Virgin/Cinecom/Bioskop, 1990, produced by Daniel Wilson, directed by Volker Schlöndorff.

<sup>4</sup> Having originally worked on the script for a year with Karel Reisz (the whole project took three years), Pinter did not feel like continuing with a new director (Schlöndorff). He explains that 'I left my name on the film because there was enough there to warrant it - just about. But it's not mine and to this day I've never published it' (Pinter quoted in Michael Billington, *The Life and Work of Harold Pinter*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1996), p. 304).

What follows is based on Pinter's unpublished screenplay and other papers in the Pinter Archive, Boxes 62, 63, 64, particularly that of February 1987 marked Daniel Wilson Productions Inc., referred to here as February/DW. This appears to be the last of three major drafts.

In order to avoid repeating the listings given by Gale and Hudgins for these three drafts, details are given below. As before, the archive box number is followed by their item number:

12 December 1986 (G&H 62/1)

2 February 1987 (G&H 62/2) (G&H give the date as 2 February 1989)

February 1987 (G&H 62/3) (February/DW).

Gale and Hudgins's references to other drafts will be given as they appear. Their full listing can be found at Steven H. Gale and Christopher C. Hudgins, 'The Harold Pinter

penetrating gaze of the state, will fail, for there is always something extra, secret and hidden which belongs to the individual.

#### DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PINTER'S SCREENPLAY AND THE NOVEL

Atwood's novel is in the form of a journal written by an unnamed woman and set in the brutal fundamentalist state of Gilead. With her husband and small daughter she has attempted to cross the border to freedom, and failed. She is captured, her husband and daughter lost to her. For this attempted escape she faces service in the toxic waste dumps of the penal colonies, and a slow, irradiated death. However, tests prove that she is one of the few fertile women in Gilead and therefore one of the 'privileged' few to be put into service as a Handmaid.<sup>5</sup> Sent to the home of a Commander, one of the ruling minority, she is to act as surrogate womb for the conception of new life, lying supine between husband and wife in the act of procreation. This ceremony, prescribed by the state, re-enacts the Old Testament story of Rachel and her maid Bilhah. The Commander takes her as his mistress, and when his wife discovers the fact she once again faces either the slow death of the toxic wastes or public execution. Whisked away by the state security police (the Eyes) she is told that she is being rescued by the underground organisation Mayday, but we are never sure, and the Historical Notes on which the novel ends leaves the reader with that doubt (Atwood, pp. 323-4).

There are differences between Atwood's novel, Pinter's screenplay, and Schlöndorff's finished film, based on that screenplay. In all three, the state, allied to the name of God, attempts to penetrate and control each individual. Atwood's heroine appears passive and vulnerable in the face of such power, her fate dependent on chance. It is Serena, the Commander's wife, who sends her to become pregnant by the chauffeur, Nick, and who on discovery of her liaison with the Commander will send her to her death. Nick and the possibility of a new baby become the focus of her attention, to the extent that she is no longer interested in helping her fellow Handmaid in Mayday.<sup>6</sup>

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Archives II: A Description of the Filmscript Materials in the Archive in the British Library', *The Pinter Review* (1995 and 1996), 101-142, (pp. 139-141).

<sup>5</sup> 'Where I am is not a prison but a privilege, as Aunt Lydia said' (Atwood, p. 18).

<sup>6</sup> 'Ofglen is giving up on me. She whispers less [...] I feel relief' (Atwood, p. 283).

The book is, of course, a warning. No luridly fictional account of the future, copies of news cuttings in Pinter's archive show that the state of Gilead (as indicated in Atwood's Historical Notes) all have their basis in fact.<sup>7</sup> Atwood has merely gathered the examples into one small nightmare state. It is this nightmare which Schlöndorff has emphasised.

#### DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PINTER'S SCREENPLAY AND THE FILM

As Schlöndorff explains:

I felt that it wasn't so important to stress the political, sociological, or social aspects, but instead to enter within the psyche of the character and understand that this is a sort of nightmare she has. And the logic of a dream or nightmare is far stronger than the logic of reality.<sup>8</sup>

As the film opens, the family are captured and the mother screams on and on, for her murdered husband, her lost child, as she is dragged away at gunpoint. We then cut to a scene of darkness and chaos, where crowds of women are herded into trucks formerly used for livestock. We see the side of one truck with the designation crossed through, and a soldier adding the figure 116 and the female symbol, a clear statement of the status of the women inside, as well as a direct reference to actual historical atrocities. A woman pleads 'You've made a mistake, I know. Please.' Nuns fight against transportation, screaming 'You can't make me break my vows.' In Schlöndorff too there is more evidence of the poisoned, toxic land which has caused sterility (we see women in masks raking the side of the rail tracks, and a lorry overturned, and police wearing gas masks). Schlöndorff spells out the violence and increases the fear; Kate is instructed to place her arm in a machine; only afterwards do we learn that it is for the attachment of a security bracelet. As the women arrive at night at the Handmaids' Centre three bodies are seen hanging on the wall outside and there is a clear view of a

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<sup>7</sup> Some examples are: a report by Sheila O'Donovan, *National Examiner*, 30 July 1985, of Communist women forced to produce babies in Romania under Ceausescu's regime; *Globe and Mail* correspondent William Johnson, reports on a blend of racism, nationalism and religion in Christian churches in the United States (article dated by hand, 8 October 1985, p. 49); Anne Sofer, *The Times*, 2 June 1986, reports on the reverse of female emancipation in Iran.

Gale and Hudgins list brief details of some cuttings at 63/1.

<sup>8</sup> Volker Schlöndorff, Production Notes for *The Handmaid's Tale* (Simona Benzakein with Jean-Baptiste Meyer, International Press In Berlin, Publicity in Europe, ODYSSEY Cinecon, 8-14 February, 1990) p.5.

headless corpse at a state execution. Pinter's Centre is 'an old high school' seen 'Through spring foliage [...] in sunlight.' 'Incantation can be heard' (February/DW, shot 26). In loose handwritten notes of 7 September, shot 6 (G&H 63/3), Pinter has crossed through the added description of ~~Barbed wire fence. Guards. Guns in foreground.~~ The threat is in no way lessened by being hidden.

As Schlöndorff spells out the fearful images, so he spells out the desire. In the final scene of Kate, alone in the mountains, waiting for her 'baby to be born into a different world', she tells the spectator that one day she will find her lost daughter, Jill. But reunion with Jill appears at best problematic.<sup>9</sup> Cynthia Baughman refers to the look of the film as both 'chilly and opulent [...] a land where everything is visible, and nothing is warm, and the narrative locks into place immediately.'<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately, by directly stating and showing, the finished film tends to lock the spectator out. It is Pinter who recreates what is real for the spectator: an invisible object which emerges from what is extra to word and image on screen.

#### PINTER'S SHAPING OF THE OBJECT WITHIN THE NARRATIVE

While Schlöndorff is correct in stating that 'the logic of a dream or nightmare is far stronger than the logic of reality', the essence of a dream lies in the dreamwork itself, in other words, in its form. As Žižek explains, it is a triple structure, consisting of the '*manifest dream-text*, the *latent dream-content* or thought and the *unconscious desire* articulated in a dream.'<sup>11</sup> Between the latent thought and the manifest text, the object of desire emerges as Pinter's screenplay creates a parallel object for the spectator. That object is the daughter; both real child and Imaginary object which dictates the mother's actions. Pinter has cleared the ground around that central figure, eliminating Luke in the opening sequence, and placing Jill safely out of reach beyond Gilead; an elusive yet tangible object of desire.<sup>12</sup> In Pinter's screenplay Kate is no longer the

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<sup>9</sup> Baz Bamigboye reports that 'The first ending that was shot was considered too grim by special preview audiences in New York and a new 'happier' ending was shot', 'Dark, Fertile Visions of our Future Maid in Hell', *Daily Mail*, 14 February 1990, p. 32.

<sup>10</sup> Cynthia Baughman, '*The Handmaid's Tale*', *The Pinter Review* (1990), 92-96 (p. 93).

<sup>11</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, (London: Verso, 1989), p. 13.

<sup>12</sup> Schlöndorff follows Pinter in eliminating Luke but follows Atwood (p. 240) in having Jill remain in Gilead.

passive victim of state control, but shows a strength of character, and courage, which enables her to achieve her freedom and her daughter. The most significant change between novel and screenplay is that in Pinter's screenplay she kills the Commander. When she is taken away, we go with her and Nick in the van so that we know she is safe.<sup>13</sup> Finally, we see her approach a reunion with her daughter. Within narrative and structure Pinter shows each character operating according to their desire, and recreates a parallel object for the spectator.

In Gilead the gaze of the state, the Law, the big Other, attempts to penetrate and thereby control each individual. Like Bentham's model of the panopticon, in which the subject perceives herself to be under constant surveillance from a central, regulatory gaze, the state of Gilead attempts to regulate the behaviour of every subject. Aligning itself with the name of God to boost its omnipotence, the state attempts to penetrate each subject through fear of that ever watchful eye.<sup>14</sup> The state police who guard the prevailing ideology are called 'Eyes'; they work overtly from black vans decorated with a winged eye, or covertly as chauffeurs, interpreters and others among the population.<sup>15</sup> In this panoptic state, one never knows if an Eye is watching. However, the gaze of the law is blind; something always escapes. In the split between subject and Other the subject's desire (what is most real for the subject) emerges. This is the pattern emphasised by Pinter in his reshaping of the novel.

While Atwood outlines the takeover of power through the monetary system, the control of the individual through one central 'Compubank', with brief reference to the news on television (Chapter 28), Pinter's early drafts dramatise the take-over of power through the capture of vision. From his first handwritten notes of 3 July (G&H 63/2), Pinter outlines:

Tip O'Neil figure speaking on TV  
- Pull plugs  
Blackout.

The shot reappears in a draft fragment of 29 August,<sup>16</sup> where a figure on television speaks of the threat to democracy as the screen is blacked out. A draft of 7 September

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<sup>13</sup> Schlöndorff follows Pinter on both points.

<sup>14</sup> In the novel the Commander's bible reading concludes with "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth" (Atwood, pp. 102-3).

<sup>15</sup> 'Most of the interpreters are Eyes, or so it's said' (Atwood, p. 38).

<sup>16</sup> Notes of 29 August are beneath those of 3 July and are not listed by G&H.

(G&H 63/3) shows the blackout of 'A grey haired man talking of a Threat to government', followed by the blackout of other channels:

- 5a. A football match.
- 5b. Blackout. Confused sounds.
- 5c. Chaos outside Congress. Cameramen. Police. Army.  
Sound of gunfire.  
Camera suddenly wrenched up. Batons. Blackout.
- 5d. Silent channel.
- 5e. Silent channel.
- 5f. Three men, 2 generals, 1 man with a dogcollar.

General ... State of Emergency. Stay in your homes.  
Everything is under control.

Man God is with us. Let us pray, for God is with us.

Draft of 7 September (G&H 63/3)<sup>17</sup>

The camera suddenly wrenched up (5c) denies the subject the means to control her own world, cuts off the possibility of knowledge through her own gaze. When communication is reinstated, we find that God has been installed within state power, reinforcing the attempted penetration of each subject by the all-powerful patriarchal gaze. Although Pinter changes this opening (discussed later in this chapter), Pinter installs within each draft a sense of a powerful state gaze.

For example, Pinter has recreated the sense of an omnipotent presence. Through successive drafts we see 'a photograph of a grey haired man, benign and avuncular: the Leader', in the chapel, in the dormitory at the Handmaid's centre, and in the hall of the Commander's house.<sup>18</sup> But benign as it appears, the gaze of the state is lethal.

The handmaids are expressly forbidden to expose themselves to any other gaze, and to do so means death. Pinter has underlined this fact with a scene where Kate, in shock after her first experience of 'The Ceremony', stands naked at the window, looking out.<sup>19</sup> Nick, the chauffeur, comes to her room to warn her:

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<sup>17</sup> 'Everything is under control' comes in Atwood, p. 183.

<sup>18</sup> Drafts of: 12 December 1986, shots 2, 12, 24; 2 February 1987, shots 17, 27, 40; and February/DW, shots 17, 27 and 40.

<sup>19</sup> In the novel it is her third posting (Atwood, pp. 24-25).

Nick Are you crazy? You could be seen. Don't you realise that? You must never ..... do that. Again. You understand?

She stares at him.

They could kill you for it.<sup>20</sup>

Later in the screenplay, a handmaid is hanged for the offence of 'unchastity'.<sup>21</sup> Only the state is allowed such total penetration of its subjects through the operation of its own powerful gaze.

The Handmaids are hidden from sight by the white wings of their head-dresses (like blinkers) and their veils, and forbidden to operate a gaze of their own. (They are 'not supposed to look at each other.'<sup>22</sup>) At their dedication in the prison chapel, the 'Aunts' (wardresses) fit head-dresses on the heads of the Handmaids, as the priest declares:

You will look neither to the right nor to the left.

You will ~~look only to God.~~ [You will remain steadfast]

I pronounce you Handmaiden in the eyes [sight] of God.

This early draft is found in a handwritten pad dated 22 November, and remains in subsequent drafts with little alteration, except that the second line reads 'You will remain steadfast and true.'<sup>23</sup>

The state not only denies a gaze to the majority of its subjects, but through manipulation of language performs an effectual blinding. Pinter has stated that part of the way that power works in our society is through the use of language as subversive element, the way that 'actual facts simply do not correspond to the language used.' He refers to:

a very successful pattern of lies which the government actually tells to its citizens and ... is repeated [in some of] the media. So that you're told you're a happy man, ... that everything is fine, [...] that

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<sup>20</sup> The shot appears in all three final drafts, 12 December 1986, shot 50; 2 February 1987, shot 71; February/DW, shot 71.

<sup>21</sup> Pinter February/DW, shot 43. In Atwood the 'crime' remains unspecified, leaving the writer to speculate 'reading? No, that's only a hand cut off, on the third conviction. Unchastity, or an attempt on the life of her Commander?' (Atwood, p. 287).

<sup>22</sup> Handwritten addition to draft of 12 December, shot 92, included in 2 February, shot 108 and February/DW, shot 110. Atwood gives 'The white wings [...] are prescribed issue; they are to keep us from seeing, but also from being seen' (Atwood, p. 18).

<sup>23</sup> Drafts of 12 December, shot 31; 2 February, shot 48; February/DW, shot 48. The draft of 22 November is not listed by Gale and Hudgins.

this is a free country, ... a democracy [...] And we say, yes, that must be the case.<sup>24</sup>

The process is exemplified in Gilead where the state causes the subject to see, and be seen, *differently*.

At the Gileadean Information Centre 'silent television screens' show 'On some screens images of war; on others prayer meetings' (February/DW, shot 76). It is an effective brainwashing which, by conflating religion and war, obscures the moral divide and pre-empts any questioning of the role of the state by the individual. This can be seen at work in an early draft of a speech by the Commander, on television (later omitted):

~~in the name~~ of God, we intend to eliminate the scum of this ~~world~~<sup>X</sup> who infect the body of God. Who offend the pride and the sanctity of God. Those who leave their bile and vomit across the sacred ~~soul~~ ['face' (handwritten)] of Jesus, that Jesus who lived and who bled and who died for us.

<sup>X</sup>[handwritten in margin: 'that still exists in this country and who infect']

17 October (G&H 64/5), shot 128.

The armed forces obscure their negative role under the guise of 'Angels', thus the television news states that in the Appalachian Highlands 'the Angels of the Apocalypse, Fourth Division, are smoking out a pocket of Baptist guerrillas. They're getting air support from the Twenty First battalion of the Angels of Light' (February/DW, shot 90).<sup>25</sup> The wardresses in charge of the Handmaids wield their electric cattle prods and are designated 'Aunts'; another arm of a state which has replaced natural human relations with state authority. 'Salvaging' is the name given to those murdered in the name of 'duty' by the state, as in the case of the woman 'found guilty of the seduction of and fornication with an Officer of our heroic forces' (February/DW, shot 148). 'Particution' is the name given to the murder of political enemies of the state, such as the member of the underground who, convicted of a rape he did not commit, is torn to pieces by the crowd (February/DW, shot 148).<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Pinter quoted by Lois Gordon, 'Harold Pinter in New York', *The Pinter Review* (1989), 48-52, (pp. 49-50).

<sup>25</sup> Pinter follows Atwood, p. 92.

<sup>26</sup> Atwood chapters 42 and 43.

Words like 'Freedom' and 'Saved' become meaningless. Aunt Lydia, instructing the Handmaids, shows them 'a bleached porn flick' of a 'naked woman [...] hanging by chains from the ceiling, being caned'. She tells them:

You have been saved from that! In those days - in those "free" days - you were considered an animal [...] You have been saved from total humiliation, from the rape of the spirit even more than that of the body. You have had your dignity restored to you [...] You are free!

February/DW, shot 96.<sup>27</sup>

Pinter shows both lack of freedom and the treatment of women as animals in the new regime. He has added a scene in the Club (early drafts refer to it as a brothel)<sup>28</sup> where a man mounts a girl, as at a rodeo, riding her until she collapses:

By the bar a large man suddenly jumps on the back of one of the girls, swinging his hat in the air. The girl collapses, the man on top of her.  
Laughter and shouts.

February/DW, shot 141.

This action is intercut with the Commander asking Kate (now renamed Offred) to go upstairs to 'a nice room' he has reserved for them, underlining a subtler but similar abuse of women designated for use by the state. Those who work in the brothel have only one alternative, the toxic dumps of the colonies. As Kate's friend Moira explains, 'They figure you have one year maximum there before your nose falls off. They stuck something up my ass and told me I only had two alternatives - the Colonies or here. So I said here.' (February/DW, shot 140).<sup>29</sup> (In Pinter's screenplay (and Schlöndorff's film) they have also amputated her hand.) There is essentially no freedom, no dignity, no safety.

Kate and other women like her, who have offended against the state, are state commodities and invisible as individuals. On arrival at the Commander's house, Serena

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<sup>27</sup> Pinter has modified this speech between the draft of 12 December, shot 58, and this final version. In the earlier draft the speech is given in the third person. 'You have been saved. [...] In the world that was, a woman was regarded as an animal. She was treated as an animal.' Pinter's final draft speaks directly to the spectator.

<sup>28</sup> Drafts of 1 October (G&H 64/2), shot 52, and 8 October (G&H 64/3), shot 57.

<sup>29</sup> Pinter has shortened the odds. Atwood gives 'three years [...] before your nose falls off and your skin pulls away like rubber gloves' (Atwood, p. 260). 'They stuck something up my ass' is Pinter's succinct addition.

gives Kate a card on which she reads her new name 'Offred', a chattel 'of Fred' (February/DW (56)). She is made to repeat it, placing the stress on 'Fred.' Pinter dramatises this invisibility in a scene in the kitchen, soon after Kate/Offred has arrived at the Commander's house:

Offred           What happened to the one before me?

Silence

Cora             What one before?

February/DW, shot 72.

Later, Offred finds that her fellow Handmaid has been replaced without warning:

Offred           Where is Ofglen?

Handmaid       I am Ofglen.

February/DW, shot 151.<sup>30</sup>

To a lesser degree, all women, the wives and daughters of Commanders, and the Marthas, the Econwives of the lower, working classes, are made invisible as individuals by their colour-coded dress.<sup>31</sup>

Both men and women are named, dressed and coded by the state, but that classification is never complete, something always escapes. For example, the Commander has his official state title, but is Fred to his friends. Serena Joy is neither serene nor joyous, and the Marthas in the privacy of their kitchen are Rita and Cora. Atwood's heroine names neither herself nor her daughter to the reader, although her name is important in retaining a sense of identity, for she tells us 'I repeat my former name, remind myself of what I once could do, how others saw me' (Atwood, p. 108). She nevertheless exists as a real presence beyond the Symbolic codes of the text. As with Pinter, there is an awareness of something more real, that is left over. Pinter has named mother and daughter to the reader of the screenplay, but (except for one telling incident) withholds those names from the screen. Jill is named by Kate only as 'my daughter.' When towards the end of the screenplay Kate, in a moment of complicity, tells Ofglen her own real (former) name, it has the effect of a gift carefully given (February/DW, shot 110). Elsewhere, in the nightclub scene, Pinter has the Commander introduce Kate to his friends as 'Mary Lou' (February/DW, shot 138),<sup>32</sup> a name so patently false that once

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<sup>30</sup> This exchange is referred to in Atwood, p. 294.

<sup>31</sup> The importance of this coding can be seen in Pinter's final draft, of February/DW, which lists the dress coding as a separate covering page, following Atwood's description throughout the novel, eg the Marthas dressed in 'dull green' (Atwood, p. 19).

<sup>32</sup> Schlöndorff has his Handmaids (including Moira and Kate) exchange their real names soon after arrival at the Centre, losing the effect of the secret, hidden self.

again we become aware of the way that the real subject exists beyond any form of representation.

Joan Copjec points out that the Panoptic gaze is used by feminism to define 'the situation of the woman under patriarchy: that is, it is the very image of the structure that obliges the woman to monitor herself with a patriarchal eye.'<sup>33</sup> She quotes a passage from *Re-vision*, a collection of feminist essays on film which refers to Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* and his examination of Bentham's panoptic model:

The dissociation of the see/being seen dyad [which the panoptic arrangement of the central tower and annular arrangement ensures] and the sense of permanent visibility seem perfectly to describe the condition not only of the inmate in Bentham's prison but of the woman as well. For defined in terms of her visibility, she carries her own Panopticon with her wherever she goes, her self-image a function of her being for another.<sup>34</sup>

As Copjec points out, this description of the panoptic gaze defines not only 'the total visibility of the woman under patriarchy [but] of any subject under any social order,'<sup>35</sup> a view which Lacan opposes. Copjec cites Bachelard's formulation of an 'orthopsychic relation' which, '(unlike the panoptic one) [...] allows thought to remain *hidden*, even under the most intense scrutiny.' In this formulation the subject is split in an 'extimate' or 'objective relation to the self'. It is this objective relation that:

guarantees that thought will never become totally coincident with the forms of the institution. Thought will be split, rather, between belief in what the institution makes manifest and suspicion about what it is keeping secret.<sup>36</sup>

What is most real for the psychoanalytic subject, as well as the subjects within the panoptic state of Gilead, is that which is hidden. Pinter's shaping of the screenplay reinforces the Lacanian position that men and women are both subject to the law (the Lacanian Symbolic) and split from it, so that there is always something left over - which is the subject's desire. The subject therefore acts in ways which are embedded in the law and ways which are hidden from it.

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<sup>33</sup> Joan Copjec, 'The Orthopsychic Subject: Film Theory and the Reception of Lacan,' in *Read My Desire: Lacan Against the Historicists*, (London: MIT Press, 1994), pp. 15-38 (p. 17).

<sup>34</sup> Copjec quoting *Re-vision*, p. 16.

<sup>35</sup> Copjec, p. 17.

<sup>36</sup> Copjec, pp. 27-28

Atwood's heroine remains passive until the last, subjected to the gaze of the state and feminist definitions of the female under patriarchy. She submits to her role as Handmaid, and loses interest in helping Ofglen's 'grapevine'; when Ofglen asks her to search the Commander's room, she makes excuses (Atwood, p. 282). Once Kate's interest in Nick deepens, especially when it seems possible that she carries his child, she loses interest in escape to another life, saying 'I want to be here, with Nick' (Atwood, p. 283). This point is noted by Grace Epstein who adds that 'Historically romance has placated women with promises of familial fulfilment, effectively silencing their opposition to the system of patriarchal oppression.'<sup>37</sup> Even the final danger in which Atwood's heroine finds herself comes not from volition, but from an act of enforced acquiescence when the Commander takes her secretly to his club, and Serena discovers it. This gives Serena the power to send her to her death in the colonies. In the novel, both Serena and the Commander watch as Kate is taken away in the black 'Eyes' van, Nick having disappeared after telling her to trust him, to go with them, that it is 'Mayday' (Atwood, pp. 305-6). But neither she nor the reader are ever sure that Nick can be trusted, or returns her feelings, whether she is being rescued or betrayed, a point also made by Epstein (Epstein, p. 55). The last words in the journal are 'Whether this is my end or a new beginning I have no way of knowing [...] And so I step up, into the darkness within; or else the light' (Atwood, p. 307). And we never do know. Although she exists as a presence beyond the confines of the text, Atwood's Offred appears to be subsumed under the disabling gaze of patriarchy, while Pinter's Offred is not.

Epstein finds in *The Handmaid's Tale* the oedipalized structure of the Hollywood romance, as defined by psychoanalytic critics such as Laura Mulvey and Teresa de Lauretis. Here, 'a male hero journeys away from the family (and particularly the mother) and enters the Symbolic Order of culture as an individuated subject.' In this scenario, Epstein notes that, 'a woman functions as an "element of plot-space" to advance the actions of the hero, signifying both what the hero is not, and/or what he must overcome.'<sup>38</sup> However, for Lacan, both men and women are subject to the Symbolic, both inextricably linked and irreparably split from it. As Lacan states, 'Men and women are signifiers bound to the common usage of language.'<sup>39</sup> And it is through that which

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<sup>37</sup> Grace Epstein, 'Nothing to Fight for: Repression of the Romance Plot in Harold Pinter's Screenplay of *The Handmaid's Tale*', *The Pinter Review*, 1992, pp. 54-60 (p. 55).

<sup>38</sup> Epstein paraphrasing Mulvey and de Lauretis, p. 55.

<sup>39</sup> Lacan, Seminar XX, p. 36, quoted by Jacqueline Rose, Introduction II, in *Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the École Freudienne*, ed. by Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose (London: W. W. Norton, 1982), pp. 27-57, (p. 49).

lies beyond language in the sense of something extra, left over, that the subject comes into being.

In her feminist reading of Pinter's screenplay, based on Schlöndorff's finished film, Epstein finds that 'Hollywood's classic tradition of dealing with women invaded the film at the last minute to reassert the romance plot assaulted by Atwood' (Epstein, p. 54). Epstein finds in Atwood's novel a revelation of 'romance as problematic for women and pregnancy as a further complication to their oppression' (Epstein, p. 56). However, for Epstein (without sight of Pinter's manuscripts and working only from Schlöndorff's finished film)<sup>40</sup> 'romance' is the Hollywood romance, of Kate with Luke and Kate with Nick:

This woman who has helped her friend execute an escape, who moments earlier has urged her lover to escape with her, who has slain the Commander in broad daylight, daring to inscribe her desire on a male body, collapses at the first sign of heroism from Nick, begging *him* not to leave *her* (Schlöndorff). Why? [...] that's romance.' <sup>41</sup>

But this is not Pinter's 'romance.' <sup>42</sup> What is open to question is the definition of *romance*. Given a different reading of the term it can be argued that it is the romance theme which Pinter elicits from all his screenplays, and that *The Handmaid's Tale*, with its dystopian feminist setting, is changed by Pinter into a paradigm of modern romance. Pinter's romance is that of the '*paysage interieur*',<sup>43</sup> the eternally lost object, half-glimpsed between trees, an object of enchantment encountered only in fantasy or dream, or as object of horror, turning to threat, and pressing too close. It is this acute, invisible object which approaches a reading of Lacan's *objet petit a*, where the subject's fantasy object is constantly engaged in 'fill[ing] out a certain void, lack, empty place in the Other', and which is 'literally our only substance, the only positive support of our being, the only point that gives consistency to the subject.'<sup>44</sup> It is this small object which

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<sup>40</sup> Although Epstein states that the screenplay was published but unavailable at the time of her article, it has not in fact been published (Epstein, note 6, p. 60, and see my footnote 4, this chapter).

<sup>41</sup> Epstein, p. 59.

<sup>42</sup> Pinter's Kate does not plead with Nick but is 'bewildered' by events (February/DW, shot 173).

<sup>43</sup> A definition of romance given by J. A. Cuddon, *Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, 3rd edn (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992).

<sup>44</sup> Žižek, *Ideology*, pp. 74-75.

is most real for the subject (whether male or female), eluding even the most restrictive power.

Pinter emphasises the empowerment of the female. One of the ways he does this is to highlight the use of cattle prods as symbols of phallic power. In a handwritten draft of 29 October,<sup>45</sup> Moira, Kate's lesbian friend, refers to an aunt saying: 'She's got a great big prick', followed in brackets by ('What a prick she is'). These overt statements are discarded in later drafts, but Pinter has, nevertheless, emphasised the phallic. His screenplay enacts a story related at second hand in the novel, showing Moira effecting an escape by tying up an aunt in the washroom and taking her clothes:

Int. Washroom. Dawn.

Aunt Elizabeth is on the floor. Moira is kneeling on her back, holding the cattle prod, pressing her forehead down onto the floor. She prods her.

Moira Keep quiet and don't dare look up or I'll kill you. I mean it.  
Offred comes in quietly, takes the cattle prod.

February/DW, shot 99.

Whereas Atwood has Moira standing behind the aunt, holding a lever from the lavatory cistern (Atwood, p. 140), Pinter has replaced it with the ironic symbol of patriarchal power. It is Moira, imprisoned for 'gender treachery' (February/DW, shot 22), who actively resists coercion by the powerful gaze of the state. In Pinter's screenplay, Offred plays an active and crucial part in Moira's escape. And whereas Atwood's heroine, once pregnant, wants only to stay with the baby's father, Nick, and loses interest in helping Mayday, Pinter's heroine wants to escape and take Nick with her:

Offred: Do you want to get out? Could we get out together?

He turns to look at her.

Nick: Maybe.

February/DW, shot 146.

In Atwood, not only the female but the male is disabled by the state. The lower order of male workers are effectively 'castrated' or 'feminised' since any sexual activity not sanctioned by the state is a punishable offence: 'They have no outlets now except themselves, and that's a sacrilege' (Atwood, p. 32). As Pinter empowers the female, so he also empowers the male. For example, he has added the fact that Nick has a video

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<sup>45</sup> Box 63. (Not listed by Gale and Hudgins).

trained on Offred's window which he can erase at will,<sup>46</sup> and the Commander refers to him as 'like a son.'<sup>47</sup> Nick therefore operates as part of the patriarchal structure, and in ways that are hidden from it (as part of the rebel underground movement, Mayday). With Atwood's Nick we are never sure whether he is a pawn of the state or not.

In the external, physical world it is of course sometimes possible for the state to penetrate the movement of its citizens. The television newscast states 'A team of Eyes, working with an inside informant in Vermont, has cracked an underground espionage ring'.<sup>48</sup> But, as the Commander also admits to Offred, that gaze is imperfect and cannot adequately quell the alternative hidden movement of the underground. In a speech added by Pinter, the Commander speaks on television of 'a significant breakthrough for our security forces', but admits to Offred that 'It's tough. They keep bobbing up. You squash one bunch and another comes out from nowhere' (February/DW, shot 167).

What is most real for the subjects within the panoptic state of Gilead, as for the psychoanalytic subject, is that which is hidden, for even under the most restrictive law something resists and exists as extra to that law, and that is individual desire. It is through this split between subject and the law (the Other) that 'The subject emerges [...] as a desiring being [...] an effect of the law but certainly not a realization of it.' (Copjec, p. 36). Rather than filling a gap created by the law, desire covers it over, veils it, with an object of the subject's own. In Pinter's final drafts there is a brief scene of Offred/Kate in her room at night: 'Pitch black./Searchlight./Pitch black.' In this darkness, Nick enters and they make love (February/DW, shots 79-82). A later shot, 106, shows Offred looking out of her window and as the searchlight sweeps her room 'She bends away'. It is a visual metaphor for the inability of the panoptic patriarchal gaze to truly penetrate the subject.

What is hidden from sight of the Gileadean gaze is mirrored in the way that Pinter works with language. Peter Hall has referred to the way that Pinter writes, embedding the emotion in the language so that actors have first to find, enlarge and express that

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<sup>46</sup> Box 63, draft of loose pages dated 24 October, shot 59 gives, 'I've got a video on your window. Don't worry. I'll wipe the tape. Ssh. Ssh.' This is dropped from later drafts. (This draft is not listed by Gale and Hudgins.)

<sup>47</sup> Cdr: 'Nick's a great guy. Everybody likes Nick.' [handwritten: 'You know what he is? He's like a son to me'] 12 December, shot 121, included in February/DW, shot 143.

<sup>48</sup> February/DW, shot 64. This is a rephrasing of Atwood, p. 93: 'an underground espionage ring has been cracked, by a team of Eyes, working with an inside informant.'

emotion, before hiding it away; 'when the actors have found how to wear their hearts on their sleeves and actually show their emotions, you then have to start a process where they hide their emotions.'<sup>49</sup> This masking of emotion within language can be seen at work in several places in the draft manuscripts. For example, Serena admits to Offred that she has known for four weeks that her daughter is alive, adding that she wasn't sure that it would be good for her to know. Offred's response is immediate:

O                    Good for me? You bitch!

K moves violently toward her.

                          You bitch!

S does not flinch.

K sits, head in hands.

                          whispers

                          How is she?<sup>50</sup>

In the draft of 12 December, this speech is modified. When Serena tells her that she wasn't sure it would be good for her to know:

                          Offred stares at her, eyes blazing.

                          Serena does not flinch.

                          Offred sits, head in hands, whispers:

Off                    How is she?<sup>51</sup>

The embedding of emotion has a direct relationship to Pinter's use of irony to express what is not being said, as in an exchange between Offred and Moira omitted from the final draft. In the Handmaid's Centre Offred crawls under the beds to Moira, whose escape attempt has failed, and who has been badly beaten:

Offred                How you doing?

Moira                Great. I love it here. How about you? How's the family up at the house?

Offred                Real fun.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Catherine Itzin and Simon Trussler, 'Directing Pinter', interview with Peter Hall, *Theatre Quarterly*, 4 (1974), 4-16, (p. 8).

<sup>50</sup> Box 63. Handwritten draft found at page 10, among group of 18 loose yellow pages, top page dated 'Nov. 3'. (Not listed by Gale and Hudgins).

<sup>51</sup> 12 December, shot 66, 2 February, 79 and February/DW, 83.

<sup>52</sup> Box 63. Loose pages below those dated 5 February, shot 94a. (Not listed by Gale and Hudgins).

Bitter ironies appear in Pinter's juxtaposition of shots, as when, following the hanging of a Handmaid for 'unchastity' (February/DW, shot 43) and the view of the sun beating down on the hanging body (shots 44-45), we cut to the Handmaids' Centre and a loudspeaker proclaiming 'Blessed are the merciful' (shot 46).

All characters can be seen to operate in response to the ubiquitous eye of state law, and in ways which are hidden from it. There is something stronger than the Law, the blind Symbolic gaze of the state, and that is individual desire. Offred and Nick making love under cover of darkness defeat that gaze: Offred: 'Didn't we just break the law?' Nick '[W]e did. We tore it apart.'<sup>53</sup> The doctor offers Offred a clandestine impregnation, behind a locked door,<sup>54</sup> and while the Commander's wife is 'in bed early',<sup>55</sup> the Commander entertains Offred in his study playing a forbidden word game, watching her read the forbidden magazines, and taking her to his 'forbidden' Club to make love to her there. Meanwhile Serena, unknown to the Commander, arranges for Offred to become pregnant by a forbidden liaison with Nick, one that Kate already desires and, in Pinter's screenplay, has already consummated.<sup>56</sup>

As can be seen, not only members of the underground, like Nick, but even those most representative of the state, act under cover of its all-powerful gaze. For Serena-Joy it is the desire for a child which motivates her, a desire which reflects that of Kate longing to be reunited with her own lost child. Pinter has made the comparison clear: Serena tells Kate 'You see, we have a lot in common. We could have motherhood in common.' Serena's desire is clearer still earlier in the same shot where she states emphatically:

Serena            Why do you think I lie on a bed with you on my belly?  
                           Why do you think? [...]  
                           Because a baby would make my life whole!

February/DW, shot 83.

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<sup>53</sup> This secret love-making appears (crossed through) in a handwritten draft, shot 76 of 24 November, Box 63 (not listed by Gale and Hudgins). The love-making (without this dialogue) is repeated at 12 December, shots 72-3; 2 February, shots 84-85 and February/DW, shots 81-82

<sup>54</sup> Pinter, February/DW, shot 94; Atwood, pp. 70-71.

<sup>55</sup> February/DW, shot 90; not found in Atwood.

<sup>56</sup> In Atwood's novel and in Schlöndorff's film, Kate does not make love to Nick until sent to his room by Serena (Atwood, pp. 271-275).

It is her desire for a baby which is most real for Serena. Because of this, and believing her husband sterile, Serena sends Offred secretly to Nick with instructions to become pregnant.<sup>57</sup>

The Commander is also split between his belief in the necessity of the ideological structure he has helped to install, and his own partially unacknowledged desire for the past. In a speech which Pinter has added, he tells Kate that the country had been in 'a mess' :

All the garbage had risen to the top. Power was in the wrong hands [...] We had all these pressure groups ... running the store, dictating to us - Blacks, Homos, all those people on welfare -

Off Women?

Cdr Yes sirree. Women. We had to clean it up. We had to take out a big hose and wash the place clean.

February/DW, shot 124.

He concludes with 'We thought we could do better, that's all.' But he admits that 'better never means better for everyone. It always means worse, for some' (February/DW, shot 124, following Atwood, p. 222). In both texts the lines reveal the Commander's awareness of the gap between the reality and the ideal.

Although he is part of the power structure that has effected the ideological changes, the Commander desires another time and place, which he attempts to recreate with Offred. He takes her to his club which is 'like walking into the past. Don't you think' (February/DW, shot 138) (Atwood, p. 247), and treats her not as a Handmaid, but as he would treat a girl in his youth, in the distant and estranged past. In early drafts Pinter has highlighted the Commander's desire with anachronisms such as : '[W]e'll have a hot time in the old town tonight' and 'You're my date' (17 October (G&H 64/5), shot 102). Perhaps more importantly, the Commander desires to convert Kate into his true love. In the penultimate draft of 2 February, shot 152, Pinter has crossed through the Commander's words after he is stabbed '~~I thought ... you loved me.~~' In the final draft, he tells her:

You know what keeps me going? The thought of you ... coming in here ... giving me my drink

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<sup>57</sup> In a draft of 17 October (G&H 64/5), shot 95, Serena appears infinitely grateful: '~~Listen. I appreciate this. I really do~~' (Crossed through by hand).

... caring for me ... being by my side. Do you  
know that?

She takes the knife from her sleeve and slashes his neck.<sup>58</sup>

What is most truly real for the Commander is the desire for a past he has helped to destroy. It is this desire which blinds him to the truth of his relationship with Kate. Such nostalgic longing appears to fit oddly with the Commander's ideological views of the present. But according to Žižek the way ideology works is through just such a split. The classic concept of ideology is that of an ideal in which the subject believes. Žižek quotes Peter Sloterdijk's *Critique of Cynical Reason*, in which Sloterdijk views the 'dominant mode of functioning' of modern ideology as 'cynical'. In this reading, 'The cynical subject is quite aware of the distance between the ideological mask and the social reality, but he none the less still insists upon the mask. So that, knowing it to be false, knowing just what interests lie behind the ideology, he still 'does not renounce it.' Žižek draws attention to Sloterdijk's distinction between cynicism and *kynicism*. 'Kynicism represents the popular, plebeian rejection of the official culture by means of irony and sarcasm' while 'Cynicism is the answer of the ruling culture to this kynical subversion: it recognizes [...] the distance between the ideological mask and the reality' but it keeps the mask.<sup>59</sup> This latter cynical, ideological position could be said to apply to the position of the Commander and those in power in the patriarchal state of Gilead. However, Žižek points out that 'cynical reason, with all its ironic detachment, leaves untouched the fundamental level of ideological fantasy, the level on which ideology structures the social reality itself.'<sup>60</sup>

Žižek describes the double illusion whereby 'They know very well how things really are, but still they are doing it as if they did not know.' The 'illusion [...] consists in overlooking the illusion which is structuring our real effective relationship to reality. And this overlooked, unconscious illusion is what may be called the *ideological fantasy*.'<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> February/DW, shot 167. Box 63 has earlier drafts which show the Commander poisoned. Cora brings poison (Draft of October 5, part of 26 clipped pages starting October 3, '9a. Dolores.') Poison is changed to Nick supplying a knife and instructions in a draft of October 7 (no shot number). (Neither draft is listed by Gale and Hudgins). Schlöndorff's Offred also uses a knife. The killing does not occur in Atwood.

<sup>59</sup> Žižek, paraphrasing Sloterdijk, *Ideology*, p. 29.

<sup>60</sup> Žižek, *Ideology*, p. 30.

<sup>61</sup> Žižek, *Ideology*, pp. 32-33.

Žižek separates ideological knowledge and action. In classical ideology 'the illusion is located in knowledge', in which case, 'the prevailing ideology is that of cynicism, [since] people no longer believe in ideological truth.' However, Žižek points out that 'The fundamental level of ideology [...] is not of an illusion masking the real state of things but that of an (unconscious) fantasy structuring our social reality itself.' Therefore, 'Cynical distance, is just one [...] of many ways - to blind ourselves to the structuring power of ideological fantasy' because 'even if we do not take things seriously, even if we keep an ironical distance, *we are still doing them.*'<sup>62</sup>

Ideology, says Žižek, is 'not a dreamlike illusion' to help us escape reality, but a 'fantasy-construction which serves as a support for our "reality" itself'. Rather than an escape from reality, it offers 'the social reality itself as an escape from some traumatic, real kernel.'<sup>63</sup> As with the dream, we awake in order to escape the real, unbearable emotion:

[F]or Lacan, *the only point at which we approach this hard kernel of the Real is indeed the dream. When we awaken into reality after a dream, we usually say to ourselves "it was just a dream", thereby blinding ourselves to the fact that in our everyday, wakening reality we are nothing but a consciousness of this dream. It was only in the dream that we approached the fantasy-framework which determines our activity, our mode of acting in reality itself.*<sup>64</sup>

The Commander, knowing the ideology of Gilead to be false, continues cynically to support it, while his actions are unconsciously structured by that same ideological fantasy.

For Kate, her fantasy object is that of reunion with her daughter outside Gilead, and it is through Kate's desire that Pinter constructs a parallel object of desire for the spectator. That object is Kate's small daughter, who functions as both real child, with whom Kate consciously desires to be reunited, and as object of desire which unconsciously shapes Kate's every move.

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<sup>62</sup> Žižek, *Ideology*, p. 33.

<sup>63</sup> Žižek, *Ideology*, p. 45.

<sup>64</sup> Žižek, *Ideology*, p. 47.

## PINTER'S SHAPING OF THE OBJECT WITHIN THE OVERALL STRUCTURE OF THE SCREENPLAY

In the novel, there is little hope for Kate's reunion with Jill since she remains in Gilead 'With people who are fit.'<sup>65</sup> Schlöndorff leaves us with Offred's fragile hope for reunion as his film ends, but it is difficult to believe and the Production Notes for the film state that her child is 'completely, and irrevocably lost to her'.<sup>66</sup> However, in Pinter's screenplay, Jill is always safe, somewhere outside Gilead. The opening shots of Pinter's final draft show 'Jill Escaping, skiing down the valley' (February/DW, shot 15). Pinter has added the handwritten note 'Escaping' to the draft of 2 February, and from the earliest drafts Pinter appears to be working in this direction. For example, shot 8 of the handwritten draft of 7 September (G&H 63/3), shows 'Flash of little girl running through trees' intercut with scenes of Kate at the Handmaid's Centre.

In an outline dated September 29, Serena tells Offred that she will get her out to her daughter if she will become pregnant by Nick, but this is dropped from later drafts.<sup>67</sup> Handwritten notes found after 3 October headed '9a Dolores', and consisting of seventeen paper-clipped pages headed 'The Escape', have a note, 'Use Nick to take messages to daughter. / Return messages' on the first page, and on the following page 'Drawings from daughter. "Mummy I love you."'<sup>68</sup> Shot 97 of a draft of 17 October (G&H 64/5), shows Serena with two letters for Offred, one 'a child's drawing of a house. Written on the paper: "To Mummy, with all my love, Jill".' The other is a polaroid photograph of Jill. However, the direct link with Jill has been cut in later drafts, leaving Offred only with the photograph and the certainty that Jill is alive outside Gilead, an ephemeral and tantalising figure.

In order to focus attention on this single object of desire, Pinter has eliminated Luke (and Schlöndorff follows this). The novel gives three possibilities for Luke's fate, but we

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<sup>65</sup> Later, Atwood's narrator tells us that 'it's easier to think of her as dead. I don't have to hope then' (Atwood, pp. 49, 74).

<sup>66</sup> Schlöndorff, Production Notes, Synopsis of Story, p. 2.

<sup>67</sup> There are two sets of notes in Box 63 of the Archive, both dated 29 September. One set of loose pages (which may correspond to G&H 63/4) paper-clipped together and headed 'Skeleton', gives Serena's statement at shot 43: 'Do it with him and I'll get you out. To your baby.'

Other notes, marked 'Sep 29 cont' give 'S - Give me a baby and I'll get you out. Do it with him' at shot 16.

<sup>68</sup> These pages do not appear to be listed by G&H.

never learn the truth. Atwood's heroine imagines him dead 'lying face down in a thicket', or in prison, or that he escaped across the border, taken in by friendly strangers in the country who gave him coffee and warm clothes (Atwood, pp. 114-115). (This third alternative is incorporated into Pinter's ending for Kate in 17 October (G&H 64/5) and following drafts.) The draft of 12 December, shot 40, shows Luke shot and fallen. And in the final February drafts, shot 12 in each gives, 'The Patrolman with Luke's body. Luke is dead.' Baughman suggests that the death of Luke 'clears the decks for a new love interest which is unproblematically non-adulterous.'<sup>69</sup> But by eliminating Luke Pinter creates one single object of desire, which is Kate's reunion with Jill.

One other hindrance is also eliminated, and that is Offred's pregnancy by Nick. In Atwood, she tells Nick she is pregnant, but tells herself that its 'wishful thinking' (Atwood, p. 283). Schlöndorff's Offred tells Nick she is pregnant after her trip to the night club with the Commander. Although Pinter's early drafts suggest pregnancy<sup>70</sup> it is dropped from later drafts, and in the final manuscript (February/DW, shot 155) exists only in Serena's hopeful expectation when she comes to ask if there is 'any news?' But for Offred, waiting tensely for the Commander's return in order to kill him, pregnancy is now a lost cause.

Atwood places the reader's focus on her heroine. It is she who is essentially our main concern. Schlöndorff follows this focus up to a point, leaving the spectator with Kate and her dream of reunion with Jill at the end. It is Pinter who, by focusing on Jill, recreates within the narrative and within the structure of the screenplay the lack which activates the desire of the spectator. What follows will examine the way that Pinter effectively constructs the equivalent of *objet petit a* for the spectator within the overall structure of the screenplay.

### The Lack

Each draft of the screenplay opens at a point of loss, creating the lack on which desire is based. As already noted, early drafts (up to 1 October 1986, (G&H 64/2) ) stress the political factor, showing the take-over of power on television as stations are blacked out, and the sudden falling of a curtain between democracy and a totalitarian regime. Kate takes her daughter to school, or the daughter plays happily unaware while Kate and

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<sup>69</sup> Baughman, p. 95.

<sup>70</sup> Box 63, loose, handwritten pages following those dated 26 September (not listed by Gale and Hudgins): Offred says 'I think it's happened.' This is repeated in the draft of 17 October (G&H 64/5) shot 124.

Luke watch their vision of ordinary life turning to nightmare, as the state imposes its own rigid, penetrating gaze. Later drafts (between October 1986 and 12 December 1986), open within a prison. However, the final drafts of February 1987 open with the attempted escape from that omnipotent and ever active gaze:

The edge of the wood through binoculars.

The family glimpsed at the edge of the wood, between trees.

Shot 3 in both February drafts.

Here we have that phrase of Pinter's which is the key to his structures of desire, the object moving through trees, hidden, then found again. It is the visual metaphor for the play of desire along the signifying chain, cutting between a desired, lost object and a lacking presence. Through the creation of this gap, Pinter leads the spectator to see 'awry', trapping her in a relationship of desire through that lack and leading her to cover it over with a fantasy object of her own.

#### The Drive

The opening sequence ends with 'Jill escaping, skiing down the valley. Fade out' (February/DW, shot 15). In this way, Pinter offers his spectator hope and the possibility of restoration to form the drive throughout the screenplay, a drive which is reinforced through Pinter's fragmentation of the structure. As with other screenplays Pinter fragments the narrative by intercutting a series of flashes into the narrative progression. The flashes cause a hiatus as if another hidden and more intense reality breaks through the surface. These flashes are the emotional reality for the central character. In effect Pinter recreates the pattern of the Lacanian Real, for it is the Real which always returns, forming a point of trauma or fixation around which the subject's desire constantly circulates. As it breaks through into the surface narrative, that emotional reality forms the drive that propels the surface story forward.

Below are listed the flashes which erupt into the central narrative, followed by a brief discussion of the way these flashes resonate with surrounding shots to create an invisible object of desire for the spectator. As noted earlier in this chapter, Žižek points out that the structure of a dream has three elements, 'the *manifest dream-text*, the *latent dream-content* or thought and the *unconscious desire* articulated in a dream.' We should not, he says, confuse unconscious desire with the 'latent thought' hidden in a dream, since the latent thought 'as Freud continually emphasizes [...] is an entirely "normal" thought which can be articulated in the syntax of everyday, common language.' What constitutes the dream is, therefore, not this latent thought but the dreamwork

itself, 'the mechanisms of displacement and condensation' which 'confers on it the form of a dream.'<sup>71</sup> In *The Handmaid's Tale* we find Pinter creating that triple structure for the spectator, intercutting into the manifest dream (the central narrative) 'flashbacks' which constitute the latent content, offering a series of these 'entirely "normal" thought[s]', revealing Kate's grief at the loss of her daughter and husband, and her desire (both conscious and unconscious) for the life that they shared before the Gileadean regime:

Flashes taken from the Final Draft of February/DW 1987

Shot

- 21. Kate and Luke walking down a street in summer. Jill on Luke's shoulders.  
He is lifting her up and down. They are laughing.
- 28. Jill skiing down the valley.
- 34. Luke and Kate dancing.
- 51. Jill on skis, gliding to a stop in the snow.
- 59. Jill running towards Kate, laughing. She jumps into Kate's arms, her legs around Kate's waist.
- 68. Empty valley. Snow. A shot rings out. Camera jumps and swivels.
- 75. The backs of Luke and Kate walking down a street, swinging Jill between them.
- 78. Kate and a girlfriend walking through a park, eating ice cream.  
They wear light, short, summer dresses. Couples lie about on the grass.
- 80. Jill skiing down the valley.
- 104. Jill running and jumping up.
- 129. ~~Jill in nightdress running to Kate. She jumps up. Her arms and legs go round Kate's body.~~ (This last flash has been crossed through by hand.)

The flashes work in two ways. Direct loss can be seen at work in a flash of Kate's last sight of her daughter, shot 28. Indirect loss works through images of the innocent and happy past which create a sense of loss when set amid the misery that is Gilead, as in the first flash of Kate and Luke walking down a summer street, shot 21. As Bruce Fink

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<sup>71</sup> Žižek, *Ideology*, pp. 12-13.

explains, "the "lost object" never *was*; it is only constituted as lost after the fact, in that the subject is unable to find it anywhere other than in fantasy or dream life.'<sup>72</sup>

Within these shots, Pinter creates a sense of *jouissance*. In the 'laughing,' 'swinging,' 'running,' 'jumping,' 'dancing' - a sense of something irrepressible in the human spirit emerges. The flashes create their own internal rhythm, progressing towards a turning point at shots 75 and 78, after which moments of remembered happiness outweigh the trauma, and there appears to be a movement upwards. If we then review the flash of 'Jill skiing down the valley', shot 80, the movement can be seen as one towards hope and freedom. In this way, the flashes not only resonate with surrounding shots, but within themselves.

For example, after the initial shot of the family in the summer street (quoted above), the next flash cuts into a scene of Kate and the other Handmaids on their knees reciting the obligatory prayer 'Oh God make us fruitful' (shot 27).<sup>73</sup> The flash at shot 28 shows Jill, 'skiing down the valley' over which we hear 'A sudden scream' and in the following shot (29) 'The scream has turned to sobs' as one of the Handmaids is dragged from the room. What is important to note here is the extra-diegetic effect of the scene, for the scream is voiced in the dormitory in Kate's present, but articulates the trauma of the earlier scene. Here again, as in *The Remains of the Day*, the effect is that described by Michel Chion as '*la voix acousmatique*', creating a 'voice without bearer' which 'hovers in some indefinite interspace', neither part of the 'diegetic "reality" nor of the sound accompaniment [...] but belonging, rather, to [some] mysterious domain.'<sup>74</sup> The effect is that of a 'voice-object' which parallels that of the gaze existing in the space between shot and shot and between spectator and screen.

The third flash, shot 34, shows a moment of lost happiness - 'Luke and Kate dancing' - and is placed between Kate lying in the dormitory at night, 'eyes open' (shot 33) and Kate in a car on her way to be interviewed for the post of Handmaid. There is a political message embedded here, and one which also fits the Lacanian pattern. The

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<sup>72</sup> Bruce Fink, *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 94.

<sup>73</sup> Atwood gives 'O God, obliterate me. Make me fruitful. Mortify my flesh that I may be multiplied. Let me be fulfilled ...' (Atwood, p. 204).

<sup>74</sup> Michel Chion, *La voix au cinéma*, (Paris: Cahiers du cinéma/Éditions de l'Étoile, 1982), pp 116-123, quoted by Slavoj Žižek, in *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture* (London: MIT Press, 1991), p. 126.

state of Gilead has banished all sense of joy, and hijacked sexuality for the purposes of the state, so that what was once delight is now duty.<sup>75</sup> If we equate the Law, the state of Gilead, with the Lacanian Symbolic, the same pattern applies, for 'the very notion of life is alien to the symbolic order. And the name of this life substance that proves a traumatic shock for the symbolic universe is of course *enjoyment*.'<sup>76</sup> In Gilead the law attempts to banish enjoyment, but the underground movement which subverts that law is equivalent to the Real, from where enjoyment (or *jouissance*) emerges. This 'life substance' is ultimately, irrepressible. And it is through the resonance between shot and shot that *jouissance* emerges, unarticulated and unseen.

The flash at shot 51 of 'Jill on skis, gliding to a stop in the snow', echoes our view of Kate as she is dedicated as Handmaid to the state. Her position resonates with that of Jill, poised between two different dangers, and as it was for Jill, the only hope for Kate lies in going forward into the unknown. The following shot shows Kate on her way to servitude at the house of the Commander and Serena.

The flash of 'Jill running towards Kate, laughing' (shot 59) directly follows from Kate watching from her window as Nick polishes the car (57-58). The young man and the routine domestic chore, reinforced by the image of Jill, reflects a life which is all the more intense because lost. This loss is compounded in the following shot as the searchlight sweeps her room and Cora comes to call her to duty in the Commander's bed (shot 60). After that ceremony, fixed between Serena and the Commander, Kate lies on her own bed 'her eyes open' (shot 67) and we have a flash of the attempted escape seen exactly from Kate's point of view. She is not in shot but the camera reacts for her. 'Empty valley. Snow. A shot rings out. Camera jumps and swivels' (shot 68). The fall in the snow, the sense of being hunted and trapped, must surely resonate with what has just happened, and remains unpacified by Rita's gift of hot milk and the statement that 'We need a lovely little baby in this house.'<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Atwood says that 'It has nothing to do with sexual desire [...] This is serious business. The Commander, too, is doing his duty' (Atwood, p. 105).

<sup>76</sup> Slavoj Žižek, 'Why Does a Letter Always Arrive at Its Destination?', in *Enjoy Your Symptom! Jacques Lacan In Hollywood and Out* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 1-28 (p. 22).

<sup>77</sup> Here again we have the Pinter signature, the voice of the overly-solicitous middle-aged woman: 'What do you think: Do you think you'll be lucky? Oh, it would be so nice. Everyone would be so happy. She deserves a little happiness too. Drink your nice hot milk. We need a lovely little baby in this house' (February/DW, shot 69). It is an echo of Meg from *The Birthday Party*, a play where Pinter also deals with the silencing and blinding of the subject. (In earlier drafts Kate's reaction has been somewhat violent 'Get out, you stupid old cow!' (loose handwritten pages dated

The flash at shot 75 of 'The backs of Luke and Kate walking down a street, swinging Jill between them' echoes that first flash, shot 21, but here we see their backs, as if the memory is also retreating. This view from the time before Gilead is yet another which carries a delight that proclaims itself as lost, the very mechanism of desire.

A similar juxtaposition occurs in shots 77 - 81, where the fearful, whispered conversation in the grocery store is followed by a shot of Kate and a girlfriend walking freely in the time before (shots 77-78). The next shot (79), of Offred in bed at night, a searchlight sweeping her room, is followed by a flash of 'Jill skiing down the valley' (shot 80). It is a moment of trauma returned, but it returns for the last time. In the moments of darkness, Nick comes and they make love (shots 81-2). The darkness, and what can be achieved under darkness, leads to the possibility of action and hope. The final flash, a shot of 'Jill running and jumping up' (shot 104) follows Kate watching Moira's escape from the Handmaids' Centre, and is a reminder that somewhere outside Gilead is freedom, innocence and enjoyment (*jouissance*). This is confirmed in shot 105 where Kate finds a photograph of Jill in her room, a confirmation that she is alive which intensifies Kate's desire to reclaim her. (A flash, shot 129, was originally inserted between Offred's official visit to Nick (sent by Serena to get pregnant), and her trip to the club with the Commander. It is a repeat of Jill running to Kate (shot 104). But this has been crossed through by hand.) Through reminders of what is truly real for the central character we come to judge and assess the 'reality' of the main narrative.

There are significant differences between this final draft (February/DW 1987) and the earlier draft of 12 December 1986. The major change comes from the fact that the earlier draft opens within the prison, and it is through the flashes inserted into the main narrative that Pinter fills out details of the failed escape. The flashes in this earlier draft work (as do the February drafts) through montage, through resonance with the main narrative, but because six of those flashes (out of a total of ten) have been used to fill out the central narrative by giving details of the attempted escape and capture, the effect of these fragmentary flashes is more that of a secondary narrative.<sup>78</sup> In Pinter's final draft, the flashes (now freed from narrative) erupt into the central narrative as moments of the Real erupt into everyday reality, as a point of loss around which desire

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20 October, Box 63. Not listed by Gale and Hudgins). But Pinter's process of embedding is at work and in the final draft Kate merely 'looks at her balefully.'

<sup>78</sup> Shots 13, 19, 32, 40, 47, 71 give details of the attempted escape and capture, while shots 6, 54, 57, 108 give moments of happiness from the time before.

constantly circulates. Žižek explains that montage 'produce[s] from fragments of the real - pieces of film, discontinuous individual shots - an effect of "cinematic space", i.e. a specific cinematic reality.' However, '[w]hat is usually overlooked [...] is the way this transformation of fragments of the real into cinematic reality produces, through a kind of structural necessity, a certain leftover, a surplus that is radically heterogeneous to the cinematic reality but nonetheless implied by it, part of it.' And it is this 'surplus of the real' which is, 'in the last resort, precisely the gaze qua object.'<sup>79</sup>

In his film, Schlöndorff has reduced the effect of montage, cutting Pinter's flashes to four, all of which concentrate on the sense of trauma and nightmare. In the opening shots of the failed escape, the child cries in the trees, 'Mummy', as the woman is captured and dragged away screaming at gun point. When the first flash of that opening scene reappears, the shot of the child crying in the snow is cut into a scene of women loaded into livestock trucks. This is followed by a shot of women loosed into a prison yard to be marshalled by guards with shields and batons. The child in the snow appears again, after a shot of Kate's face at night, blue washed. Later still, between the dedication of the Handmaids and the car journey to the Commander's house, there is a red screen wash with a view of Kate looking down at her dead husband. The next flash is of the child in the snow, followed by Kate alone for the first time in her room at the Commander's house. The cries of the child in the first shot continue over into the second. We therefore understand Kate to be woken by the child calling, and she cries. This is the last flash we have of either the child or the husband; all have reinforced loss and fear. And the fear fails to be pacified by Kate's final words in the film, in the debris-strewn gully in the mountains, where Kate tells us that she is safe, and that she will find her daughter and that her daughter will remember her.<sup>80</sup> But being told something is so makes it *less* real for the spectator.

#### The 'Loop of Enjoyment'

This screenplay is unusual for Pinter in that Kate regains her daughter who is both truly desired, and Kate's unconscious object of desire which shapes her every move, and which has shaped the passage of desire through the screenplay for the spectator. Nevertheless, throughout successive drafts the ending has remained close in essentials to Pinter's romance theme, where the object of desire (half seen, through trees) is

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<sup>79</sup> Slavoj Žižek, 'Looking Awry', *October*, 50 (1989), 30-55, pp. 44-45.

<sup>80</sup> Offred's daydream in Atwood, p. 116.

approached, but never grasped. Through the passage of the screenplay, the spectator has been engaged with Jill as object-cause of desire - the missing object. And it is in the closing shots of the screenplay that Pinter brings the spectator back to the point which initiated our desire. In Lacanian terms, it is 'The loop of enjoyment.'<sup>81</sup> But for enjoyment to continue, the object of our desire must remain out of reach, for the real aim of desire is not 'to hit the goal but to maintain the very circular movement of repeatedly missing it.'<sup>82</sup> Pinter does not close the gap between spectator and object but leaves a space for desire to continue to operate.

What appears to be Pinter's first draft of an ending is dated 1 October (G&H 64/2), where, at shot 65, Kate arrives at the border at dawn and we see:

Jill, her daughter, seen through trees, three years older, grave,  
bewildered.

Offred walks towards her.

This is extended in a draft of 17 October (G&H 64/5), shot 139, where 'Offred walks through trees. In a clearing she sees a Red Cross van [...] A small figure takes a step towards her and stops [...] It is Jill [...] Offred walks towards her.' Drafts of 12 December 1986 and an outline of 14 January 1987, do not show Kate's meeting with Jill, but leave Kate, now safe across the border, in a café, speaking to her on the phone.<sup>83</sup> However, endings of 2 February, and the final draft, February/DW, show Kate skiing down a valley (echoing Jill's escape as the screenplay opened) and her approach to Jill:

164. Canadian country street. Day.

An ice cream wagon. Cars.

Girls in short skirts. Boys riding bicycles [...]

Sounds of children. She arrives at a school fence and looks through.

165. Ext. School Playground. Day.

Dozens of children playing, running about.

The camera focuses on Jill, playing a ball game with other children.

She does not notice Kate.

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<sup>81</sup> Žižek's description. Slavoj Žižek, *Tarrying with the Negative: Kant, Hegel, and the Critique of Ideology* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), Part III.

<sup>82</sup> Žižek, *Tarrying with the Negative*, p. 199.

<sup>83</sup> In the draft of 12 December, Kate is met by a woman who introduces herself as Mrs Agnew and tells Kate that her daughter is waiting by the phone to hear from her.

Gale and Hudgins also note this ending in the café, but state that 'her daughter is waiting by the phone for "Mrs Agnew" ' (G&H 62/1).

In the handwritten outline of 14 January (G&H 63/5), the name of the woman in the café is changed to 'Mrs Dyson.'

166. Kate standing.

She gazes at Jill through the wire.

She turns, walks along the side of the fence and goes into the school.

The laughter of children.

The final draft of February/DW 1987 ends in exactly this way (shots 180-182) with a sense of *jouissance* - an approach towards the invisible, irrepressible, object of desire, but no nearer. For Kate, as a mother, reunited with her daughter, safe outside Gilead, this is the truly conscious enjoyment of a happy ending. But as object of desire, both for Kate and the spectator, we may not come too near:

The sublime object is an object which cannot be approached too closely: if we get too near it, it loses its sublime features and becomes an ordinary vulgar object - it can persist only in an interspace, in an intermediate state, viewed from a certain perspective, half-seen. If we want to see it in the light of day, it changes into an everyday object, it dissipates itself, precisely because in itself it is nothing at all.<sup>84</sup>

In Atwood's scenario, Offred wants to stay with Nick, as though the new man, the new baby, will fill her empty space. The lack which structures desire cannot therefore function with the possibility of desire fulfilled. Schlöndorff's scenario privileges loss and fear. It is Pinter's screenplay which installs a true object of desire. He introduces the lack and the desire which veils the space and shapes the central action. Events in the main narrative take place *because* of what happens in the flashes that represent Kate's desire, and it is in the resonance between these flashes and the central narrative that Pinter creates an object of desire for the spectator. In Pinter's scenario there is always hope, but in Atwood's novel and Schlöndorff's film that hope is tentative in the extreme. In duplicating the pattern of desire for the central character, Pinter installs those same patterns of desire for the spectator, an invisible object which emerges from the Symbolic codes of the text and belongs to her alone. In doing so he not only creates the lost and tantalising object of the romance, but provides an answer to those readings of the political and repressive structures of power which dominate critical approaches to his stage work; that is a notion of life which exists in excess of those structures and belongs expressly to the hidden activity of the individual.

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<sup>84</sup> Žižek, *Ideology*, p. 170.

In *The Remains of the Day*, Pinter created for the spectator an object of desire that is eternally lost and live. Here, in *The Handmaid's Tale*, Pinter offers an object of desire which, because it is aligned to a real object in the external world, will change once it is achieved. The next chapter on *Victory* will show how Pinter creates the third position of the object, where the object comes too close, and instead of desire causes anxiety.

## Chapter Five

## VICTORY

Pinter's *Victory*, like Conrad's novel, takes place in the landscape of a dream.<sup>1</sup> The tropical island of Samburan on which the central character, Heyst, has made his home, is referred to as 'a dream [...] A lovely dream,'<sup>2</sup> and the visitors who arrive there, unwelcome, unannounced, come as envoys from another world. Pinter emphasises the dream. Where Conrad's Heyst refers to his partner's madness: 'I [...] respected his very madness!' (Conrad, p. 213), Pinter eliminates madness and speaks of his respect for the world of dreams: 'I respected the ~~madness of~~ ... his dreams.'<sup>3</sup> However, in this screenplay, Pinter shows how desire embedded in the unconscious can turn into an unwelcome fullness, causing anxiety and a strong sense of the uncanny.

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<sup>1</sup> No film has been made from Pinter's screenplay, which was published in 1990. Pinter explains that Richard Lester had set up the project, but that the backing studio, Universal, did not take it up. (Pinter quoted in Michael Billington, *The Life and Work of Harold Pinter* (London: Faber and Faber, 1996), p. 289).

Based on the novel by Joseph Conrad, *Victory*, 1915 rev. edn with an introduction by Tony Tanner, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986). Unless stated otherwise, references to Conrad will be to this novel.

References to the published screenplay are to Harold Pinter, *Victory*, in *The Comfort of Strangers and Other Screenplays* (London: Faber and Faber, 1990). (As shots are not numbered, page numbers will be given).

References to manuscript papers are to Box 59 of the Pinter Archive.

<sup>2</sup> Conrad, p. 241, gives the speech to Ricardo; Pinter, p. 200, to Jones, his master.

<sup>3</sup> Pinter's 'First Draft 11 June 1982' shot 67, gives dots above the words deleted. In Pinter's published text the line is changed to: 'I respected his innocence. I respected his dreams (p. 189).

This draft of 11 June 1982 is listed by Gale and Hudgins as item 10 in Box 59 (G&H 59/10). Their full list can be found in Steven H. Gale and Christopher C. Hudgins, 'The Harold Pinter Archives II: A Description of the Filmscript Materials in the Archive in the British Library', *The Pinter Review* (1995 and 1996), 101-142 (pp. 137-139).

## THE OBJECT TURNS UNCANNY

Pinter has been faithful to the spirit of Conrad's novel, and while he has made changes (for example his Heyst is more sympathetic than Conrad's, and his Jones remains alive as the screenplay ends) those changes only serve to support the novel's central theme.

Conrad's *Victory* is the story of Swedish Baron Axel Heyst who, following his dying father's advice to 'Look on, make no sound', has evermore stood aside from the world (Conrad, p. 175). When the novel opens, we find Heyst alone on a small island in the Java Sea, the surviving partner of a failed coal mining venture. Only once has Heyst moved from his proud and isolated position 'on the bank of the stream' of humanity (Conrad, pp. 175-6) and that was to rescue the innocent Morrison from ruin. In gratitude, Morrison sets up the company which is to make their fortunes, only to die in England before the venture can gain ground. *Victory* sees Heyst emerging once more from isolation in the rescue of a young girl, Lena, from the dubious clutches of a travelling orchestra, the unwelcome attentions of its leader, Zangiaco, and the hotel keeper, Schomberg. Heyst takes her to live with him on his island, which is, for both of them, a safe retreat from a threatening world. But their happiness is short-lived as the enraged Schomberg, infatuated with Lena and loathing Heyst, sends a trio of unpleasant characters after them. Lena is the catalyst through whom Heyst enters the acute world of desire, and because of whom Heyst attracts the enmity of the world at large. It is an enmity that proves fatal, for what follows leads to the death of both Lena and Heyst, yet a death which is not without a sense of victory.

To attempt a Lacanian reading of the novel, we could say that Heyst's dictum, received from his father on his death bed, to stand aside from humanity, places him in the position of any subject in relation to the Symbolic. For on entry into the Symbolic (the law and language), the subject is split between self and word as between self and world. The Imaginary, through which Heyst attempts to cover over that split, is his relationship with his island; both the real island paradise of the Java sea that he inhabits, and his imaginary position on the banks of the stream of humanity. The uncanny emerges when instead of a split between self and Other, which the subject covers, the object comes too close. 'What one loses with anxiety is precisely the loss - the loss that made it possible to deal with a coherent reality.' It is that lack of the lack that creates the uncanny.<sup>4</sup> In *Victory*, that fullness has its narrative equivalent in the uncanny trio of Jones, his

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<sup>4</sup> Mladen Dolar, ' "I Shall be with You on Your Wedding-Night": Lacan and the Uncanny,' *October*, 58 (1991), 5-23 (p. 13).

'secretary' Ricardo, and their servant Pedro. In his structuring of the screenplay, Pinter also creates an uncanny object for the spectator, one that comes too close.

In the opening lines of his novel, Conrad embeds a metaphor which prefigures the death of the central characters at the novel's end. Conrad refers to 'a very close chemical relation between coal and diamonds', and to coal as 'black diamonds' (Conrad, p. 3). The metaphor reflects on Heyst and his coldness towards ordinary life; one who, like the 'black diamonds' of his mining venture, will be consumed by flames as the novel ends. Throughout the novel, Conrad hints at the conflagration to come, previewed in the link between Heyst and the 'indolent volcano' whose 'dull red glow' echoes the tip of Heyst's cigar (Conrad, p. 4). A tropical sun threatens its own 'consuming, passionate blaze' (Conrad, p. 305), and man mirrors nature as Ricardo threatens Schomberg with the burning of his hotel: 'It would blaze like a box of matches' (Conrad, p. 112). Conrad can therefore be seen to construct another text below the surface, attempting (in those well-known words) 'to make you hear, to make you feel [...] before all, to make you see.'<sup>5</sup>

Working through film form, it is this acute visual and emotional experience that Pinter recreates from Conrad's novel. But instead of the fire which runs throughout the narrative, something else emerges in the Pinter screenplay, the sense of a gaze which returns again and again to impose itself on character and spectator before finally erupting as the screenplay closes.<sup>6</sup> Within the screenplay a multiplicity of gazes cross and recross. Lena's arrival on the island is met by Chang's<sup>7</sup> impassive gaze, and a view of '*Decay. Trees encroaching on the bungalows. Jungle*' (Pinter, p. 180). The spectator watches as Ricardo watches Heyst at night (Pinter, p. 202) or, hidden in a tree, watches the clearing below, as Heyst goes to see Jones (Pinter, p. 203). Jones watches Ricardo shaving (Pinter, p. 211), unaware that he is preparing to meet Lena. While characters attempt to see, something always remains hidden. As Heyst says, 'No doubt we are being watched' (Pinter, p. 214). And throughout the screenplay there is a sense of a hidden gaze, invisible yet lethal, which lies waiting to erupt.

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<sup>5</sup> Joseph Conrad, Preface to 'The Nigger of the "Narcissus"', 1897 in *The Nigger of the "Narcissus", Typhoon and Other Stories* (London: J. M. Dent, 1950), p. x.

<sup>6</sup> Draft notes of 16 June (G&H 59/17) conclude, after 'Long shot of island burning,' and a note 'Cut Wang 157', with the word 'Volcano,' but it is dropped from the published screenplay.

<sup>7</sup> Wang, in Conrad.

Near the opening of his screenplay for *Victory*, Pinter has placed the camera instructions '*building glimpsed through trees*' (Pinter, p. 168). The building is the concert hall, which Davidson passes on his way to collect Heyst from Schomberg's hotel. It is the site of the opening movement of the drama and of Heyst's fateful meeting with Lena. The object, briefly glimpsed, recurs again as Heyst walks in the hotel garden, and the spectator follows his view of '*something white flitting between the trees. It disappears*' (Pinter, p. 176 follows Conrad, p. 83). It is Lena, come to find him, and in the darkness he tells her he will take her away. As in other screenplays, Pinter offers a visual metaphor for the ephemeral object, glimpsed then lost, then found again, a metaphor which echoes the fragile relationship between the subject/spectator and the object of desire.

In the gap between word and word; in the lack beyond representation, the subject comes into being through desire. As Žižek explains, because the subject's desire can never fill that gap in being, the 'object-cause of desire' can only exist as surplus, because '[i]f we subtract the surplus we lose enjoyment itself.'<sup>8</sup> However, this surplus enjoyment also 'has the [...] power to convert things (pleasure objects) into their opposite.'<sup>9</sup> The danger is that we get too close, and in doing so we lose 'the lack itself.' As in Lacan's example of the Holbein painting, discussed in chapter one, we either cover over the gap with an object (of desire) of our own, or desire disappears as the gap becomes a fullness, like the death's head, which presses too close. With the disappearance of desire comes what Žižek terms 'anxiety,'<sup>10</sup> and Mladen Dolar describes as the 'uncanny'. What is 'hidden and secret' can therefore become 'threatening and fearful.' Lacan's *objet petit a* exists in an 'extimate' relation with the subject, 'neither [...] interior nor [...] exterior, but [...] located there where the most intimate interiority coincides with the exterior and becomes threatening, provoking horror and anxiety.'<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989), pp. 52-53.

<sup>9</sup> Žižek, 'Looking Awry', *October*, 50 (1989), 30-55 (p. 35).

<sup>10</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture* (London: MIT Press, 1991), p. 8.

<sup>11</sup> Dolar, pp. 5-6.

## THE UNCANNY IN THE NARRATIVE OF NOVEL AND SCREENPLAY

Pinter's shaping of the narrative reduces the coldness of the father's philosophy, makes Heyst more sympathetic and strengthens the ties between Jones and Heyst senior and between Heyst and Jones, a reshaping which results in a strong sense of the uncanny. The effect of his father's philosophy on Heyst has been crucial, and has left him standing apart from life, yet Pinter has pared down the references to this parental shaping, reducing them to that one single tenet to 'Look on. Make no sound' (Conrad, p. 175) (Pinter, p. 216). In an early draft Heyst explains how his own nature echoes that of his father:

Heyst            My father was a man of universal scorn and unbelief. I took  
after him.

Lena            Scorn?

Heyst            And contempt.

Handwritten draft of 8 May<sup>12</sup>

But Pinter works to show that Heyst does not entirely take after his father, and the statement does not appear in the final text.<sup>13</sup> In the May draft, Pinter originally followed Conrad in expanding on his father's contempt for the world and how he found the world's wages were not good enough to compensate man for his time (Conrad, pp. 195-6). However, in Pinter's final printed text, the only direct statement that Heyst makes about his father's negative philosophy comes when Heyst realises the danger from the intruders, and questions whether he could bring himself to kill them:

*Heyst looks up at the painting of his father. He murmurs.*

HEYST            He is responsible. The night he died I asked  
him for guidance. He said, 'Look on. Make no  
sound.' That is what I have done all my life.  
Until ... you.

Pinter, p. 216.

Pinter has added the final words: 'Until ... you', suggesting an active will to change on Heyst's part, and has reserved this central reference to the father's philosophy for this point, whereas the phrase comes much earlier in the novel.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> The handwritten draft appears in a pad headed 'Notes' which Gale and Hudgins date as 17 April (or which might read 12 April), G&H 59/13.

<sup>13</sup> The statement already softens that made by Conrad's Heyst, who emphasises his own culpability, referring to himself as 'a man of universal scorn and unbelief' (Conrad, p. 199).

<sup>14</sup> Conrad gives Heyst's relationship with his father at the opening of Part III, chapter one, before the girl's arrival on the island.

While Pinter cuts all but the briefest reference to the father's alienating philosophy, he reveals Heyst's (unarticulated) affection for him. For instance in Pinter's handwritten draft of 3 May, Heyst introduces Lena to his father's portrait. She says that 'He looks very ~~grave~~ gloomy', and originally, Pinter intended Heyst's reply to have been '~~He didn't think much ... of the world around him.~~' But this is already struck through and Heyst's only response is given as 'He was.' Pinter adds 'He laughs', and the laugh invokes affection.<sup>15</sup>

Christopher C. Hudgins believes that the novel 'presents a more sympathetic picture of Heyst than does Pinter's script', but it is difficult to agree.<sup>16</sup> For example, Heyst apparently rapes Lena, after which Pinter's Heyst quietly asks to be forgiven (Pinter, p. 190), while Conrad's Heyst speaks of other things, suggesting they return home since Lena is not used to the heat (Conrad, pp. 216-17). There are other examples, as when Lena wakes and finds Heyst searching the main room, and he sends her back to bed. Conrad's Heyst tells her, 'The best you can do is to go and lie down again, Lena [...] I think I shall smoke a cheroot on the verandah. I don't feel sleepy for the moment.' When she tells him, 'Well, don't be long,' Conrad tells us that 'He made no answer' (Conrad, p. 258). Pinter's Heyst, although also distracted by thoughts of the intruders, is both more sympathetic and more sensuous:

HEYST            Mmnn.

*Pause.*

Go back to bed. I'll come. I'll just smoke a cheroot on the veranda.

*He touches her arm.*

I'll come.

Pinter, p. 202.

Lena is the pivotal point through whom Heyst becomes prey to the acute inner world of desire and the malevolent attention of the world at large. Like Heyst, she has been drifting, unattached, and like Heyst she finds in the island the safe harbour for which she has been searching. She is dependent on Heyst for her very existence:

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<sup>15</sup> Pad dated '17 April', headed 'Notes' (G&H 59/13). The reduced speech is at p. 183 of Pinter's final printed text.

<sup>16</sup> Christopher C. Hudgins, 'Victory: A Pinter Screenplay Based on the Conrad Novel', *The Pinter Review* (1991), 23-32 (p. 23).

Do you know, it seems to me that if you were to stop thinking of me I should not be in the world at all [...] I can only be what you think I am.

Pinter, p. 184.<sup>17</sup>

In the end, her triumph is that she *can* be other than he thinks her to be. Defying his instructions to hide she flirts with Ricardo in order to gain his knife, the only protection for herself and Heyst. In the process she is fatally wounded, but triumphant.

Lena's likeness to Heyst, and yet her dissimilarity, is a pattern that works through other characters to create something extra below the surface of the text.<sup>18</sup> For example, Ricardo believes he and Lena have much in common, telling her 'You're my kind. Aren't you?' (Pinter, p. 205).<sup>19</sup> But although they are both saved from drifting by attachment each to a different type of 'gentleman,' Lena's loyalty and integrity are poles apart from Ricardo's self-seeking duplicity. It is from this doubling in both Conrad and Pinter that a sense of the uncanny emerges. Whereas in narratives of desire, Pinter creates a lack for the spectator, here he creates a fullness which hovers in an interspace between inner and outer, good and evil, desire and menace.

Pinter's reworking emphasises the link between Heyst's father and the intruder, Jones. Both the father and Jones keep a distance from a world they hold in contempt, but whereas the elder Heyst translates his contempt into pity (Conrad, p. 174), and Pinter makes no mention of that contempt in the final text of the screenplay, Jones is pitiless, a cold-blooded killer. Conrad's Heyst remembers his father's 'thin features' (Conrad, p. 174) and his 'ample blue dressing-gown' (Conrad, p. 91). When Jones confronts Heyst on the island, Conrad describes him as emaciated, 'a painted pole' dressed in 'an old but gorgeous blue silk dressing-gown' (Conrad, p. 376). In Conrad therefore, Jones is something of a caricature of the father, and Pinter's Jones confronts Heyst in a similar fashion, 'a *painted pole*' in a 'blue silk dressing gown' (an item Pinter was keen to retain for its effect).<sup>20</sup> This visual link between the father and Jones is lost in the screenplay,

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<sup>17</sup> Conrad adds 'somehow' after 'it seems to me' (Conrad, p. 187).

<sup>18</sup> Tanner refers to the 'disturbing similarity/difference' between Heyst and Jones (Tanner, Introduction to *Victory*, Conrad, p. xvii).

<sup>19</sup> Conrad gives 'You and I are made to understand each other. Born alike, bred alike, I guess' (Conrad, p. 297).

<sup>20</sup> Pinter places quotation marks around 'a painted pole' (Pinter, p. 219).

In a letter to Richard Lester dated 14 June 1982 (G&H 59/3), Pinter says, 'If they don't bring their bags off the boat we lose what I think is a marvellous image in Scene 142 - Jones in blue silk dressing gown, with two candles burning.'

but Pinter emphasises the parallel by a statement he gives to Jones at the height of the drama, when Heyst and Jones find Lena and Ricardo together. It is that central tenet of the father's philosophy which Jones whispers to Heyst, urging him to 'Look on. Make no sound' (Pinter, p. 223). Hudgins refers to the way that the statement 'picks up on the novel's subtle suggestion of similarity between the father and Jones.'<sup>21</sup> But we are invited to compare in order to understand their dissimilarity. By putting the father's dictum into Jones's mouth, Pinter makes the moment revelatory and we understand that for Heyst it is a revelation of the falseness of that advice which he had previously accepted.

Pinter appears to be drawing attention to the split between good father and bad father. While the good father is 'the protector and the bearer of the universal Law', the bad father is 'the horrible castrating figure' who 'always emerges at the moment when the subject comes close to fulfilling a "sexual relation".' Dolar refers to the approach of this uncanny figure as 'precisely what bars the sexual relation; it is the dimension that prevents us from finding our Platonian missing halves and hence imaginary completion.'<sup>22</sup> And, in novel and screenplay, Jones and his crew emerge as destroyers of Heyst's newfound happiness, before he has had time to establish his relationship with Lena.

Equally important is the likeness between Heyst and Jones. In Conrad, Heyst reports his conversation with Jones to Lena, and his anger when Jones tells him that 'you and I have much more in common than you think', adding that he was sure the man was jeering (Conrad, p. 321). Pinter gives the speech directly to Jones, with the extra line: 'Well, we *are* both gentlemen, aren't we?' (Pinter, p. 204). In his introduction to *Victory* Tanner refers to the word 'gentleman' as 'both "hollow" and central' to Conrad's novel,<sup>23</sup> and at several instances throughout the novel the reader is forced to measure Heyst's behaviour against both a general code of behaviour, and that of Jones. Davidson, on learning that Heyst has fled with a girl from the orchestra, believes 'It's ... impossible. He's a gentleman' (Pinter, p. 170 follows Conrad, p. 41). But this is not Schomberg's view, who in a fit of jealous pique exclaims 'He's a public danger. Everyone knows he killed Morrison. He was always a swindler, a ruffian, a spy, an imposter, a Schweinhund!' (Pinter, p. 171).<sup>24</sup> Pinter has added the word 'spy' as though the power

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<sup>21</sup> Hudgins, *Victory*, p. 29.

<sup>22</sup> Dolar, speaking of Freud's story of the Sand-Man, p. 10.

<sup>23</sup> Tanner, Introduction to *Victory*, Conrad, p. ix.

<sup>24</sup> Conrad gives: 'Vagabond, imposter, swindler, ruffian, *Schwein-Hund!*', p. 47.

of a hidden gaze alarms Schomberg as much as murder or swindle. But it is the spectator who is to spy out the truth, since we have a clash of views from which to judge Heyst when he first enters the scene.

Ironically it is Jones, who introduces himself as 'A gentleman' (Conrad, p. 103) (Pinter, p. 181), whose acts are those of the swindler and killer. Pinter has inserted a brief scene which shows the way in which Jones and Ricardo operate:

EXT. HOTEL VERANDA. NIGHT.

*Men standing with drinks. Ricardo walks on to the veranda.*

RICARDO        Any of you gentlemen care for a game of écarté?

MAN             Splendid idea.

SECOND MAN    Very good idea.

*Ricardo turns, looks into the shadows.*

RICARDO        And you, sir, would you like to join us in a game?

*Jones comes out of the shadows.*

JONES            What a good idea.

Pinter, pp. 183-84.<sup>25</sup>

As for killing, Ricardo believes that an elegance of performance in this sphere marks Jones as the perfect gentleman: 'that's the way a gentleman does things, you see. No fuss. A bullet straight through the heart. Graceful. Elegant. You follow?' This statement, from Pinter's 'First Draft, 11 June 1982' (G&H 59/10), shot 72, is cut from the final printed version of the screenplay.<sup>26</sup>

It is Heyst who can be seen to act according to the unstated code of a gentleman in saving Lena from the clutches of the travelling orchestra and the attentions of the hotel keeper. Pinter clarifies the fact that this is not a selfish act on Heyst's part, by showing Heyst's consideration:

LENA            I can't take your bed. I don't want to.

HEYST          You're not taking it. I'm giving it to you.

Pinter, p. 182.

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<sup>25</sup> Conrad describes how: 'It began first with a game or two after dinner - for the drinks, apparently [...] Schomberg detected the meaning of it at once. That's what it was! This was what they were!' (Conrad, p. 109).

<sup>26</sup> The line comes at the end of Ricardo's account of the killing of Antonio, just before Ricardo orders Schomberg to bring him a glass of sirup (page 194 of the published screenplay). In the novel Ricardo refers to Jones 'plug[ging] a bullet plumb centre into Mr. Antonio's chest. See what it is to have to do with a gentleman' (Conrad, p. 140).

Yet Heyst apparently rapes her - another point made clearer in Pinter's script, although, as noted above, Pinter also softens the aftermath of the act.

Both Heyst and Jones have drifted through life, and Jones describing himself as 'A gentleman - at large' (Conrad, p. 103)(Pinter, p. 181) echoes Heyst's own lack of attachment to the world. Heyst states that he has 'lived a life of hard indifference [...] I have simply been moving on, while others were going somewhere' (Pinter, p. 189).<sup>27</sup> And Heyst's statement on killing, even for self-preservation, has something of the cold elegance of Jones:

I've always thought cutting throats a vulgar, stupid  
exercise.

*Pause.*

But to be totally without power - to protect you - that is a  
bitter -

Pinter, p. 215.

Even here, where his duty is towards Lena, Heyst seems to hold aloof. Heyst has a coolness towards the world, he is a drifter, an outsider. All of these attributes can be applied to Jones, but in Heyst there is something more too, an inherent humanity which leads him to rescue Morrison from destitution and Lena from a form of slavery. As with the parallel between Jones and Heyst senior, we are surely meant to read those parallels between Heyst and Jones in order to recognise where they differ, where such cold philosophy might lead. Jones is the other side of the coin. As Tanner suggests, 'Jones is to some extent Heyst's diabolical counterpart.'<sup>28</sup>

What emerges through this doubling is the aspect of the uncanny. In his novel, Conrad actually refers to Jones's 'uncanniness' (Conrad, p. 117) and 'his lifeless manner, which seemed to imply some sort of menace from beyond the grave' (Conrad, p. 112). Dolar refers to the 'sudden emergence of the doubles in the romantic era, the extraordinary obsession with ghosts, vampires, undead dead, monsters, etc.'<sup>29</sup> Many of these aspects of Jones surface in Conrad's description of him, as in the aspect of the undead, the 'menace from beyond the grave' quoted above, and his appearance as 'a daylight ghost [...] a [...] disturbing and unlawful apparition' (Conrad, p. 121). Dolar refers to the

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<sup>27</sup> Conrad gives, 'I was simply moving on, while the others, perhaps, were going somewhere' (Conrad, p. 211-12). Conrad's suggestion of uncertainty lessens the alienation from humanity stated by Pinter's Heyst.

<sup>28</sup> Tanner, Notes on *Victory*, Conrad, p. 425.

<sup>29</sup> Dolar, p. 16.

monster in *Frankenstein*, who, nameless, 'cannot be part of the symbolic',<sup>30</sup> and there are affinities between Conrad's Jones and the man-made monster of *Frankenstein*. In the novel Heyst speaks of Jones and crew as coming from another place, 'envoys of the outer world' (Conrad, p. 329), and nameless, for both Conrad and Pinter suggest that the name is false.<sup>31</sup> Not only that, but there is no place for him in society; society cannot accommodate him. In Conrad, Jones states 'I've been hounded out of my sphere by people very much like that fellow' (Heyst), and that is the root cause of his antagonism to Heyst.<sup>32</sup> Dolar makes the point that in *Frankenstein*, the monster is a 'noble savage, the self-educated man' who 'turns bad only because the culture turns him down. By not accepting him society shows its corruption, its inability to integrate him, to include its own missing link.' But while the monster of Frankenstein is a 'noble savage', Jones (and Ricardo) represent an 'instinctive savagery', an 'evil intelligence' (Conrad, p. 329). And, as Dolar concludes, 'The monster can stand for everything our culture has to repress.'<sup>33</sup>

Jones can be read as the mirror image of Heyst, whereby Heyst recognises himself, and finds himself split between self and image. As Dolar points out, the mirror image 'already implies the split between the imaginary and the real', and 'one can only have access to imaginary reality, to the world one can recognize oneself in and familiarize oneself with',<sup>34</sup> because of that split which we attempt to cover over, resulting in *objet petit a*, the centre of being and of *jouissance*. The Lacanian concept of anxiety is 'not the anxiety of losing something [...] it is the anxiety of gaining something too much, of a too-close presence of the object. What one loses with anxiety is precisely the loss - the loss that made it possible to deal with a coherent reality.' What emerges is a threatening and uneasy fullness, which is the uncanny. Dolar describes how Lacan uses the gaze to present the missing object:

[I]n the mirror, one can see one's eyes, but not the gaze which is the part that is lost. But imagine that one could see one's mirror image close its

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<sup>30</sup> Dolar, p. 16.

<sup>31</sup> There is hesitation in both accounts before Jones gives his name. Conrad's Jones states 'My name? Oh, plain Mr. Jones - put that down'. Tanner's notes refer to Conrad's original intention of calling him 'plain John Smith' (Conrad, p. 103; n.103, p. 418).

Pinter gives Jones's response as: 'Our names? Ah. Yes. My name is Jones' (Pinter, p. 181).

<sup>32</sup> The statement comes at p. 337 in the novel, and is partially repeated by Jones at p. 381.

<sup>33</sup> Dolar, pp. 18-19.

<sup>34</sup> Dolar, p. 13.

eyes: that would make the object as gaze appear in the mirror. This is what happens with the double, and the anxiety that the double produces is the surest sign of the appearance of the object.<sup>35</sup>

It is this anxious fullness which works throughout the screenplay, but Pinter has added a scene which directly illustrates Dolar's point. In the novel, Schomberg confides to his wife his fears about Jones and crew. Conrad describes how Schomberg 'never glanced her way, for the reason that Mrs. Schomberg, in her night attire, looked the most unattractive object in existence' (Conrad, p. 105). In Pinter, however, the scene in the Schomberg's bedroom directly follows Schomberg's urgent attempt to get Lena to run away with him. The scene is without any dialogue and centres on a gaze:

INT. HOTEL. SCHOMBERGS' BEDROOM. NIGHT.

*Mrs Schomberg sitting at dressing-table in her night clothes, looking into a mirror.*

*Schomberg comes in. He stands, looking at her reflection in the mirror. She does not meet his gaze.*

Pinter, p. 174.

Instead of Schomberg averting his gaze from her (as in Conrad), he stares into the mirror. He therefore becomes the unwelcome fullness of that uncanny gaze, for Mrs Schomberg is no longer split between herself and her mirror image. She dare not meet his gaze because she would see that extra and unwelcome knowledge of herself from which her everyday fantasies normally protect her.

The same uncanny gaze imposes itself on Axel Heyst. He has attempted to escape from the world, yet he is faced with an unwelcome intrusion into the heart of his island, threatening his very being. As Jones states: 'I am the world itself come to pay you a visit [...] I am a sort of fate - the retribution that waits its time' (Conrad, p. 379). Pinter has transposed this sense of the uncanny to a laconic familiarity, pointing us towards an intimate double. When Heyst asks 'Who are you?', Jones replies: 'Me? I'm just paying you a visit' (Pinter, p. 221). Through Jones, Heyst has a sudden unwelcome knowledge of himself. It is through this malicious double that Heyst sees those attributes he has prized, of aloofness and distance and lack of anchorage, as something other, and it is this sense of an eruption of something unpleasant, uncanny, that Pinter recreates through the structure of the screenplay.

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<sup>35</sup> Dolar, p. 13.

## THE EMERGENCE OF THE UNCANNY IN THE STRUCTURE OF THE SCREENPLAY

Instead of a Lack - a Fullness

The uncanny emerges where, instead of a lack, we encounter a fullness. Pinter is adept at the revelation of the uncanny through language, where the most urbane conversation can slide imperceptibly from civility to threat. For example, a sense of the uncanny emerges in Ricardo's speech to Schomberg, where he tells him how easy it would be for him to give the order to Pedro to kill him:

He does it well. You hear a low crack, that's all - and  
then the man drops down like a limp rag.

*He smiles at Schomberg.*

Mind you, I wouldn't ask him to do it unless you irritated  
me in some way. I'm a reasonable man.

Pinter, p. 191.

The first line matches Conrad, except that Pinter substitutes 'He does it well' for Conrad's 'It can be done.' But the oddness of violence threatened with a smile is Pinter's addition, translating into dialogue Conrad's description of his 'coyly voluptuous expression' (Conrad, p. 152). Hudgins has seen in *Victory* many alliances between Conrad's characters and Pinter's own, particularly those of *The Homecoming*, where he links Teddy with Conrad's Heyst, and Ruth with Conrad's Lena,<sup>36</sup> but he does not mention Pinter's Lenny, a modern Ricardo, whose account of his exploits down at the docks slides almost imperceptibly from friendly confidence into a sickening threat.

Elsewhere, Pinter has added his own signature to the dialogue, as in the confrontation between Heyst, Ricardo and Jones. Heyst, having come to warn them that his native cook is on the loose and armed, is then forced to submit to Jones's insistence that Pedro should take over Heyst's cooking. Heyst cannot refuse without admitting his suspicion and fear of the trio, especially in view of their glib effusiveness. Ricardo insists that Pedro should be sent straight away to start cooking dinner:

Like to cook special dinner for the gentleman tonight, Pedro?

*Pedro stares at him.*

He's thrilled.

Pinter, p. 210.

As within Pinter's manipulation of language, a threat stands out in the overall structure of the screenplay. Whereas examination of *The Remains of the Day* and *The*

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<sup>36</sup> Hudgins, *Victory*, p. 23.

*Handmaid's Tale* finds a gap that the spectator is led to cover over for herself, forming an invisible object of desire, here in *Victory* Pinter recreates an uneasy fullness. In Pinter's 'First Draft 11 June 1982' (G&H 59/10), a boat approaches the port and we see the figure of Davidson, arriving to collect Heyst from Schomberg's hotel, providing the spectator with someone who will elicit meaning as the narrative progresses. However, in the final printed version of the screenplay Davidson's arrival is delayed until after the opening sequence, and the initial images stand alone, working directly both to capture and unsettle the spectator.

Below is the opening sequence in its final form (I have added shot numbers for ease of reference):

1.     *A boat becalmed, far out to sea. The mast slowly sways. Heat haze.  
Red sun.  
Gulls encircle the boat, screeching.*
2.     *Screeching violins. A ladies' orchestra. Bare arms. White dresses.  
Crimson sashes.*
3.     *A wall of foliage. Bamboo spears pierce the foliage, quiver, stay  
pointed.  
Camera pans up to see, through leaves, impassive native faces.*
4.     *An island. Moonlight. Silence.  
Figures of men seen from a distance at the door of a low, thatched  
house. The door is kicked open. The sound reverberates in the night.  
Explosion of shrieking birds.*

Throughout these shots, Pinter creates an undertow of unease. The apparently pacific image of a boat becalmed is disturbed by the raucous screeching of gulls; the romantic vision of the ladies orchestra broken by the screeching of violins, and the '*impassive native faces*' are juxtaposed with the threatening aspect of their spears which '*pierce*' the foliage. In shot 4, the silence is broken open as the door is kicked in and an '*Explosion of shrieking birds*' takes to the air. Within these shots, Pinter is juxtaposing silence (or that visual silence, which is stillness), and harsh, raw sound which violates silence. The juxtaposition of passivity and violence works to create a vacillation whereby the spectator's attempt to make meaning (to impose her own fantasy or gaze) is unsettled, and there is within each shot the sense of something extra to both image and sound, something which unsettles and disturbs.

While Pinter installs antagonisms between vision and sound within the shots, they are also linked one with another in a chain of visual and aural resonances. The boat

becalmed amid the screeching gulls, which hints at man as prey to nature, links through 'screeching violins' to the women, whose bare arms and white dresses also suggest vulnerability, that they are also prey. Pinter presents those visual elements which soften and romanticise the plight of the women, as opposed to Conrad, who adds to those same elements an entirely different context and tone, that of emotionally inert robots.<sup>37</sup> The fact that these shots are meant to resonate with each other can be seen from Pinter's parallel changes to 'gulls' and 'violins' in the manuscript. A handwritten draft of 24 July (G&H 59/19b) gives :

1. Gulls encircling boat, / ~~Shrieking~~: Screeching.
2. ~~Shrieking~~-violins. / Screeching etc.

In softening the image of the women, by extracting '*Bare arms. White dresses. Crimson sashes*', Pinter hints at an exotic flora which is reflected in the following shot of '*A wall of foliage*' (shot 3), while the stillness, impassivity and potential cruelty of the natives is echoed in the shot of the island, silent in the moonlight, before the '*Explosion of shrieking birds*' (shot 4). Pinter can therefore be seen to be building up a network of visual and aural resonances into a fullness which vacillates between an apparent calm and a threatening instability.

The vacillation continues in shots (7) to (9):

7. *A cylinder gramophone playing in a room. Rosalia Chalier singing.*  
*Moonlight.*  
*A girl's figure in a sarong passes, carrying a bowl of water.*  
*In background a mosquito net canopy over bed. A man's body on the bed.*  
*The girl parts the netting, places the bowl on the bed, kneels on the bed, looks down at the man.*  
*The gramophone hissing.*
8. *A creek. Night. Crackle of fire. Two figures seated in foreground.*  
*Fire burning.*  
*Beyond the fire two Venezuelan Indians poking long knives into fish.*  
*They eat.*  
*The two foreground figures remain still.*  
*One of these raises a hand and wipes it on a silken handkerchief.*

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<sup>37</sup> 'The small platform was filled with white muslin dresses and crimson sashes slanting from shoulders provided with bare arms, which sawed away without respite [...] in the movements of the bare arms, in the low dresses, the coarse faces, the stony eyes of the executants, there was a suggestion of brutality - something cruel, sensual and repulsive' (my italics) (Conrad, p. 68).

9. *High up on a hillside two figures in the grass. Bright sunlight.  
A girl's stifled scream.*

The hiss of the gramophone interrupts the calm of shot 7, while the '*silken handkerchief*' of shot 8 stands out oddly.<sup>38</sup> In shot 9, the '*Bright sunlight*' is at odds with '*A girl's stifled scream.*' The scene at shot 8 belongs to a story told by Ricardo to frighten Schomberg, the hotel keeper, about the cold-blooded killing of Pedro's brother. In this opening sequence, Pinter has removed the shot from its context, creating a wider resonance for the screenplay as a whole, and leaving a subtle discordance beneath the surface.

As with Pinter's other screenplays, the images of the opening sequence create a desire to return, to see those shots again in context. But when we do return to shots 8 and 9 later in the screenplay, we find that the pacific scene by the fire is a prelude to murder, while the scream is the prelude to love between Lena and Heyst. There are other disparities between this opening coda and the narrative to follow, all of which work to unsettle the spectator. In these opening shots, the pattern of breakage and linkage, through verbal and visual resonances, engages the spectator in a constant vacillation between one aspect of the shot and another. Within these shots and between these shots, something stands out. But, emotive and dynamic in themselves, these shots achieve maximum intensity when repeated in the body of the screenplay.

#### The Drive Disturbed

That return to earlier images for a second look is important, in order to establish both the object of desire and its relationship with the spectator. In Lacan's examination of Holbein's 'The Ambassadors,' discussed in chapter one, that portrait of the two figures surrounded by their wordly accomplishments, we find across the centre of the painting a blank space. It makes no sense, and for this reason the spectator is led to take another look. But the second look reveals not an object of fascination (something we desire to see) but an unwelcome fullness (in the case of Holbein's portrait, a death's head) which cancels our relationship with desire and instead projects a figure of anxiety. As Žižek explains, the object (*objet petit a*) cannot emerge from a 'matter-of-fact, disinterested, "objective" perspective,' only when we look again with 'a look supported, permeated, and "distorted" by a *desire*.'<sup>39</sup> However, while this is the pattern examined in the two

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<sup>38</sup> Conrad gives Jones wiping his fingers on a 'plantain leaf', p. 140. In Pinter's screenplay, this part of Ricardo's story, including the silk handkerchief, is later dramatised, pp. 192-194.

<sup>39</sup> Žižek, 'Looking Awry', *October*, p. 34.

previous chapters, in this screenplay the return for a second look encounters not a gap we can cover over, but, like Holbein's death's head, an uneasy fullness.

When the first image of the boat becalmed returns we find '*Three figures gradually discerned reclining in the boat*'. We therefore appear to be approaching the boat; we also recognise that we are '*far out to sea*' (Pinter, p. 197). When the orchestra scene returns it is distorted, distanced, seen '*through screens*' (Pinter, p. 171), and the return to shot 3, the barricade in the jungle, finds the spears already in place, waiting. No '*Camera pans up to see, through leaves, impassive native faces*' - the threat is faceless (Pinter, p. 213). In shot 4 of the opening we watch from a tall distance as men enter the abandoned hut, but in the narrative we are beside them as Heyst leads them to their hut and Chang bursts it open. No birds shriek as the door '*explodes in silence, reverberating in the night*' (Pinter, p. 201).<sup>40</sup> The two figures in the final shot of the opening sequence, seen in the grass, high up on the hillside, and the stifled scream, place the moment as that when Heyst takes Lena, but when the scene is repeated the camera/spectator is close by, and there is no scream (Pinter, p. 189). The opening shot both fills in the missing moment in this return shot, and disorients by placing the spectator elsewhere.

If the girl in the sarong is Lena, and the man Heyst, then these images (1-4 and 7-9 from the opening sequence) can be partially accommodated within the film's narrative. However, shots 5 and 6 cannot:

5. *Driving rain. Leashed, barking dogs leading men with rifles through jungle.*  
*One of the men suddenly turns in panic, raises gun to shoot.*
  
6. *Champagne cork popping.*  
*Two men standing on a jetty. Champagne is poured into glasses. In background a freighter leaving. Natives waving, cheering. The freighter whistles.*

These two shots stand outside of the narrative. In Pinter's handwritten draft of 24 July the shots are separated by others in the opening sequence, and identified as characters we shall later encounter: R(icardo) and J(ones). (The numbers are given exactly as they appear in the manuscript):

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<sup>40</sup> Although Pinter gives an approach to the bungalow in long shot (p. 200), the focus appears to close in on the door as it is opened.

- (3) 4 R and J chased through jungle by men & dogs.  
 (8) 10 Morrison - opening champagne.

Handwritten draft of 24 July (G&H 19b).

However, the final printed version of shot 5 not only leaves the figures unidentified, but shows a disparity between the role of the hunters and their '*panic*', since these hunters appear to be hunted.<sup>41</sup> Pinter is embedding a visual metaphor which prefigures the ending of the tale.

Immediately following this shot is the celebratory scene on the jetty which appears to refer to the start of the mining venture with Morrison. In the novel Heyst says of Morrison's gratitude that it 'was simply frightful' (Conrad, p. 199). Pinter originally dramatised the scene, with Morrison exclaiming 'You saved my life. God sent you in answer to my prayer', to which Heyst replies 'I have no connection with the supernatural, I assure you' ('First Draft' of 11 June 1982 (G&H 59/10) shot 15B).<sup>42</sup> After this Morrison vows to make their fortunes and, in a draft of 24 November 1982 (G&H 59/9) shot 26, begins to open a bottle of champagne. Neither the fearful shot of the hunt, nor the celebratory scene on the jetty, is incorporated into the body of the screenplay. What Pinter is creating is the semblance of the uncanny, something which remains outside, and extra to the narrative.

After the disjunctions of the opening sequence, and Davidson's arrival at Schomberg's hotel to look for Heyst, Pinter gives a jump back in time to Heyst's arrival at the hotel, inserting a shot:

EXT. NICARAGUAN CREEK

*One year earlier.*

*Pedro, carrying bags, Ricardo, carrying cash box and Jones walking along beach to small boat. They climb into it. Pedro picks up oars and begins to row. The boat moves away from the beach.*

Pinter, p. 172.

It is part of Ricardo's story for Schomberg, the start of the trio's journey towards the island, which includes a robbery and a murder, but once again the spectator does not know this. The unease of the opening coda is here given a visual focus in the murderous trio. Whereas Heyst has formerly screened off his view of the outside world

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<sup>41</sup> The intention might have been to show two different sets of men. Even so, it is a hunt which has no context in the main narrative of the screenplay.

<sup>42</sup> 'Morrison' is handwritten in the margin with a small cross placing it after 'supernatural.'

by his Imaginary relation with his island, this is the pivotal point, the beginning of the change, as if a gaze begins to impose itself on Heyst, and the spectator. Since the object of desire operates in response to a lack, then the danger comes when that lack becomes a fullness, for in losing the lack we encounter anxiety and a sense of the uncanny.<sup>43</sup>

While Conrad tells us that Jones is uncanny,<sup>44</sup> Pinter reproduces the uncanny in the structure, placing Jones as the figure of an inert fullness which shatters Heyst's imaginary relation with his island, his father, and himself. For instance, in the screenplay Jones is seen to follow Heyst as if drawn by some invisible thread to shadow his every move. Immediately following the arrival of Heyst and Lena on their island, we see a shot of Surabaya Harbour and the arrival of Jones and crew (Pinter, p. 180). Conrad's Jones is actively searching for Schomberg, having been given his name by a man they met in Manila (Conrad, p. 100), but Pinter gives no such explanation, and the trio arrive without background or context.

The arrival of Jones and Ricardo at the hotel, and Schomberg's tentative questioning, are followed by a cut to Samburan and Lena's introduction to the Chinese servant Chang (Pinter, p. 181-2). In this way Pinter interconnects the arrival of Heyst and Lena with the arrival of Jones. An even stronger link is created by the juxtaposition of Heyst and Lena on their sunny island, about to eat breakfast. Heyst *'picks up a small bell and rings it.'* And, as if in response, Pedro bursts through the door with a tray, in Schomberg's hotel lobby, at night (Pinter, p. 185). As the ties between mainland and island build, a palpable menace encroaches on the small island of Heyst and Lena's dreams. By directly linking the movement of Lena and Heyst with Jones and his crew, there is a sense of fatality about each move, as though they are fixed within an omnipotent and malevolent gaze.

While Conrad speaks of 'a ring of magic stillness' around Heyst's island (Conrad, p. 66), Pinter transposes silence and stillness to the uncanny. Jones himself is a silent, still presence, waiting in the shadows for the card game to take place, or eavesdropping while Schomberg plans with Ricardo. In Conrad, Schomberg's efforts to persuade Ricardo to follow Heyst for his (non-existent) treasure are interrupted by the arrival of

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<sup>43</sup> Dolar, p. 13.

<sup>44</sup> Conrad refers to the way 'he walked out of the billiard-room in all the uncanniness of his thin shanks' (Conrad, p. 117).

Mrs Schomberg (Conrad, p. 169). In Pinter, however, it is Jones who is found to have silently materialised:

*RICARDO stares vaguely over SCHOMBERG'S shoulder.*

RICARDO: Oh yes? [...] Well ... it might be of interest.

*Schomberg turns sharply and looks behind him.*

*JONES LEANING AGAINST THE DOOR, LOOKING AT HIM.*

Pinter, p. 195.

The effect is repeated later, as Jones, in conversation with Heyst, draws his attention to Pedro squatting silently in the corner of the room, watching Heyst (Pinter, p. 204).<sup>45</sup> Again and again Pinter draws attention to a hidden presence, silent, still and watching. While the greasy Zangiaco corners Lena in the deserted billiard room, Pinter has added:

*An unseen presence in foreground, breathing.*

Pinter, p. 177.

Pinter also adds a scene of Schomberg watching Jones and Ricardo as they go upstairs.

INT. HOTEL. JONES'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.

*JONES lying on bed, fully dressed, staring at the ceiling.*

INT. HOTEL. RICARDO'S ROOM.

*RICARDO lying on bed, naked.*

*The door opens, JONES enters, closes door. [...]*

INT. HOTEL BILLIARD ROOM

*SCHOMBERG sitting in the shadows, licking his lips.*

Pinter, p. 186.

And while Heyst and Lena on their island believe themselves to be most happy, and most free, both Conrad and Pinter show that they are prey to an unseen gaze, as Chang watches them disappear into the forest (Conrad, p. 189), (Pinter, p. 186). Pinter increases the sense of watchfulness by placing this shot of Chang watching Heyst and Lena directly after the shot of Schomberg watching Jones and Ricardo in the hotel. And both Conrad and Pinter reinforce the threat to the lovers' happiness by showing that, at the moment when they feel most secure, they are most threatened. Heyst tells Lena: 'Nothing can break in on us here', but Lena sees Chang over his shoulder, a silent

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<sup>45</sup> An incident which Heyst reports to Lena in the novel (Conrad, p. 319).

presence in the room, come to tell them that a boat is approaching (Conrad, pp. 223-224) (Pinter, p. 197).

The arrival of that boat was evidently meant to have the high drama of a wreck, but in Pinter's letter to Richard Lester of 14 June 1982 (G&H 59/3), he says that he has 'omitted the sequence of Jones's boat crashing against the reef for three reasons.' Pinter gives those reasons as a) 'I like the fact of the mast being taken off the boat and therefore Heyst unable to escape in the boat.' Reason b), as already noted above, is the use of the blue silk dressing gown and candles in the scene with Jones. But perhaps the most important of all is Pinter's statement at c) 'I prefer the discovery of the boat under the jetty anyway.' Lester appears to have had his way, since the printed screenplay shows '*The boat ricocheting against the rocks on the ocean side of the reef*' before it is pulled to safety by Heyst and Chang (Pinter, p. 198). Pinter's preference was to follow Conrad where the boat is spotted, then disappears only to materialise in their midst, right under the pier. As Conrad states in the novel, 'It was very uncanny' (Conrad, p. 226). Pinter's instinct was therefore towards the uncanny, the threat which materialises silently, like a malignant gaze of which we are made suddenly aware.

#### Instead of Enjoyment - Anxiety

Pinter makes two crucial changes to the ending of Conrad's tale. The first (already mentioned) is that Pinter gives the father's statement to Jones to whisper into Heyst's ear, to 'Look on. Make no sound' (Pinter, p. 223). In this way, Heyst is offered the clear choice, to follow that philosophy of inaction which has guided his adult life, or to take action. The second change is that Pinter's Jones remains alive, rather than dead in the water by the wharf (Conrad, p. 411), and it is this factor which allows a closer Lacanian reading of the final chapter. One of the descriptions that Conrad attaches to Jones is that of 'a conceited death's head' (Conrad, p. 349), and it is as death's head that Jones's character makes most sense. Lacan's description of the Holbein painting shows that the second look at the painting reveals that it is 'the death's head' which is its hidden secret.<sup>46</sup> If we look at the Ambassadors, the vigorous figures surrounded by 'the symbols of *vanitas* [...] the sciences and arts', we do not see the skull.<sup>47</sup> Conversely, if

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<sup>46</sup> Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis (FFCP)* 1973, ed. by Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. by Alan Sheridan (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), p. 92.

<sup>47</sup> Lacan, *FFCP*, p. 88.

we see the skull in its fullest form, the Ambassadors disappear, and we *only* see the skull. As Lacan explains, what is reflected is 'our own nothingness.'<sup>48</sup>

The effect of the father's words on Heyst has been to impose the law of the Symbolic on the visible world. It has opened up a gap between Heyst and the world. As Žižek explains, 'The emergence of language opens up a hole in reality, and this hole shifts the axis of our look; language redoubles "reality" into itself and the void of the Thing that can be filled out only by an anamorphic gaze from aside.'<sup>49</sup> Heyst has filled the void with his fantasy, believing himself standing on the bank of a stream of life, of humanity, from which he has chosen to step aside - but what is revealed is that his position on the bank is that of all humanity. As Conrad's Marlow states elsewhere, 'We live, as we dream - alone.'<sup>50</sup> Heyst finds that the *objet* that was the driving force of his life did not in fact exist, but was merely his own fantasy in response to that dynamic gap which is the Real. It is here that *objet petit a* emerges as both the empty space and the fantasy with which we cover it over. In the field of vision *objet petit a* operates within the formal structure of the gaze, an invisible, ephemeral point from which the subject is suspended in a vacillating relationship between desire and anxiety, either covering over the gap, or coming face to face with the realisation that there is nothing but that gap, a realisation that defeats our relationship with desire. In Pinter's *Victory* it is Jones who presses too close, destroying Heyst's relationship with his island and himself, as he too comes face to face with his own nothingness.

Lena has acted heroically. By attempting to gain the knife from Ricardo she is fatally wounded. The knife is her prize, a point Pinter clarifies by adding 'I won it for you' (Pinter, p. 224). In her action Heyst can see the futility and emptiness of his own existence. Rather than cling to the 'Schopenhauerian pessimism'<sup>51</sup> of his father, and the apparent safety of alienation from human emotions, which in Jones appears as death-in-life, he chooses death with Lena in the flames. It is, as Ronald Knowles points out, both Heyst's 'tragedy and his "victory" ' that he does, in the end, take action.<sup>52</sup> By

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<sup>48</sup> Lacan, *FFCP*, p. 92.

<sup>49</sup> Žižek, 'Looking Awry', *October*, p. 35.

<sup>50</sup> Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, 1902 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), p. 57.

<sup>51</sup> Ronald Knowles, *Understanding Harold Pinter (UHP)*(Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1995), p. 165.

<sup>52</sup> Knowles, *UHP*, p. 165.

keeping Jones alive, Pinter dramatises (in Conrad's 'death's head')<sup>53</sup> the materialisation of a gaze which, coming too close, destroys the subject's Imaginary relation with world and self:

*The house ablaze. HEYST sitting with LENA in his arms  
DAVIDSON rushes up the steps, is beaten back by the flames.  
He turns, see JONES.*

DAVIDSON: Help me, for God's sake!

*JONES puts his hand behind him, picks up his revolver, points it at  
DAVIDSON. DAVIDSON freezes. JONES drops the revolver,  
stares blankly at him. [...]  
The figures of HEYST and LENA no longer visible. [...]  
JONES still sitting, in the light of the flames, unmoving.  
Camera holds on the scene.*

Pinter, pp. 225-226.

The spectator's view is that of Davidson and Jones bereft of action; Davidson because threatened by Jones, and Jones because he appears to see the futility of the gesture. Davidson is transfixed by Jones, suddenly revealed as harbinger of death; and Jones appears equally transfixed by the knowledge that killing Davidson will achieve exactly 'Nothing!', that final word of Conrad's *Victory*.

In *The Remains of the Day*, Pinter's final shot dramatises for the spectator that eternally lost object of desire, as Stevens walks away from us, 'lost' in the holiday crowd. In *The Handmaid's Tale* Pinter stops the action just before the object of desire is reclaimed. Here in *Victory*, Pinter dramatises that uncanny object which he has worked through language, narrative and structure to create, leaving Jones a blank, inert presence in the centre of the screen, a personification of the object that comes too close, cancels our relationship with desire and installs a deep anxiety.

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<sup>53</sup> Conrad, p. 349.

## Chapter Six

### THE OBJECT AS GAZE IN THE STAGE PLAYS

In his screenplays, Pinter can be seen to be leading the spectator towards the construction of an hallucinatory object; through the installation of a gap, something extra emerges which belongs to the spectator alone, engaging her fascination and holding her suspended in a relationship of desire or anxiety. In the field of vision, Lacan's *objet petit a* presents itself as a gaze which 'in its formal structure is rather a device to open a "non-place," the pure oscillation between an emptiness and a fullness.'<sup>1</sup> By examining the stage plays in the light of this structure, a new reading emerges in which vision is linked to an ephemeral and vacillating point of being.

### CRITICS ON FILM FORM IN THE PLAYS

Studies by critics have pointed to specific evidence of cinematic form in Pinter's plays for the stage. However, where those critics deviate from my own approach is that they identify film form with the mechanisms of the camera and with the manipulations of the image, rather than with that point which is extra to representation and which engages the spectator in a relationship of desire.

In particular, studies of *Old Times* have produced a wealth of cinematic formulae. Gay Gibson Cima, cited in chapter one, refers to Pinter's 'tendency to treat the stage as if it were a film screen' through his use of 'non-verbal (visual) sign systems' and 'experiments with the narrative sequence.' For example, Cima points to 'Pinter's Eisenstein-style montage approach to scenic development,' where the audience make

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<sup>1</sup> Mladen Dolar, ' "I Shall be with You on Your Wedding-Night": Lacan and the Uncanny,' *October*, 58 (1991), 5-23 (p. 20).

'their own syntheses of separate stage images or bits of dialogue.'<sup>2</sup> She shows how Pinter manipulates focus, and how by concentrating on specific objects, such as the coffee cups and brandy glasses, 'cuts out the "footage" that shows the characters actually drinking.'<sup>3</sup> And she notes the use of flashback as Anna and Kate return to their past, and the revised (replayed) images of Anna's account of the scene in the bedroom: 'he didn't move quickly ... that's quite wrong ... he moved ... very slowly.'<sup>4</sup> Steven H. Gale refers to the 'jump cut' as Anna's silent presence on stage leads directly to her entry to the conversation, or a discussion of dinner to come merges into a discussion of dinner finished,<sup>5</sup> points also noted by Christopher C. Hudgins.<sup>6</sup> However, rather than identifying particular aspects of cinematic technique in Pinter's work with what we see on stage, it is what lies *beyond* representation that provides an insight into the Pinter canon.

In her essay on *Mountain Language*, Ann C. Hall cites Stephen Heath's use of Lacan's early work (his 'mirror stage' and 'gaze') to argue that the spectator is master of the image but not the voice. ('[T]he eye literally captures the object, whereas the ear cannot master sounds as effectively.')

<sup>7</sup> But there can be no 'capture', since the subject is split between self and word, and self and image; and it is this very impossibility of capture which elicits desire.

Marc Silverstein's analysis of *Old Times* invokes both Sartre's notion of the 'look-looked-at' and Lacan's theory of the split between the eye and the gaze at work in the play.<sup>8</sup> However, Silverstein's focus on cultural power links that power to the cinematic apparatus, finding that 'In the case of the cinematic image, this split between

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<sup>2</sup> Gay Gibson Cima, 'Acting on the Cutting Edge: Pinter and the Syntax of Cinema,' *Theatre Journal* 36.1 (1984), 43-56 (pp. 43, 48).

<sup>3</sup> Cima, p. 45.

<sup>4</sup> Cima, p. 47-48, quoting *Old Times*.

<sup>5</sup> Steven H. Gale, 'The Use of a Cinematic Device in Harold Pinter's *Old Times*,' *Notes on Contemporary Literature*, 10.1 (1980), 11.

<sup>6</sup> Christopher C. Hudgins, 'Inside Out: Filmic Technique and the Theatrical Depiction of a Consciousness in Harold Pinter's *Old Times*,' *Genre*, 13 (1980), 355-376 (p. 365). Hudgins also notes that 'Pinter's theatrical technique for displaying memory is filmic in origin.' (p. 373).

<sup>7</sup> Ann C. Hall, 'Voices in the Dark: The Disembodied Voice in Harold Pinter's *Mountain Language*,' *The Pinter Review* (1991), 17-22 (p.18), quoting Stephen Heath, "Difference", *Screen* (1978), 51-112 (pp. 84-86).

<sup>8</sup> Marc Silverstein, *Harold Pinter and the Language of Cultural Power* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1993), pp. 113-114.

the subject and the object of representation - the presence of one term necessitating the absence of the other - guarantees the power of the cinematic apparatus and specifically the camera producing, but absent from, the image.' For example, Silverstein notes Deeley's involvement in the cinematic process as director, and as manipulator of a linguistic camera; that is to say Deeley's description of Kate walking conjures up a cinematic image through language while he himself 'remains invisible, transformed into the disembodied eye of the camera.' For Silverstein, 'Deeley's scopic desire' reveals itself as 'a desire to gaze without fear of becoming an object of the gaze, a desire to disappear within and become transformed into the cinematic apparatus.'<sup>9</sup>

My own focus is the subject suspended in a relationship of desire with a different gaze, a different structure; neither an attempted mastery of the image nor an attempted merging with the camera, the Lacanian gaze involves that which is unrepresented. The gaze to which film theory refers 'is located "in front of" the image, as its signified [...] the point that "gives" meaning.' In film theory, therefore, 'The subject is [...] thought to identify with and [...] in a sense, to *coincide with* the gaze.' However, as Joan Copjec explains, Lacan locates the gaze ' "behind" the image, as that which fails to appear in it and thus as that which makes all its meanings suspect. And the subject, instead of coinciding with or identifying with the gaze, is rather *cut off from it*.' It is this split which brings desire into play, and which '*founds* the subject.' ('The subject is the effect of the impossibility of seeing what is lacking in the representation, what the subject, therefore, wants to see.')<sup>10</sup> And it is here in the formal structure of the gaze (both gap and hallucinatory object with which we attempt to cover that gap) that Lacan's *objet petit a* emerges. It is from this invisible object that Pinter suspends his spectator in an acute and ephemeral relationship with desire.

## VISION AND BEING

In *The Hothouse* (1958/80) Roote speaks of the primacy of vision: 'Vision's very important.' Later he tells us that he himself has 'second sight,' and not only that, but he

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<sup>9</sup> Silverstein, *Cultural Power*, p. 109.

<sup>10</sup> Joan Copjec, 'The Orthopsychic Subject: Film Theory and the Reception of Lacan' in *Read My Desire: Lacan Against the Historicists*, (London: MIT Press, 1994), pp. 15-38 (pp. 36, 35).

can 'see through walls.'<sup>11</sup> He can therefore see beyond the representational walls of exterior reality. Vision in Pinter's work is never just sight, it is a question of perception. To perceive is 'to apprehend what is not present to observation; to see through, see into.'<sup>12</sup> As Len explains in *The Dwarfs*, perception 'might also be hallucination.'<sup>13</sup>

References to vision run throughout the plays. Characters become blind, like Rose in *The Room*, or sight is damaged, as for Stanley, Edward and Disson. But for all four of these early characters, lack of sight coincides with the revelation of an extra (albeit unwelcome) knowledge which touches on the centre of being. Critics have associated blindness, or lack of sight in Pinter's plays with either physical or spiritual death.<sup>14</sup> However, Katherine H. Burkman sees Edward's 'diminishing sight, the slight ache in his eyes' taking place as he suffers new insight into himself and his situation.'<sup>15</sup> Ann P. Messenger also makes the link between the incidence of sight and blindness (together with light and darkness) in Pinter's plays and 'the problem of identity.' As Messenger notes, blindness can signify insight, as with Tiresias, the blind seer, who had 'the power of prophetic vision', and 'Sophocles' Oedipus, ignorant of his identity [...] struck out his own eyes when knowledge dawned.'<sup>16</sup>

While Pinter's characters can sometimes 'see' beyond representation, expected transparencies can become intransigent and 'blind.' Windows act as screens for Kullus

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<sup>11</sup> *The Hothouse*, Harold Pinter, *Plays One*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), pp. 260, 302.

<sup>12</sup> *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, Volume II, definition 3, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p. 1551.

<sup>13</sup> Harold Pinter, *The Dwarfs: A Novel*, written 1952-1956, revised for publication 1990 (London: Faber and Faber, 1992), p. 151.

<sup>14</sup> Peter C. Thornton, 'Blindness and the Confrontation with Death: Three Plays by Harold Pinter', *Die Neueren Sprachen*, 67 (1968), 213-23. Thornton sees Rose dead at the moment of blinding (p. 215), and Stanley spiritually dead with the destruction of his glasses (p. 217), while in *A Slight Ache* the Matchseller 'represents approaching death' (p. 220).

Esslin links blindness in *The Room*, *The Birthday Party* and *A Slight Ache* to 'sexual inadequacy and death', Martin Esslin, *Pinter: The Playwright (PTP)*, 5th rev.edn (London: Methuen, 1992), p. 78.

<sup>15</sup> Katherine H. Burkman, 'Death and the Double in Three Plays by Harold Pinter', in *Harold Pinter: You Never Heard Such Silence*, ed. by Alan Bold (London: Vision Press, 1984), pp. 131-145, (pp. 135-6).

<sup>16</sup> Ann P. Messenger, 'Blindness and the Problem of Identity in Pinter's Plays,' *Die Neueren Sprachen*, 21 (1972), 481-90, (p. 482).

who had a 'predilection for windows' yet 'paid no attention to the aspect beyond.'<sup>17</sup> In *A Kind of Alaska*, Deborah describes 'windows masquerading as walls. The windows are mirrors, you see.'<sup>18</sup> And windows become mirrors for Beth, reflected back to herself in the dark window of *Landscape*.<sup>19</sup> But, as Bill tells James in *The Collection*, mirrors are 'deceptive.'<sup>20</sup> There is always something more, left over, that we don't see. The reflected image in the mirror is a pale ghost of the real self, it lacks what Mladen Dolar describes as 'the immediate self-being of *jouissance*.'<sup>21</sup> The true subject, the real centre of being is what cannot be seen in the mirror, what is therefore beyond representation. It is this sense of something extra to vision which Pinter consistently emphasises.

In the same way that Pinter emphasises what lies beyond vision, he emphasises what lies in the silence beyond language.<sup>22</sup> In *The Caretaker*, Aston's intense, hallucinatory vision is linked to silence. He speaks of hallucinations which weren't exactly hallucinations, in which 'everything got very quiet ... all this ... quiet ... and ... this clear sight.'<sup>23</sup> In *Silence* Ellen speaks of an intense silence out of darkness: 'Around me sits the night. Such a silence [...] Am I silent or speaking?'<sup>24</sup> Early drafts show that Pinter's original title for *Silence* was 'Shadows'<sup>25</sup> so that a hidden connection exists between the silence of the final title and what lies in shadow, and is therefore unseen. In *No Man's Land* Spooner describes that place 'Which never moves, which never changes, which never grows older, but which remains forever, icy and silent.'<sup>26</sup> In *A*

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<sup>17</sup> 'The Examination,' *Plays One*, p. 382.

<sup>18</sup> *A Kind of Alaska*, Harold Pinter, *Other Places* (London: Methuen, 1982), p. 39.

<sup>19</sup> *Landscape*, Harold Pinter, *Plays Three* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1978), p. 195.

<sup>20</sup> *The Collection*, Harold Pinter, *Plays Two*, rev. edn (London: Methuen, 1979), p. 146.

<sup>21</sup> Dolar, p. 13.

<sup>22</sup> Pinter has spoken of his role as Iago, at the age of twenty-one, to Anew McMaster's *Othello* and how he 'relished the stillness, the watchfulness' adding that 'That particular production left a great impression on me later on when I started to write plays.' Harold Pinter interviewed by Fintan O'Toole, 'An Unflinching Gaze', *Irish Times*, 30 April 1994, p. 3.

<sup>23</sup> *The Caretaker*, *Plays Two*, p. 64.

<sup>24</sup> *Silence*, *Plays Three*, p. 211.

<sup>25</sup> The Pinter Archive, Box 28. Also noted by Susan Hollis Merritt, 'The Harold Pinter Archive in the British Library', *The Pinter Review* (1994), 14-53 (p. 38).

<sup>26</sup> *No Mans Land*, Harold Pinter, *Plays Four* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1981), p. 153.

*Kind of Alaska*, Deborah speaks of 'everything so quiet so still'<sup>27</sup> and the later play, *Moonlight*, ends with Bridget's description of the dark, silent house in the moonlight.<sup>28</sup> What they appear to describe is the Real, that point which exists beyond both language and vision and which traps the spectator within a relationship of desire.

#### THE GAZE IN THE EARLY PLAYS : 1957 - 1962

If we look at Pinter's first four plays in relation to the structure of the gaze, it is possible to find a new reading of his famous intruders. For what are the intruders but eruptions of the Real which, coming too close, cancel out the central character's hallucinatory view of their world, leaving them effectively blind?

In *The Room* (1957), a blind black man emerges from the blackness of the cellar somewhere in the building beneath Rose and Bert's room. The darkness in the cellar inside the building is echoed in the formless space outside into which Bert plunges in his van ride: 'They got it dark out.'<sup>29</sup> As the play ends, Bert's killing of the blind man is followed by Rose's cry that she 'Can't see.' What we encounter in this first play is Rose's Imaginary view of her world, which is a view distorted, filtered through desire. Finally that desiring view is destroyed, and she becomes aware of seeing nothing.

Rose's view of the world is evident. She tells us 'This is a good room. You've got a chance in a place like this.'<sup>30</sup> However, the audience, through what they see of the room, and what they understand of the threat to it from prospective tenants, have already seen beyond Rose's fantasy. (As Marc Silverstein notes, 'the scene negates what is said in it and about it.')31 That desire, for a safe, secure haven with Bert, causes her view of Bert and the room to be set 'awry' with a look 'supported, permeated, and "distorted" by a *desire*.' This is Rose's *objet petit a*, an object which 'is always, by

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<sup>27</sup> *A Kind of Alaska, Other Places*, p. 13.

<sup>28</sup> Harold Pinter, *Moonlight*, (London: Faber & Faber, 1993), p. 80.

<sup>29</sup> *The Room, Plays One*, p. 109.

<sup>30</sup> *The Room, Plays One*, p. 89.

<sup>31</sup> Marc Silverstein, 'Keeping the Other in its Place: Language and Self-Fashioning in Selected Plays of Harold Pinter' (doctoral thesis, Brown University, May 1989, Chapter One, p. 28). This thesis forms the basis of *Harold Pinter and the Language of Cultural Power*, referred to earlier in this chapter.

definition, perceived in a distorted way because, outside this distortion, "in itself," it *does not exist*.' It is ' "objectively" [...] nothing at all, nothing of the desire itself which, viewed from a certain perspective, assumes the shape of "something".' <sup>32</sup>

In the same way that desire shapes Rose's view of her room, so desire shapes Rose's view of Bert.<sup>33</sup> Rose covers over the empty space that is Bert, only to find that he returns as something other, as an uncanny fullness which destroys that desiring relationship. As the play progresses he makes his journey in his van into a dark and formless place, a parallel of the Real where both death and desire reside:

I drove her down, hard. They got it dark out [...]  
 There was no cars. One there was. He wouldn't move.  
 I bumped him [...] I had all my way [...] She was good.  
 She went with me [...] She took me there. She brought  
 me back.

*The Room*. p. 109-110.

Both Bert and Riley erupt out of a formless darkness. The blind Riley, the dumb Bert, appear to be doubles, reverse images of each other. Bert, the familiar, returns as something horrifying and uncanny (a killer), while Riley, the threatening presence in the cellar, emerges as an old familiar, calling Rose home.

And Rose apparently makes this link between them, asking if the blind man is also deaf and concluding that 'You're all deaf and dumb and blind, the lot of you.' Although blind, Riley can 'see'. He knows that 'This is a large room'; He has 'waited to see' Rose, and when he touches her he can then see her: 'Now I see you', a fact with which Rose no longer disagrees. Like Roote in *The Hothouse*, he is able to 'see' beyond the surfaces of representation. Through him (his call for her to return to her father, the use of a name she rejects but does not deny), Rose now sees differently. The early view of her surroundings now changes. The room takes on the aspect of a prison. She tells Riley that 'I've been here [...] Long [...] The day is a hump. I never go out.' <sup>34</sup>

As she touches his eyes, his temples, his head, Bert returns from *his* formless place. As Riley the blind man can 'see,' so Bert the speechless can speak, while Rose's voice is

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<sup>32</sup> Slavoj Žižek, 'Looking Awry', *October*, 50 (1989), 30-55, (p. 34).

<sup>33</sup> Silverstein sees Bert's silence as resistance to Rose's attempt to fashion him into her narrative. Silverstein thesis, p. 34.

<sup>34</sup> *The Room, Plays One*, pp. 107, 109.

subdued, acquiescent until the moment when Bert kills Riley and she cries out that she 'Can't see. I can't see. I can't see.' *Blackout. Curtain.*<sup>35</sup> Bert is no longer a blank space onto which she can screen her desire, he has become an unwelcome fullness, destroying her tentative relationship with the negro, and with her world. Rose's view of her world was only possible through a gap between herself and that external scene, a gap which she covered with her own object of desire. With the eruption of these doubles she loses her cosy world and the Imaginary construct which keeps an awareness of the Real at bay.

Pinter creates a parallel effect for the spectator. As in his later work on the screenplays, Pinter has embedded an invisible object at the opening of the play. Rose's statement 'It's murder' outside, is the letter posted along the signifying chain of the action, which activates the spectator's desire in relation to the text/stage. But rather than desire (what the spectator wants to see) Pinter causes anxiety (what she fears she will see). For Lilian Back the uncanny is revealed in this play through 'a continuum of psychic uncertainties' and she quotes Rose's opening description of the cold outside as 'It's murder' and notes that this metaphor turns 'into a physical reality' both on stage and 'in the minds of the audience.'<sup>36</sup> For Lacan, *this* is the uncanny; it is created when something becomes an inescapable fullness. It is *certainty*, rather than uncertainty, that produces the uncanny object when the object comes too close and cancels our fantasy with its 'unbearable presence.'<sup>37</sup>

Within the overall structure, Pinter also creates a sense of anxiety for the spectator through the conjunction of irreconcilable opposites. Rose's description of her room continually invokes the contrast of the damp, dark cellar. Mr Kidd speaks about his sister, although Rose denies that he had one.<sup>38</sup> The Sands speak of coming up the stairs and then deny it, saying they were coming down.<sup>39</sup> Bert's van ride is described in terms of an enforced sexual encounter. The spectator is automatically engaged in drawing the opposing statements together, but those attempts are defeated by

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<sup>35</sup> *The Room, Plays One*, p. 110.

<sup>36</sup> Lilian Back, 'Elements of the Uncanny in Harold Pinter's *The Room*', *Michigan Academician*, 14 (1981), 5-12 (pp. 7-8).

<sup>37</sup> Dolar, p. 20.

<sup>38</sup> *The Room, Plays One*, pp. 93-94.

<sup>39</sup> *The Room, Plays One*, pp. 95, 101.

something that sticks out, like the figure that erupts from the darkness beneath Rose's room, and from the formless territory outside.

The next three plays can also be read as something which, coming too close, defeats the central character's Imaginary relation with their world. In *The Birthday Party* (1957) blindness and dumbness are again linked to the destruction of personal fantasy when two uncanny intruders emerge from the space outside. Goldberg and McCann destroy not only Stanley's glasses but his fantasy of a concert platform, an applauding audience, a cabaret job in Berlin, and his safe and suffocating haven with Meg and Petey.<sup>40</sup> Pinter's famous intruders can be re-read as a gaze returned, as objects erupting from a formless place to annihilate the subject's fantasy construct of the self. As Stanley is led out into that space, he is both blind and dumb, reduced to a central core of being.

In *The Dumb Waiter* (1957), Gus and Ben wait for an unknown victim while attempting to fulfil impossible orders for food emanating from a hidden presence somewhere beyond the confines of their windowless room. As they wait for the victim to appear their preparations focus on what they will or will not see:

BEN	He'll see me and come towards me.
GUS	He'll see you and come towards you.
BEN	He won't see you.
GUS	( <i>absently</i> ). Eh?
BEN	He won't see you.
GUS	He won't see me.
BEN	But he'll see me.

*The Dumb Waiter, Plays One, p. 143.*

As we discover when the play ends, the victim won't see Gus because Gus himself is the victim. Whereas Gus believed Ben his friend, Ben, the old familiar, now turns uncanny, threatening.

Questions of vision and perception dominate Pinter's fourth play, *A Slight Ache* (1958) as Edward fails to notice the honeysuckle, showing that he is 'blind' to his surroundings as to much else. But he happily blinds a wasp, thus prefiguring a deeper blindness. Through this small incident Pinter creates for the spectator the hidden object which comes full circle in Edward's collapse and his own loss of sight as the play ends.

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<sup>40</sup> *The Birthday Party, Plays One, pp. 16-27.*

In this play it is the silent figure of the Matchseller who acts as screen onto which Edward and Flora project both anxiety and desire.<sup>41</sup> As Elissa S. Guralnick states, 'Edward perceives him as embodying a threat, presumably of death - and virtually dies of him. Flora perceives him as embodying life - and virtually consorts with him.'<sup>42</sup> Like Holbein's death's head (described in chapter one), the Matchseller is both a gap (evoking desire) and a fullness (evoking anxiety). The Matchseller reproduces those elements that exist in the Real, that vital gap beyond representation.

The key to vision in these early plays emerges in Edward's much quoted speech on his own vision:

it was not so much any deficiency in my sight as the airs  
between me and my object [...] the currents obtaining in the  
space between me and my object, the shades they make, the  
shapes they take, the quivering, the eternal quivering.

*A Slight Ache, Plays One, p. 182.*

The passage has a direct resonance with Diderot's 'Letter on the Blind for the use of those who see', referred to by both André Breton and Jacques Lacan. Breton quotes from Diderot when examining the non-representational in art:

'M. de ... asked him, what are eyes?' "They are an organ," replied the blind man, "on which air produces the same effect that a stick produces on my hand." [...] "When I place my hand between your eyes and an object, my hand is present to you but the object is absent. The same thing happens to me when I seek a particular object with my stick and encounter another one instead." ' 43

Lacan, speaking of the same letter, points out that 'this construction allows that which concerns vision to escape totally. For the geometral space of vision [...] is perfectly reconstructible, imaginable, by a blind man. What is at issue [...] is simply the mapping

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<sup>41</sup> Barbara Ellen Goldstein Kern refers to the Matchseller as 'a caricature of the classical Freudian analyst [...] a "blank screen" upon which Edward and Flora project their own libidinal wishes, fantasies, conflicts and fears.' Barbara Ellen Goldstein Kern, 'Transference in Selected Stage Plays of Harold Pinter' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Drew University, 1987), p. 207.

<sup>42</sup> Elissa S. Guralnick, 'The Mind: Arthur Kopit's *Wings* and Harold Pinter's *A Slight Ache*,' in *Sight Unseen: Beckett, Pinter, Stoppard, and Other Contemporary Dramatists on Radio*, (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1996), pp. 99-127 (p. 101).

<sup>43</sup> Diderot's *Lettre sur les aveugles*, quoted by André Breton in *Surrealism and Painting*, 1928, rev. edn trans. by Simon Watson Taylor (London: Macdonald, 1972), p. 51.

of space, not sight.’<sup>44</sup> In effect vision is not just seeing, but being, a mapping of the self in space. Pinter’s characters also map themselves through their hallucinatory, desiring relationships. When the object presses too close, that relationship with desire is destroyed.

Esslin has linked Pinter’s approach to that of Heidegger, ‘man’s confrontation with himself and the nature of his own being, that fundamental anxiety which is nothing less than [...] awareness of the threat of non-being, of annihilation.’<sup>45</sup> Lois Gordon takes a similar line in suggesting that ‘the mysterious intruders in the plays’ can be read as ‘Godots-arrived (The Eternal Nothing),’<sup>46</sup> a statement followed by Gillen who suggests that ‘What Pinter puts palpably on stage [...] is, like Beckett, absence.’<sup>47</sup> However, as L. A. C. Dobrez points out in his existential reading of Beckett, ‘the experience of nothingness is also an experience of being.’<sup>48</sup> It is this description which aligns with Lacanian theory. As Bruce Fink explains, ‘Lack in Lacan’s work has, to a certain extent, an ontological status: it is the first step beyond nothingness.’<sup>49</sup> It is this vital point beyond the Symbolic and Imaginary relations where Lacan locates the Real, which drives the subject forward towards *jouissance* (inexpressible enjoyment) or beyond enjoyment, to death.<sup>50</sup> And it is that life and death duality which Pinter clearly evokes in the form of the Matchseller in *A Slight Ache*.

*A Slight Ache* marked a turning point, since it was written for and performed first on radio. As critics note, on radio, the presence of the Matchseller is entirely open to the

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<sup>44</sup> Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, (FFCP), 1973, ed. by Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. by Alan Sheridan (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), p. 86.

<sup>45</sup> Esslin, *PTP*, p. 27.

<sup>46</sup> Lois G. Gordon, *Strategems to Uncover Nakedness: The Dramas of Harold Pinter* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1969), p. 9.

<sup>47</sup> Francis Gillen, ‘“Whatever Light is Left in the Dark?” : Harold Pinter’s *Moonlight*’, *The Pinter Review* (1992-93), 31-37 (p. 32).

<sup>48</sup> L. A. C. Dobrez, *The Existential and Its Exits: Literary and Philosophical Perspectives on the works of Beckett, Ionesco, Genet and Pinter* (London: Athlone Press, 1986), p. 91.

<sup>49</sup> Bruce Fink, *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 52.

<sup>50</sup> Bice Benvenuto and Roger Kennedy, *The Works of Jacques Lacan: An Introduction*, (London: Free Association Books, 1986), p. 180.

creation of the audience.<sup>51</sup> The Matchseller therefore takes on the true proportions of the Real - formless and indefinable. And yet far from a blank space, that gap in speech and vision represents something vital and hidden, which evokes the listener's desire. In an interview soon after the first presentation of the play on radio, Pinter speaks of the 'clarity [...] of the image which comes over' and the way that 'On radio this play relied a great deal [...] on its letting the imagination of the listener do a great deal of work.'<sup>52</sup> In this way radio drama can be seen to duplicate the structures of desire in Lacan's *objet petit a*, where the listener is drawn to cover over that vital gap (the Real) between herself and the spoken word (the Symbolic), with an acute Imaginary relationship of her own.

In these early plays the gaze which emerges from the Real is both spatialised and personified. Pinter's *The Hothouse*, written in 1958, was abandoned until 1980, so that his next play to reach the stage was *The Caretaker* (1959). In this play Pinter moves closer to a realistic setting, and symbols such as blindness, broken spectacles, the unseen speaker, the speechless presence, give way to an internalisation of the Real and a focus on the characters' attempts to cover over that gap with the Imaginary object of their own desire.

Apart from a series of revue sketches, Pinter's next five plays either went straight to radio or straight to television. In the television plays, Pinter uses realistic settings while placing characters (and spectator) between two separate realities.<sup>53</sup> In *Night School*, Sally tells Walter that she is a school teacher when she is actually (or also) a night-club hostess. In *The Collection* (1961), James, husband of Stella, accuses Bill of sleeping with his wife when they were together in Leeds, but as the play progresses the conflicting accounts show the truth as ever more elusive. In *The Lover* (1962) the wife and husband are also their own adulterous lovers making love in the afternoon.

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<sup>51</sup> Esslin, *PTP*, p. 77.

<sup>52</sup> Pinter quoted by Wertheim in a discussion of 7 March 1961, with the producer Donald McWhinnie and Carl Wildman of BBC 'Network Three.' (Albert Wertheim, 'Tearing of Souls: Harold Pinter's *A Slight Ache* on Radio and Stage', in *Harold Pinter: Critical Approaches*, ed. by Steven H. Gale (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1986), pp. 64-71 (pp. 65-6).

<sup>53</sup> *A Night Out* was produced on Radio on 1 March 1960, and on television on 24 April 1960. As with *A Slight Ache*, Esslin refers to the greater impact of the play on radio, its increased 'uncertainty' and 'ambiguity' and how the effect is more 'suggestive and terrifying' (Martin Esslin, 'Harold Pinter's Work for Radio' in Gale, *Critical Approaches*, pp. 47-63 (pp. 52-54)).

Aspects of Pinter's work for the screen (already noted in chapter two) can be identified as a paring down of dialogue and dramatic action, a circularity of structure through the embedding of a hidden 'object' which returns as the screenplay ends, and the placement of the spectator within a central point of view. The circularity is already present in Pinter's first play as Rose's 'It's murder' proves the hidden object which returns in full force as the play ends with murder. Notable examples of circularity in the later work occur in *The Homecoming* (1964), where 'this family of brutish grotesques' freeze into a family portrait at the final curtain.<sup>54</sup> The action progresses from Ruth's arrival with Teddy, her defeat of Teddy who leaves without her and is therefore literally out of the picture, to that final tableau of Ruth and family, either at her feet, or sidelined. What we have is a portrait of Ruth's desire. In this way, *The Homecoming* looks forward to *Old Times* (1970), where it is Anna's fantasy which freezes into place at the final curtain. Pinter not only leads us to read the action as coalesced into the final image, but to read the foregoing action backwards from that image in the creation of one complex vacillating scene.

This overall circular structure does not always carry forward into the later plays, but throughout the canon the circularity emerges through repetitions within the overall structure. Within dialogue, repetition creates a hallucinatory and vacillating image for the spectator in the space between one statement and another, as for example the differing explanations of the affair in Leeds in *The Collection*. Pinter's early poems and the short prose works *The Black and White* and *The Examination* present a central point of view which is absent from the overall structure of the plays. However, within that structure, the use of monologue, as in Rose's unanswered address to Bert, or Flora and Edward's to the Matchseller, could be read as a series of central points of view, through which the spectator identifies the character's desire. These aspects, which structure a hidden object in the screenplays, can therefore be identified to a greater or lesser extent as already present within the plays leading up to Pinter's first work for the large screen.

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<sup>54</sup> George E. Wellwarth, 'The Dumb Waiter, The Collection, The Lover and The Homecoming, A Revisionist Approach', in *Harold Pinter: A Casebook*, ed. by Lois Gordon (London: Garland, 1990), pp. 95-108 (p. 106).

## THE MOVE INTO FILM : 1962 - 1966

The period 1962 to 1966 was a transitional period for Pinter in which he wrote his first screenplays for *The Servant* (1962) and *The Pumpkin Eater* (1963), the short story *Tea Party* (1963), which he adapted for television in 1964, an adaptation of *The Caretaker* for the big screen (1962-63),<sup>55</sup> *The Homecoming* (1964) and *The Basement* (1963-6).

*The Caretaker* (Screenplay 1962-63)

Speaking of the transfer of *The Caretaker* to film, Pinter says 'things I'd yearned to do, without knowing it, in writing for the stage, crystallized when I came to think about it as a film.' He was pleased with the realism of the play on screen, with its realistic setting, which allows brief glimpses of the world outside, to telling effect. Pinter points to the ability of the screen to substitute visuals for dialogue in the creation of a silent language, as in the scene in the garden 'which is very silent; two silent figures with a third looking on' which is 'able to hit the relationship of the brothers more clearly than in the play.' And he refers to the 'extraordinarily successful' use of the close up in one scene between the elder brother and the caretaker, which allows the scene to be played 'in terms of great intimacy.' Pinter refers to 'The balance, the timing, and the rhythm' of film, as 'the silent music, as it were',<sup>56</sup> once more drawing attention to the unstated and unseen.

Although Pinter's dialogue does not alter in the transition from stage to screen, considerable sections have been cut. For example Mick's flight of fancy in attempting to sell Davies a flat in the house is omitted, as are the majority of Davies's racial comments and small complicating details of narrative, such as Aston's complaint about the woman who attempted to pick him up in a cafe, and Davies's claim that he has that trouble too. (However, Davies's long speech about his trip to the monastery remains virtually intact.) On screen, language begins to give way to visuals.

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<sup>55</sup> The Pinter Archive, Box 6 contains a draft screenplay of *The Caretaker* dated 15 October 1962 and an 'Export Script' of 14 June 1963. These drafts are listed by Gale and Hudgins as items 6/5 and 6/1 respectively (Steven H. Gale and Christopher C. Hudgins, 'The Harold Pinter Archives II: A Description of the Filmscript Materials in the Archive in the British Library', *The Pinter Review* (1995 and 1996), 101-142 (p. 109) ).

<sup>56</sup> Kenneth Cavander, Interview with Harold Pinter and Clive Donner, 1963, in *Behind the Scenes: Theater and Film Interviews from the Transatlantic Review*, ed. by Joseph F. McCrindle (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), pp. 211-222 (pp. 214, 218-19).

A handwritten outline shows the action starting with a row in a cafe, shot 1,<sup>57</sup> and this scene is elaborated in Pinter's screenplay of 15 October 1962. Here in the all night café (with characters and dialogue reminiscent of *The Black and White*), we have our first view of Davies, losing his job as cleaner because he refuses to take out a bucket, then following Aston out of the cafe, and airing his grievances along the road. But this has been crossed through by hand. The deletion alters the emphasis of the opening, since the first three shots of the draft of 15 October 1962, together with an undated outline,<sup>58</sup> the 'Export Script' of 14 June 1963, and the film itself, all begin with a still, dark object installed in the corner of the screen beneath the credits. As the credits end, a figure emerges from this darkness, and enters the unlit house.<sup>59</sup> Intercut into these silent, shadowy movements we watch the progress of Aston and the fractious Davies along the wintry street towards the house where Mick now waits in stillness, darkness and silence.<sup>60</sup>

This opening echoes the stage play where Mick's silent presence is installed in the room, disappearing just before Aston and Davies enter. And whether sensed or actual, that presence hovers throughout the play, disturbing Davies's relationship with Aston and finally erupting as he smashes the Buddha. Davies understands that his relationship with Aston and Mick is broken, and so too is his Imaginary relationship with Sidcup, and his papers (the source of plenitude, that will 'tell you who I am' )<sup>61</sup> as he finally stutters into silence. Mick emerges as the uncanny object which destroys Davies's fantasy construct of his world.

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<sup>57</sup> Handwritten draft outline on three foolscap pages, part of ten handwritten foolscap pages of notes (G&H 6/2).

<sup>58</sup> Handwritten outline on foolscap page (began in ink and continued in pencil) part of G&H 6/2.

<sup>59</sup> Directions for the opening shot (draft of 15 October 1962), give the shot as 'static. There is no movement in the van.' In shot 2, Pinter has then crossed through by hand: ~~'In the front room of the next house heavy curtains are pulled. Shafts of light fall through the chinks'~~ as Mick enters the house. All movement, all light is therefore reduced to the minimum.

<sup>60</sup> Steven H. Gale notes the significance of the opening shots 'in establishing the meaning that the author will develop during the course of the film.' Steven H. Gale, 'Film and Drama: The Opening Sequence of the filmed Version of Harold Pinter's *The Caretaker (The Guest)*', in Gordon, *A Casebook*, pp. 119-160 (p. 126).

<sup>61</sup> *The Caretaker, Plays Two*, p. 29.

*Tea Party* (1963-64)<sup>62</sup>

Focussed through a central point of view, *Tea Party* returns to the theme of extra-perceptual vision as Disson's damaged and bandaged eyes reveal his worst fears: his wife and secretary in a sexual threesome with his brother-in-law in full view of the party. This was a new move for Pinter, presenting the fantasy of the central character on screen beside images of external reality. Pinter felt that the play was less successful than the story on which it was based.<sup>63</sup> Representing the fantasy on screen was evidently a mistake, yet he attempted it once more in his screenplay for *The Basement*.

*The Basement* (1963-66)<sup>64</sup>

As in *Tea Party*, reality and fantasy are clearly represented (although it is not certain where one ends and the other begins).<sup>65</sup> As Law's comfortable basement flat is taken over by Stott and his girl Jane, both relationships and flat undergo a series of abrupt changes which critics link not only to 'the passage of time but also the changing emotional relationships of the three characters.'<sup>66</sup> For example, Law's comment to Stott that the flat is overcrowded with three people is followed by a claustrophobic scene in summer as the three of them are revealed at lunch in tropical clothes behind closed curtains. Law searches feverishly for a record and turns, holding it, in winter, at night, followed by a shot of Stott and Jane climbing naked into bed, cut to summer, day, and Law watching Jane and Stott now outside in the backyard, before he brings the record to them. The following scene shows Law and Jane in a 'Cave by the sea. Evening. Summer' as Jane asks Law to tell Stott to go, so that they can be happy together, followed by 'Exterior. Backyard. Night. Winter. [...] The window is open' as Law tells Stott that Jane betrays him.<sup>67</sup> The change of season and furnishings in order to elaborate emotional states prefigures Pinter's later screenplays for *The Go-Between*

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<sup>62</sup> Pinter's short story, written in 1963, was re-worked as a play in 1964.

<sup>63</sup> Pinter states that he feels '*the story is the more successful.*' Note to *Tea Party*, *Plays Three*, p. 242.

<sup>64</sup> Discussed in chapter one, *The Basement* (originally *The Compartment*) was written for the large screen as part of the Grove Press project (together with Beckett's *Film*), but remained unmade and was later rewritten for television (see Michael Billington, *The Life and Work of Harold Pinter* (London: Faber and Faber, 1996), p 191).

<sup>65</sup> Esslin sees the changing scenes as either day-dreaming on the part of Law, or 'a sequence of images on the theme of two men fighting for a girl.' Esslin, *PTP*, p. 154.

<sup>66</sup> Arnold Hinchcliffe, *Harold Pinter* (London: Macmillan, 1976), pp. 137-8.

<sup>67</sup> *The Basement*, *Plays Three*, pp. 164-6.

and *Langrishe, Go Down* (written in 1969 and 1970). But, unlike those screenplays, the visual complexities of *The Basement* tend to shut the spectator out. Visually, both *Tea Party* and *The Basement* appear to be steps backward from the realism of *The Caretaker*, and from the silent, intimate images which allow what is unspoken - and unseen - to emerge.

However, as noted in chapter one, the circularity of *The Basement* parallels Beckett's contribution to the same film project, and directly links it to a gaze. In *Film* Beckett shows Eye following Object, finally revealed to be one character split by an 'anguish of perceivedness.'<sup>68</sup> In *The Basement* we can also read the personification of a gaze as the intrusion of Stott and his girl into Law's lonely but comfortable life. This gaze causes Law to see himself differently. This pattern looks set to repeat as the play closes, with Law and Jane emerging out of the darkness to encroach on Stott. Law is now the intruder, operating from the point of view of that original gaze, and it is as if this reversal allows Law (uncannily) to see himself seeing himself. Pinter's experiments with a sense of visual fullness in this original screenplay can be seen as a forerunner to the invisible and uncanny object successfully created in the structure of *Victory* (1982), discussed in chapter five.

In Pinter's first plays, possession and dispossession can be read in relation to a gaze personified, which erupts to cancel a character's Imaginary relation with their world. From here onwards, the focus of the stage plays shift from external representation to a vacillating inner world where characters struggle between anxiety and desire.

#### THE PLAYS OF 1966 - 1982

In his own work for film, *Tea Party* (1964) and *The Basement* (1963-6), Pinter had experimented with representing fantasy on screen. It was an experiment he considered repeating for *Accident* (1966), before he and Losey rejected the idea. Pinter speaks of attempting the equivalent of the 'free-association, stream-of-consciousness style of the novel' before finding it 'over-elaborate' on screen.<sup>69</sup> Instead, 'It has been pared down and down, all unnecessary words and actions are eliminated.' As he explains, 'The

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<sup>68</sup> Samuel Beckett, *Film*, (New York: Grove Press, 1969), p. 11.

<sup>69</sup> Harold Pinter speaking to John Russell Taylor on *Accident, Sight and Sound*, 35.4 (1966), 179-84 (pp. 183, 184).

drama goes on inside the characters and by looking hard at the smooth surface we come to see something of what is going on underneath.' <sup>70</sup>

From this point onwards, Pinter's work for the stage takes a new direction, achieving a focus and stillness which critics describe as 'interior monologue.' It is these interior monologues which bring both radio and film form to the stage, in the fragmentation of dialogue,<sup>71</sup> and in the creation of a series of intense and vacillating images made more intense and more personal because they exist only within the mind of the spectator.

Pinter refers to writing for the stage as 'the most difficult thing of all.' While he enjoyed writing for radio 'because of the freedom', and while television privileged pictures over words so that 'words are of less importance than they are on the stage', writing for the stage was problematic.<sup>72</sup> The freedom which radio allows is the freedom to create the fluidity and intensity of images otherwise found only on film; on radio also the images are most acute because unvisualised, belonging to the listener alone. As Esslin notes, radio 'allows the mental image before the listener's internal eye to become fluid, exactly as the images in dreams change their shapes from instant to instant.'<sup>73</sup> And, as Freud says, 'in dreams [...] we appear not to *think* but to *experience*; that is to say, we attach complete belief to the hallucinations.'<sup>74</sup> By bringing the intensity of the monologue to the stage, Pinter increases that hallucinatory play between spectator and stage.

In *Landscape* (1967) and *Silence* (1968) Pinter not only draws attention to the gap between characters on stage,<sup>75</sup> but through a paring down of word and action places a

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<sup>70</sup> Pinter refers to *Last Year in Marienbad* which would, he says, have been 'just as strange and mysterious and frightening' if given a perfectly ordinary setting. (Pinter speaking to John Russell Taylor, p.184).

<sup>71</sup> Hudgins refers to 'the filmic portrayal of memory' in the 'projected interior monologue' of *Landscape* and *Silence*. (Hudgins, 'Inside Out', p. 359).

Billington also sees this period 'including *Landscape*, *Silence*, *Old Times*, *No Mans Land* and *Betrayal*' as directly influenced by Pinter's experience in film and television, leading him 'very close to what James Joyce and Virginia Woolf accomplished in the novel: the theatrical equivalent of the interior monologue' (Billington, p. 191).

<sup>72</sup> Pinter, 'Writing for Myself,' *Plays Two*, pp 11-12.

<sup>73</sup> Esslin, 'Harold Pinter's Work for Radio', p 49.

<sup>74</sup> Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 1900, trans. by James Strachey, The Penguin Freud Library, Vol. 4 (Harmondsworth: Pelican 1976, repr. Penguin, 1991) p. 115.

<sup>75</sup> '*DUFF* refers normally to *BETH*, but does not appear to hear her voice. *BETH* never looks at *DUFF*, and does not appear to hear his voice.' (Directions for *Landscape*, *Plays Three*, p. 175.) (*Landscape* was first performed on radio owing to censorship problems

renewed emphasis on the gap within each character. By internalising action, Pinter is able to fragment dialogue, so that we read the thoughts of characters which constantly circulate around a central point of trauma or desire. And it is through fragmentation that a complex image emerges for the listener. Beth creates a vacillating image, in her memory of the beach and of a man, far away, sitting on the breakwater. But after a pause, the image is revised; she 'may have been mistaken. Perhaps the beach was empty.' After another pause it is revised again and the man reinstated within the image: 'He couldn't see . . . my man . . . anyway.'<sup>76</sup>

Through Beth and Duff's parallel monologues, a series of complex images are also created. His character, both gentle and violent towards Beth, and coarse in his description of the outside world of 'Dogshit, duckshit ... all kinds of shit', provides both a context and a complexity to her daydreaming.<sup>77</sup> Is Duff the lover of whom Beth speaks? Is Mr Sykes? An answer would be reductive. What is material is the interspace, the ontological gap, from which something most real emerges for both character and spectator. Not only is the truth unarticulated, but it remains as something which *cannot* be articulated, the true property of the Real in the Lacanian sense. In the early plays the Real was represented, both personified and spatialised, achieving its clearest form in the figure of the Matchseller in *A Slight Ache*, whose blankness is a source of those properties which exist in the Real, both death and desire. That gap continues in the vacillations between two separate realities in *Night School*, *The Collection* and *The Lover*. But from *Landscape* onwards the Real is internalised through the monologue form.

*Silence* (1968), tempers the monologue form with a movement between characters who converse at certain points, yet they sit before us in silence.<sup>78</sup> C. Clausius points out that the play 'demonstrates the paradox of all three characters appearing live on stage while at the same time being merely figments of the other's thoughts.'<sup>79</sup> In Pinter's letter to

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(Esslin, *PTP*, p. 156).

Directions for *Silence* give 'Three areas. A chair in each area' (*Silence, Plays Three*, p. 200).

<sup>76</sup> *Landscape, Plays Three*, p. 181.

<sup>77</sup> *Landscape, Plays Three*, p. 180.

<sup>78</sup> Bates moves once to Ellen to ask if they will meet (p. 205), Ellen moves twice to Rumsey (pp. 209, 212) with brief exchanges between Ellen and Bates (pp. 216, 218), and Ellen and Rumsey (p. 217) (*Silence, Plays Three*).

<sup>79</sup> C. Clausius, 'Spatialized Time in Harold Pinter's *Silence*', *The Pinter Review* (1995 and 1996), 28-40 (p. 29).

the director Hans Schweikart he speaks of 'the characters during the first two thirds of the play [...] in two stages of their lives [...] I present them one moment as young and in the next as old', adding that 'the silences announce the change from youth to old age and back again.'<sup>80</sup> As in the fragmented structures of the screenplays which follow, these fragments of speech, juxtaposed one with another, emphasise the gap, the lacking space, which traps the spectator in an Imaginary relationship of loss and desire.

In the screenplays of this period (*The Go-Between* 1969, *Langrishe Go Down*, 1970, and *The Proust Screenplay* 1972) Pinter intensifies the fragmented form. Between past and present, summer and winter, desire and death, Pinter creates a dynamic gap that the spectator is led to cover over. After *The Proust Screenplay* Pinter emphasises this ontological gap in *Monologue* (1972). This play, written especially for television, emphasises both lack and unseen presence. Directions give '*Man alone in a chair./ He refers to another chair, which is empty.*'<sup>81</sup> The man alone, speaking to an empty chair, follows a line of Pinter's characters, beginning with Rose, who reveal their imaginary efforts to cover over a lacking place in being. As the monologue opens, the man challenges the unseen other to a game of ping pong, saying that he is:

willing to accept any challenge, any stakes, any gauntlet  
you'd care to fling down. What have you done with  
your gauntlets, by the way? In fact, *while we're at it*,  
what happened to your motorbike?

*Monologue, Plays Four*, p.271.

The metaphorical gauntlet coalesces into object, in the same way that the monologue closes with the suggestion that 'you could have had two black kids [...] I'd have been their uncle./ *Pause./ I am their uncle.*'<sup>82</sup> Like ghosts solidifying into life before us, the hallucinatory objects take shape. Mention of Tzara and Breton within the text point towards that acute hallucinatory object, the 'image present to the mind,'<sup>83</sup> shaped by the speaker's and the spectator's desire.

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<sup>80</sup> Pinter's letter to Hans Schweikart printed (without permission) in the programme notes for Schweikart's production of *Silence* (translated and quoted by Clausius, p. 39).

<sup>81</sup> *Monologue, Plays Four*, p. 271.

<sup>82</sup> *Monologue, Plays Four*, pp. 276.

<sup>83</sup> André Breton, 'Situation surréaliste de l'objet; Situation de l'objet surréaliste (1935)', in *Manifestes du Surréalisme* (Paris, 1962), quoted by Haim N. Finkelstein, *Surrealism and the Crisis of the Object* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1979), p. 2.

In *No Man's Land* (1974), Pinter again stresses that ontological gap which waits below the memories, the word games, the pictures in photograph albums, the 'no man's land [...] which remains forever, icy and silent.'<sup>84</sup> And it is that formless place which is emphasised in Pinter's trio of plays presented as *Other Places* (1982) and made up of *Family Voices* (1980), *A Kind of Alaska* (1982) and *Victoria Station* (1982).<sup>85</sup>

### Other Places

*Family Voices* (originally written for radio, 1980) is a series of fragmented monologues offering vacillating images of loss and desire for the listener. The pleasure with which the son (Voice 1) speaks of his new surroundings turns to fear; the mother (Voice 2) longs for her son, but ends by cursing him, and the father (Voice 3) is dead, then speaks to deny it, then speaks finally to restate the fact. In *A Kind of Alaska*, Pinter evokes the patently internalised emptiness of Deborah, who, as the play ends, can be seen to have chosen those statements which will close off the lack. For example, Deborah is told by her sister that her parents are on a world cruise. This is later countered by Hornby who tells her that her father is blind, her mother dead. But it is her sister's statement that Deborah chooses to install as reality as the play ends.<sup>86</sup> In the brief sketch *Victoria Station*, the driver appears to be lost in a formless place, beside a non-existent Crystal Palace, carrying his 'lover,' asleep (or dead) on the back seat. This trio end the series of plays in which the drama consists in watching the protagonists struggle to cover over the formless space (the Real) with an Imaginary object of their own, a process in which the spectator is drawn to participate.

### Betrayal

Between *No Man's Land* (1974) and *Family Voices* (1980), Pinter created *Betrayal* (1978). Little has changed in the adaptation to screen in 1981, except, as in *The Caretaker*, a sparing use of external scenes to open out the film into a realistic setting. Pinter explains that: 'It was originally written for the stage in a kind of cinematic way, with a structure that possibly owes something to the films I've worked on for the last 20 years [...] even the stage version -- comes as much out of film as it does out of the stage.'<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> *No Man's Land, Plays Four*, p. 153.

<sup>85</sup> *Victoria Station* was later replaced by *One for the Road* (1984).

<sup>86</sup> *A Kind of Alaska, Other Places*, pp. 28, 34, 40.

<sup>87</sup> Harold Pinter speaking to Leslie Bennetts, 'On Film, Pinter's *Betrayal* Displays New

In *Betrayal* Pinter evokes not only an invisible object, but the drive which traps the spectator's desire. As in the screenplays, an object of loss is embedded as the play opens, and this sets in motion the spectator's desire along the signifying chain of the play. As the play progresses, moments of loss return again and again, until the full loss is recaptured in one circular movement which is both end and beginning. As Beckett commented after reading the play, 'That first last look in the shadows after all those in the light to come - wrings the heart.'<sup>88</sup>

The play opens with Jerry and Emma meeting in a pub. They speak of their affair, finished some time before. Emma tells Jerry that last night she told Robert about their affair, and that her marriage is now also 'all over.'<sup>89</sup> The film opens by establishing that sense of loss. As guests leave an elegant London house the camera closes in, while remaining outside the window as a silent dialogue takes place inside. A man and a woman, he upstairs moving through the drawing room, she downstairs in the kitchen. He descends, they speak. She slaps his face. He slaps her. She sits at the table, head in hands. A small child appears, she takes him upstairs. The scene cuts abruptly to day, and sudden exterior noise, a demolition site; a junk car swings from a crane across the centre of the screen, a train passes. Cut to Emma waiting silently inside a seedy pub. Inside the pub all is quiet; muted, distant sounds. Exterior noise as Jerry approaches. As Jerry enters, we also enter a site of interiorised demolition.

Other additions to the film increase the sense of loss; the high crane shot, then long shot as Emma arrives at the flat for the last time before it is given up, and as she leaves, Jerry watching from the window; the close shot of Emma crying in the car, the landlady looking out, Jerry looking down, the car driving along the street, leaving the picture. The fragmented views, the contrast between long shot and close up, all increase the sense of isolation between the characters. Then there are the additional scenes with the children, such as Emma in Venice, telling her small daughter that tomorrow they will visit 'Torcello.' But Torcello becomes lost along with much else since (as in the stage play, scene five), the scene continues with Emma telling Robert that she and Jerry are lovers, and so Robert goes to Torcello alone. Following the scene of the lovers reunited

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Subtleties,' *New York Times*, 27 February 1983, 1, 23 (pp. 1, 23).

<sup>88</sup> Samuel Beckett, quoted by Martha Fehsenfeld, ' "That first last look..." ' in *Pinter at Sixty*, ed. by Katherine H. Burkman and John L. Kundert-Gibbs, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), pp. 125-128, (p. 11).

<sup>89</sup> *Betrayal, Plays Four*, p. 176.

in their flat (stage play, scene six), Pinter adds a brief, silent scene of Emma at home, and Robert leaving, unspoken. Before the final scene, which is the start of the affair, the screenplay adds four brief scenes which detail the early excitement: the clandestine meeting in Jerry's house while the family are away; the child asking who was on the telephone; the phone call from Robert to Jerry, when Jerry cannot immediately identify the person with whom he has a meeting that afternoon, so causing the spectator to suspect that Robert already suspects, especially when he suggests that Jerry must be meeting 'a beautiful poetess.'<sup>90</sup> The last of the four scenes inserted here is the awkward meeting when the lovers agree to rent rooms in the Kilburn house, telling the landlady they are business people from Leicester, and leaving the spectator to decide how much she also suspects. These scenes are followed by the final scene of the play, and in the screenplay the spectator is placed once more outside the house, but this time enters the party, and the room where Jerry waits for Emma, and their affair begins.

As the play progresses, one loss is juxtaposed with another, as the betrayals are revealed. Emma betrays Robert, her children and Jerry (she has long ago told Robert of the affair with Jerry, not the night before they meet); Robert is said to have betrayed Emma for years, unknown to her; Jerry betrays his wife and family, and his best friend Robert. These layered betrayals cause moments of loss through narrative revelation, but the true loss for the spectator comes in the fragmented structure, where the loss becomes increasingly more intense as the screenplay moves not towards resolution but towards a *jouissance* that we already know to be lost. The 'lostness' increases until that final moment when, as Beckett points out, there is everything ahead - and nothing.

From the beginning Pinter has worked to elicit an object of desire for the central character, and for the spectator engaged in a relationship of desire with the page/stage/screen. In *Betrayal*, as in those screenplays which ostensibly deal with time past and present (*The Go-Between*, *Langrishe*, *Go Down*, *The Proust Screenplay*), time is subsumed in a reading of desire, for both time and happiness are paradigms of the object of desire, eternally lost and therefore eternally desired. In the screenplays following *The Proust Screenplay* time is 'obliterated', and what emerges through photographic stills and intercut narratives is a questioning of all representation, all given realities, together with an emphasis on that ontological gap which lies at the very centre of being. It is that gap which Pinter emphasises in his stage plays during this same period.

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<sup>90</sup> *Betrayal*, 1982 Horizon/Sam Spiegel (Eric Rattray), director David Jones.

MIXING POLITICS AND DESIRE : 1982 - 1994<sup>91</sup>

The themes of all screenplays in this next period deal overtly or implicitly with important political themes, of the corruption of power, and the need to make choices even in the face of impossible odds. For example, in *Victory* (1982) the choice lies between actual or spiritual death. Pinter summarises the themes of his stage plays of this period as 'One for the Road is about torture. And *Mountain Language* is about an army, and victims. *Party Time* is about a bunch of shits and a victim. All these are about power and powerlessness.'<sup>92</sup> Also in this period Pinter wrote two sketches: *Precisely* (1983), offers laconic estimates of casualties after a nuclear strike,<sup>93</sup> while *New World Order* (1991) shows two torturers and their victim, in effect the same old order all over again.

The form of the stage plays in this period reflects a changing form in the screenplays. In all but two screenplays (*Turtle Diary* and *The Trial*) Pinter continues to fragment form and narrative, emphasising the suspect aspects of all representation through inserted photographic images (*The Heat of the Day*, *Reunion* and *The Comfort of Strangers*). From *The Trial* (1989) onwards, Pinter reduces the use of fragmentation, but increases the split between voice and visuals. Already used in earlier screenplays such as *Accident* and *The Go-Between*, it is given added emphasis in these later screenplays as Pinter continues to structure a dynamic gap for the spectator.

On stage a gap also operates. In *One for the Road* (1984) a split in language evokes death, in *Mountain Language* (1988) the separation of language from speaker evokes *jouissance*. In each case, what is most real for the spectator lies in the gap between word and word, word and visual. In *One for the Road* Nicholas's oblique statement, 'don't worry about him. He was a little prick'<sup>94</sup> leads the spectator to fear that a child is murdered. As Silverstein points out, the phrase repeats an earlier statement 'Your son

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<sup>91</sup> With apologies to Arthur Ganz, whose essay on three earlier plays, 'Mixing Memory and Desire: Pinter's Vision in *Landscape*, *Silence*, and *Old Times*', cites two conflicting and 'significant impulses of the inner self' one toward 'power, energy, and sexual gratification' and the other 'toward retreat, restraint, withdrawal [...] from life.' (*Pinter: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. by Arthur Ganz (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1972), pp. 161-178, (p.161) ).

<sup>92</sup> Harold Pinter speaking to Mel Gussow, September 1993 in Mel Gussow, *Conversations with Pinter*, (London: Nick Hem, 1994), p. 102.

<sup>93</sup> Written in response to 'the Peace Movement's efforts to prevent the siting of cruise missiles in Britain' (Letter from Susannah York to Harold Pinter dated 11 March 1983. The Pinter Archive, Box 60. Not listed by Gale and Hudgins).

<sup>94</sup> Harold Pinter, *One for the Road*, rev. edn (London: Methuen, 1985), p. 79.

is ... a little prick.’<sup>95</sup> In the split between present tense and past tense the truth remains unstated, and therefore most real.

*Mountain Language* (1988) was written after Pinter's screenplay for *The Handmaid's Tale* (1986-87). In Atwood's novel the citizens of Gilead are denied a voice and a gaze by the state. Pinter has reshaped the novel to show that something hidden always escapes the strictures of state power, and this is the theme carried into *Mountain Language*. Denied their own language, the characters at one point stand mute on stage, while we hear their hidden voices. Pinter explains that ‘the voice overs in the play testify to the “indestructible spirit,” that individuals may be extinguished but art can give expression to the “spirit” of “metaphysical” perseverance.’<sup>96</sup> It is the ability of the human spirit to exist over and beyond such power that offers a reading of the later play, *Party Time*, and both plays are open to a Lacanian reading, where something extra, and most real, exists beyond both the Symbolic and Imaginary relations.

#### *Party Time* (1991) to *Ashes to Ashes* (1996)

An examination of *Party Time* will enable a comparison and a clarification of aspects of vision found in the earlier plays. Pinter adapted the play for television (in 1992), and it is that version which is published, and quoted here. *Party Time* is important on several counts; not only is it a succinct summary of the corruption of power and the plight of the individual against the system;<sup>97</sup> but the play also has a surprising affinity with the three subject positions outlined by Lacan: the Symbolic, the Imaginary and the Real.

In *Party Time* Pinter presents us with guests at an elegant party who are either delighted members of a new club, or eager to belong. Outside, in the darkness (although it is

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<sup>95</sup> Silverstein's emphasis. Silverstein quotes from the 1986 New York edition, p. 71. (Marc Silverstein, 'One for the Road, *Mountain Language* and the Impasse of Politics', *Modern Drama*, 34.3 (1991), 422-440 (p. 432) ).

The Methuen edition, 1985, p. 71, gives: 'Your son is ... seven. He's a little prick.'

<sup>96</sup> Ronald Knowles quotes Pinter in discussion after a reading of the play in Cardiff in October 1994. (Ronald Knowles, 'From London: Harold Pinter 1994-95 and 1995-96,' *The Pinter Review* (1995 and 1996), 152-167 (p. 155) ).

Ann C. Hall also notes that Pinter's technique in *Mountain Language* 'impl[ies] that the subversion of political oppression may be possible' (Hall, p. 20).

<sup>97</sup> 'Finally it's hopeless. There's nothing one can achieve. Because the modes of thinking of those in power are worn out, threadbare, atrophied. Their minds are a brick wall. But still one can't stop attempting to try to think and see things as clearly as possible.' The statement resonates with Roote's ability to see through walls, quoted earlier in this chapter. (Harold Pinter speaking to Nicholas Hern, 'A Play and its Politics' in *One for the Road*, pp. 5-24 (p. 20) ).

never stated explicitly) dissidents are rounded up and dealt with.<sup>98</sup> The Symbolic, the law, the cultural systems (including language) which shape the individual, can be equated with the club and its members at this party. What lies outside is the Real. The guests attempt to cover over the split between the bright party and the darkness outside through their (Imaginary) fantasy of belonging. Liz speaks of her pride at being there as 'part of the society of beautifully dressed people,'<sup>99</sup> while Terry praises what he imagines to be the virtues of the club: 'I tell you, it's got everything [...] Real class' [...] 'you know, food, that kind of thing - and napkins - you know, all that, wonderful, first rate.'<sup>100</sup> But the spectator reads the emptiness, the lack, and the compelling desire of the characters to cover over that lack.

As the play ends, Jimmy, outside the party, speaks of formlessness and darkness from the centre of a burning light:

*The light burns into the room. A young man stands in the frame of the door. [...]*

*The camera moves through the crowd towards him. The sounds die.*

JIMMY            [...] It shuts down. It shuts. I see nothing at any time  
any more. I sit sucking the dark.  
It's what I have [...] It's the only thing I have. It's mine.  
It's my own. I suck it.

*Party Time*, pp. 46-47.

The fusion of dark and light parallels the fusion of death and desire in his speech, and suggests the drive towards *jouissance* and death which exists in the Real. His are the final words of the play, spoken from the true centre of being, for '*the "subject" is precisely the void that remains after all substantial content is taken away.*'<sup>101</sup> This play, which opens with Terry's statement of plenitude through which we read a lack: 'it's got

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<sup>98</sup> Gavin: 'we've had a bit of a round-up' (Harold Pinter, *Party Time: A Screenplay*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), p. 45).

<sup>99</sup> *Party Time*, p. 26.

<sup>100</sup> *Party Time*, pp. 1, 41.

<sup>101</sup> Slavoj Žižek, 'Grimaces of the Real, or When the Phallus Appears', *October*, 58 (1991), 45-68 (p. 64).

Here we have the echo of one of Pinter's earliest characters, reduced to blindness and dumbness, as Stanley leaves his birthday party.

everything', ends with Jimmy's acknowledgement of a lack which approaches a sort of plenitude, for the Real is not nothing, but '*vacuum* and *plenitudo* all in one.'<sup>102</sup>

While the characters of *Party Time* exemplify the three Lacanian subject positions, in the individual psyche all three positions are inextricably interlinked. And Pinter has provided this unifying point in the character of Dusty. Dusty is intimately linked to the party through her husband Terry, and to the formless place beyond through her brother Jimmy. She asks constantly for news of Jimmy, but is told by her husband to 'shut up and mind your own business.'<sup>103</sup> Through Dusty, Pinter provides a place for the spectator, able to view the polarisations of power and powerlessness for herself. But Dusty can also be seen to epitomise the true position of the Lacanian subject, split between what she sees and hears, and that which remains hidden.<sup>104</sup> It is in this vital gap that desire arises.

The position of Jimmy in *Party Time*, reduced to a central core of being, resonates with the parable from Kafka's *The Trial*, for which Pinter wrote the screenplay in 1989. Although the screenplay was written only two years before *Party Time*, Kafka has been a formative influence for Pinter. He has said, 'I read *The Trial* when I was a lad of 18, in 1948. It's been with me ever since. I don't think anyone who reads *The Trial* - it ever leaves them.'<sup>105</sup> In Kafka's novel (already outlined in chapter two), Joseph K. awakes one day to find a blank, impassive gaze staring at him from a window across the road, while in the next room officers of the state wait to arrest him for a crime which is never defined. Breaching the intimacy of his bedroom, the blank gaze penetrates his most private space and is the beginning of a series of inexorable events which destroy his Imaginary relationship with his world.

In novel and screenplay this point is illustrated by the priest's parable of the Door of the Law. All his life a man has waited to be admitted through this door, but he is barred from entry by the Doorkeeper. Kafka tells us that 'Finally his eyes grow dim and he does not know whether the world is really darkening around him or whether his eyes are only deceiving him. But in the darkness he can now perceive a radiance that streams

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<sup>102</sup> Dolar, p. 20.

<sup>103</sup> *Party Time*, p. 8.

<sup>104</sup> In Copjec's words: 'split [...] between belief in what the institution makes manifest and suspicion about what it is keeping secret' (Copjec, pp. 27-28).

<sup>105</sup> Harold Pinter speaking to Mel Gussow, October 1989, p. 88.

immortally from the door of the Law.' <sup>106</sup> Finally, he asks the crucial question of the Doorkeeper, why had no-one else entered? The Doorman then tells him that the door was meant only for him. Suddenly, the man's fascination with the doorway vanishes and he realises that 'The whole spectacle of the Door of the Law and the secret beyond it was staged only to capture his desire.' All the time he watched the door, desiring to enter, he believed in a purpose for his waiting; now he realises that there was nothing but his own desire. It is at that moment that he becomes aware of the gaze that emerges from the Real. While he believed himself to be watching the door, the 'thing that fascinated him was, in a way, gazing back at him all along, addressing him.' <sup>107</sup> As Lacan states, it is 'because desire is established here in the domain of seeing' that it can be made to vanish.<sup>108</sup> The subject/spectator therefore hovers in an interspace, between the desire to see (covering over what is missing in representation with an object of desire of her own), and the awareness of the gap which, pressing too close, becomes a fullness, a gaze returned. <sup>109</sup>

Critics note the similarities in interpretations of *The Trial* and Pinter's early plays.<sup>110</sup> (Links have also been made between Kafka's work and the later trio of plays, *Other Places*.<sup>111</sup>) Ronald Knowles sees both 'Kullus' (1949) and 'The Examination' (1955) as inspired by Kafka, and 'prototypes of one of Pinter's principal concerns: possession and dispossession of place and person.'<sup>112</sup> By re-reading the concerns of the early plays

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<sup>106</sup> Franz Kafka, *The Trial*, 1925, trans. by Willa and Edwin Muir (London: Minerva, 1992), p. 236.

In Pinter's screenplay 'a radiance glow[s] inextinguishably.' Harold Pinter, *The Trial*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1993), p. 62.

<sup>107</sup> Slavoj Žižek, Slavoj, *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture* (London: MIT Press, 1991), p. 114.

<sup>108</sup> Lacan, *FFCP*, p. 85.

<sup>109</sup> 'The object on which depends the phantasy from which the subject is suspended in an essential vacillation is the gaze' (Lacan, *FFCP*, p. 83).

<sup>110</sup> Francis Gillen, 'From Novel to Film: Harold Pinter's Adaptation of *The Trial*', in Burkman and Kundert-Gibbs, pp. 137-148 (p. 137).

<sup>111</sup> John L. Kundert-Gibbs finds that in this trilogy 'Pinter returns in a more direct way to Kafka's work', and views the struggle between Controller and Driver in *Victoria Station* 'in terms of a struggle for understanding as a means to power' (John L. Kundert-Gibbs, ' "I am powerful ... and I am only the lowest doorkeeper": Power Play in Kafka's *The Trial* and Pinter's *Victoria Station*', in Burkman and Kundert-Gibbs, pp. 149-160 (p.149) ).

<sup>112</sup> Ronald Knowles, *Understanding Harold Pinter* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1995), p. 6.

from the point of view of vision we arrive, through Lacan, at that essential link between vision and being, between possession and dispossession of the self.

That fragile relationship comes to the fore in *Moonlight* (1993), which like *Party Time* allows a dual reading. In *Moonlight* Andy is on his death bed, surrounded (or not) by friends and family. But the play can also be read as different aspects of a single psyche, with Andy split between his young self (his sons - who no longer speak to him) and Bridget as his feminine side (Gillen refers to her as 'the *anima*, the feminine, healing, reconciling spirit'),<sup>113</sup> the source of *jouissance*, now dead. As the play ends Bridget speaks of a dark, silent house in the moonlight, echoing Jimmy's stand in *Party Time*, facing darkness and yet bathed in light.

In Pinter's final play to date, *Ashes to Ashes* (1996), he returns to an overtly political theme, building on the structural split used in *Mountain Language*. Here we have a dual persona, a woman of the 1990s, who tells of the horror of the Holocaust. Half a century apart, it is not *time* that we recognise, but a terrible loss - in the way that Plath arrogated the same prison camps for her own despair. The play is effectively an aided monologue, since Devlin is there to elicit Rebecca's story of her brutal lover, as the man she had given her heart to tore 'all the babies from the arms of their screaming mothers.'<sup>114</sup> Once again, as in *Party Time*, Pinter's central character exists in an intimate relationship between inner and outer worlds.

Since the images do not belong to Rebecca ('Nothing has ever happened to me. [...] I have never suffered. Nor have my friends'),<sup>115</sup> those images float in an interspace between speaker and spectator. Pinter further releases the images into that interspace by the lack of emotional colouring in Rebecca's descriptions, and through stage directions which state that by the end of the play "*the room and the garden beyond are only dimly defined./The lamplight has become very bright but does not illumine the room.*' Once more, as in *Party Time*, *Moonlight* (and The Door of the Law in *The Trial*) a voice speaks into darkness while surrounded by light.

As the play ends Pinter focuses our attention on the last of several compelling and moving images. Looking down from a tall building Rebecca sees an old man and a little

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<sup>113</sup> Gillen, ' "Whatever light ..." ', p. 34.

<sup>114</sup> Harold Pinter, *Ashes to Ashes*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1996), p. 27.

<sup>115</sup> *Ashes to Ashes*, p. 41.

boy in the street, 'both dragging suitcases [...] They were holding each other's free hand.' Behind them, a woman with a baby. A handwritten draft gives a little girl with the woman, and all of them lost to sight, and Rebecca closing the shutters.<sup>116</sup> But in the final printed text we are then brought close. Rebecca says that the street 'was icy. So she had to tread very carefully. Over the bumps.' The focus is therefore lowered to street level. All four figures disappear out of sight. But the woman and baby are then reinstated: 'She stood still. She kissed her baby. The baby was a girl [...] The baby was breathing./ *Pause.*/ I held her to me'<sup>117</sup> Not only are we drawn down to street level but are led to inhabit the role of the mother intimately close to the baby.

As Rebecca speaks of what happened next 'They took us to the trains', an echo begins. 'They were taking the babies away' so she makes it into 'a bundle' and holds it under her arm. But 'the baby cried out' and she is forced to hand over 'the bundle' and get on the train. Then a woman speaks to her:

REBECCA     And she said what happened to your baby  
 ECHO           your baby  
 REBECCA     Where is your baby  
 ECHO           your baby  
 REBECCA     And I said what baby  
 ECHO           what baby  
 REBECCA     I don't have a baby

*Ashes to Ashes*, p. 83

We are led to occupy an interspace between voice and echo as the woman grieves for the baby that was never hers, that she never held, that was never wrenched from her. It is the ultimate object of loss and desire and it is shared by the spectator.

As in *The Room*, Pinter embeds violence as the play opens and links violence with desire. Here too, the spectator senses the coming horror, which advances towards her in carefully placed hints, as in Rebecca's reference to the factory she visited with her lover. It 'wasn't the usual kind of factory' and full of people who 'would follow him over a cliff and into the sea, if he asked them.'<sup>118</sup> Later, this is what we 'see' as she unfolds this darkly moving image for us. But finally, it is the loss of the 'bundle' which is the ultimate lost object, cause of a deep anxiety. The echo that Pinter installs behind

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<sup>116</sup> Small white pad in two sections in plastic folder: section (a) begins 'Oh by the way.' The Pinter Archive, Box 67 (not listed by Gale and Hudgins).

<sup>117</sup> *Ashes to Ashes*, pp. 71-73.

<sup>118</sup> *Ashes to Ashes*, pp. 23-25.

Rebecca's words resonates with Pinter's experience as a child in Cornwall (noted in chapter one) which he describes in terms of vision; suspended between desire and a deep anxiety, and aware of the formlessness of being.

## CONCLUSION

Throughout his work for the stage, Pinter has presented characters who, although blind, can see, or dumb, speak. Others are reduced from sight and speech to blindness and dumbness. Characters therefore exist in an interspace between speech and silence, sight and blindness. It is just such an interspace that Pinter creates for his spectator, through the gap between what a character tells us, and what we see, as Rose tells us about her room, or between two opposing statements of the truth, as Beth draws the picture of the beach. In *One for the Road* it is in the interspace between past and present tense that a child dies; in *Mountain Language*, in the gap between what we see and what we hear, the human spirit floats free. In each case, something most real exists beyond representation. In *Party Time* (1991) we read the political divide of power and powerless, but we also understand that Jimmy speaks from a central and irreducible core of being, while a third reading offers that place as the Real, that exists outside both the Symbolic and Imaginary relations. In *Moonlight* (1993), Andy is on his death bed encircled by friends and family, or representative of the human condition encapsulated in one soul spread out and dissected before us. And this is a pattern identified in earlier plays. (Alan Roland suggests a similar fragmented view as a reading of *The Birthday Party*<sup>119</sup>, and James R. Hollis of *The Homecoming*.)<sup>120</sup>

Pinter can therefore be seen to create an object of desire (or anxiety) for the spectator within the structure of the plays. But Pinter also creates another form of hallucinatory image from which the spectator finds herself suspended. Throughout his work for stage and radio, Pinter leads his spectator/listener to cover that gap between herself and word with a series of intense, unseen images that we make our own, like memories we cannot quite place: the dirty underwear in the pan on the stove, the usherette stroking herself in

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<sup>119</sup> '[T]he characters and their relationships are also projections of a single, tormented psyche (Stanley's) - picturing the conditions, dynamics, and persecutions leading to its breakdown' (Alan Roland, 'Pinter's *Homecoming*: Images in Dramatic Action', *Psychoanalytic Review*, 61 (1974), 415-28 (p. 426) ).

<sup>120</sup> James R. Hollis, *Harold Pinter: The Poetics of Silence* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1970), p. 108.

the cinema foyer, the fisherman by the café in Amsterdam, the old man and the small boy dragging their suitcases along the frozen street, and the woman following behind with her baby. Through these moving images Pinter leads the spectator to construct her own object of fascination.

Pinter moves his unseen images closer to the spectator by ensuring that the image never entirely belongs to the speaker but hovers between, trapping the listener's own imaginary relationship within its shifting form. As with Rose in *The Room*, there is a gap between what a character tells us, and what we understand to be the case. Davies's story about the dirty underwear in the vegetable pan comes immediately after his statement that he's 'had dinner with the best' and is produced as an example that he is not one of 'them toe-rags [...] [that's] got the manners of pigs'.<sup>121</sup> Deeley's story of the usherette is suspect because it is part of his description of his first meeting with Kate in an empty cinema watching *Odd Man Out*, while Anna claims that it was she and Kate who 'almost alone' saw the same film.<sup>122</sup> Rebecca's story, she admits, does not belong to her or to anyone she knows, and creates in its movement along the icy street an overwhelming anxiety as we suspect the nightmare to come. And Spooner's proposed portrait of the fisherman is an enigma, for at its centre is the figure of the man sitting very still, whistling, both stillness and whistle hidden in the still, silent canvas. As in Dali's reading of 'L'Angelus' or Holbein's portrait of 'The Ambassadors,' or in Pinter's invisible, unspeaking Matchseller, a blank stain works across the centre of these pictures onto which we screen our own personal images. It is these personal, hallucinatory images which then act as objects of either anxiety or desire.

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<sup>121</sup> *The Caretaker, Plays Two*, p.18.

The contradictions between what Davies says he has done, and what is fact, is made clear in the scene deleted from the draft screenplay, where the scene in the café differs from his description of it. (The Pinter Archive, Box 6 (G&H 6/5) ).

<sup>122</sup> *Old Times, Plays Four*, pp. 25-26, 34.

## Chapter Seven

### CONCLUSION

This thesis shows that there is a way through the critical stalemate which privileges language over silence, and Pinter's stage work over his adaptations for the screen. By approaching Pinter's work through vision, allied to Lacanian theory, we find a fresh reading of the Pinter canon. Thanks to the recent availability of archive papers we are able to chart the work through successive drafts of each screenplay to find Pinter working towards what is most real for both central character and spectator, through what is unstated and unseen. Lacan's *objet petit a* offers a theorisation of that acute point beyond representation. Unarticulated in language, unrepresented in the visual field, Lacan's small object of desire is what is most real for the subject, for 'in its relation to desire, reality appears only as marginal.'<sup>1</sup>

In the screenplays examined in detail it is possible to see Pinter's hallucinatory object at play. In *The Remains of the Day*, Stevens's blindness in his service of Lord Darlington loses him another object of desire, Miss Kenton, an object which Pinter offers to the spectator as forever lost, and therefore forever live. In *The Handmaid's Tale*, Pinter shows that in the most rigorously authoritarian state, the gaze of the Other (the law) remains blind, and something hidden, which belongs to the subject alone, eludes even the most constricting power. Stopping the action just before that object is reclaimed, Pinter leaves the object live. In *Victory*, Heyst's blind adherence to his father's dictum is shattered by the unwelcome arrival of Jones and crew, and he recognises through his uncanny double that he has always seen the world awry. As the screenplay ends, the object Pinter offers for the spectator remains both live and lost; live because lost in Lena

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<sup>1</sup> Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis (FFCP)*, 1973, ed. by Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. by Alan Sheridan (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), p. 108.

and Heyst's immolation in the fire, and lost because we are left with that unpleasant fullness (Jones) as the object that came too close.

This thesis has not attempted to cover the difference between that acute and invisible object created through Pinter's work for the stage, and that for the screen. There are differences between the text of a play on the page and the text of a screenplay, because the screenplay expressly conjures images which take on much of the work of dialogue in expressing the emotional content of the narrative. But in each case, a similar structure is at work, for the play, whether on page or stage, captures the Imaginary relation of the spectator. In each case something emerges to stand outside the Symbolic codes of the text, as the spectator covers that gap between self and text with her own Imaginary hallucinatory, images of desire.

This study has focused on the written text of the screenplays because however faithful a director's intentions towards Pinter's screenplay, it can never be that exact screenplay which reaches the screen. Even Losey ignores Pinter's intentions, as for example in *The Go-Between*, where the opening music and visuals drive a demented pony and trap through Pinter's stillness and silence. And, as we have seen with *The Remains of the Day* and *The Handmaid's Tale*, there can be serious discrepancies between Pinter's script and the film which finally arrives on screen.

Over the years, Pinter's work for the stage shows an increasing internalisation of action and a paring down of dialogue which brings it close to the dialogue of the screenplays. With the abandonment of the represented fantasy on screen in *Tea Party* (1964) and *The Basement* (1963-66), and the extreme paring down of word and action in his screenplay for *Accident* (1966), Pinter moved into monologue with *Landscape* (1967) and *Silence* (1968) on stage. Monologue, already present in the early plays, allows a fragmentation of form, and within that fragmentation a gap from which something extra and vital emerges. In writing *Betrayal* (1978) for the stage, with its object already lost as the play opens, and its fragmentary form within a circular, revelatory structure, Pinter creates a perfect parallel between the shape of his work for the stage and his work for the screen.

Fragmentation increases in the screenplays from *Accident* (1966) onwards, reaching its height in *The Proust Screenplay* (1972). Fragmentation continues (with the exception of *Turtle Diary*, 1983-84) up to *The Trial* (1989), which follows a strictly chronological progression. In the next two screenplays, *The Remains of the Day* (1990-91) and *Lolita*

(1994), fragmentation is reduced, but where it diminishes, Pinter emphasises the gap between voice and visual.

The earliest example of actual separation of voice and visual can be found in the screenplay for *Accident* (1966) in the scene between Stephen and Francesca, although we can also read a forerunner of this gap in Pinter's first screenplay, *The Servant* (1961-63). In that screenplay we encounter a spoken silence, where the surrounding conversation in a restaurant, and the monologue of the man in the bar, serve to emphasise the gap between the central characters. This particular split, which offers a gap in which the spectator installs herself, is most evident in the later screenplay, *The Comfort of Strangers* (1988-89), where Pinter has deleted from the final published version any visualisation of Robert's central story, leaving that scenario as most acute for the spectator. Such a gap can also be seen at work in the free-floating voice of *The Remains of the Day* (1990-91), and in the voice over in *Lolita* (1994). The split between voice and visual is brought into action in the stage play *Mountain Language* (1988), which pre-dates the final draft of *The Comfort of Strangers*. That split reappears in subtler form in *Ashes to Ashes* (1996), where Rebecca tells a story which is patently not hers, but which floats in an interspace between speaker and spectator. In the intervening plays, *Party Time* (1991) and *Moonlight* (1993), the spectator is also trapped in an interspace. Between the polarised political positions, the fragmented structures of a single psyche in *Party Time*, something extra, and most real, emerges, while in *Moonlight* we are suspended between two scenarios, the death-bed scene, and a reading of the human condition.

Fragmentation, the split between two different images or narratives, or between what we see and what we hear, is considered to be the property of cinema. Through montage the film maker creates both a gap and something extra, a clash between two distinct entities, to create an hallucinatory third which belongs to the spectator alone. This invisible object is installed by Pinter as each screenplay opens, working within the circularity of the whole work, to return as the screenplay closes. The ambiguity of the dialogue, the juxtaposition of one shot with another, the split between word and visual, all serve to emphasise the gap which parallels the Lacanian Real as a place of both lack and fascination, which traps the spectator's desire. This is the structure that Pinter installs throughout his work for stage and screen, creating a dynamic gap for the spectator to cover with a vacillating, hallucinatory object of her own.

This reading of the invisible, dynamic object of desire provides a balance to those well trodden paths to Pinter's threat and menace. But rather than offering an alternative

reading it extends the view to incorporate that of desire and 'romance' - a word rarely used in relation to Pinter's work. Lacan's object is the true object of the romance, existing in a *paysage intérieur* which is always already lost, since we can only recognise it after the event. And the only way back to this lost domain is in fantasy or dream. But the fantasy itself is lost when something presses too close, causing an uncanny fullness that cancels our relationship with desire. In Pinter's unpublished poem 'August Becomes' the narrator speaks of the lost object of enchantment:

Here, as we open the small  
bridge and the ringed house of children,  
where I gave the key into the locked  
year, is rusted summer door.'

And although 'We/would open the passage to that room/though miles away', it is only through dream and fantasy that we can regain it. Finally, 'In the enquiry of/dark where I had no voice, [...] the/ grain of the moon slipped and fell' and 'the broken teeth in/the sky take summer in shackle.'<sup>2</sup> As in Rimbaud's 'Enfance', the speaker is trapped between desire for the lost place and an awareness of a threat which cancels desire.

One further reading that Lacan's *objet petit a* illuminates, is a response to those constructions and constrictions of power which shape the subject. We cannot avoid the Symbolic, the field of language, text and sign; it is inherent in all that we see and hear and it shapes our desire in relation to the narrative before us. Nevertheless, beyond the Symbolic, and the Symbolically constructed Imaginary, there is always something extra, left over, which is most real and which belongs to the subject alone.

An approach to Pinter's work through the screenplays allows a shift of focus to that hallucinatory object which Rimbaud first attempted to capture, and which evolved through the theories of the Surrealists, to be formalised by Lacan. Lacan's *objet petit a* is both a lacking space, and the object with which we unconsciously cover it over. As Copjec explains, this lack, 'founds the subject' and is the very 'cause of being.'<sup>3</sup> In the field of vision, *objet petit a* is the formal structure of the gaze. It is this invisible object which is most acute, most real for the subject and inextricably connected to the centre of being, the extimate point where internal and external worlds meet. But because 'desire

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<sup>2</sup> Final version of 'Autumn Becomes' incorporating Harold Pinter's amendments in his letter of 31 March 1999 to the author, quoted in chapter one.

<sup>3</sup> Joan Copjec, 'The Orthopsychic Subject: Film Theory and the Reception of Lacan' in *Read My Desire: Lacan Against the Historicists* (London: MIT Press, 1994), pp. 15-38 (p. 35).

is established here in the domain of seeing' it can be made to vanish.<sup>4</sup> And when it vanishes, it causes anxiety. Because of this, 'the subject is suspended in an essential vacillation'<sup>5</sup> between anxiety and desire.

Pinter's characters hover in an interspace between sight and blindness, speech and silence, a structure which Pinter duplicates for the spectator. Žižek tells us that 'If the exemplary case of the gaze qua object is a blind man's eyes, which *do not see*, then the exemplary case of the voice qua object is a voice that remains silent, a voice that *we do not hear*.'<sup>6</sup> Long before Žižek, Pinter wrote, 'Only the deaf can hear and the blind understand/The miles I gabble.'<sup>7</sup> Half a century later we are perhaps only beginning to understand the truth of that statement.

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<sup>4</sup> Lacan, *FFCP*, p.85.

<sup>5</sup> Lacan, *FFCP*, p.83.

<sup>6</sup> Slavoj Žižek, 'Grimaces of the Real, or When the Phallus Appears', *October*, 58 (1991), 45-68 (p.49).

<sup>7</sup> 'I shall tear off my Terrible Cap' (1951), Harold Pinter, *Collected Poems and Prose*, rev. edn (London: Methuen, 1986), p. 9.

## POSTSCRIPT

*The Dreaming Child* (1997)<sup>8</sup>

I am greatly indebted to Harold Pinter for his kindness in sending me a copy of this unpublished screenplay. It is of particular importance since the subject reinforces the focus of Pinter's work and the subject of this thesis: that the world of unconscious desire is more real than the world of everyday reality. When desire itself is lost, we are faced with an oppressive (and, in this case, fatal) nothingness.

In Karen Blixen's story, little Jens (offspring of a poor girl who dies), lives in poverty in the slums. Hearing tales of grand houses and the opulent life of the rich from an elderly seamstress, he enters a dream life in which he belongs in that other world. Through a stroke of fate he is adopted into just such a family, and appears to have an uncanny familiarity with all around him. Once established, however, he starts to dream of his former life; poverty-stricken, rat-infested. It is a dream life that is unable to sustain him, and he dies. In this narrative, the loss of desire becomes a fatality.

Interwoven with the narrative of little Jens's desire is the narrative of Emilie's desire, the young woman from the rich house who becomes his adoptive mother. At the age of eighteen Emilie falls passionately in love with Charlie Dreyer, but the night before he leaves for the West Indies, she refuses him. Shortly afterwards, she learns that he has died. Emilie, now safely married to her unexciting cousin, suffers a certain coldness of heart, a coldness only alleviated by the death of little Jens. She tells her husband that he was her child with Charlie (although this is patently untrue). With the loss of little Jens, Emilie is moved to speak of that other loss, buried long since. Emilie's emotional blankness is now ended and life becomes vivid once more.

In his screenplay, Pinter's opening sequence returns to the intense fragmentary images of the dream previously employed in *The Proust Screenplay*. But whereas in that

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<sup>8</sup> 'The Dreaming Child' in *Winter's Tales* by Isak Dinesen (Karen Blixen), 1942, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983).

The screenplay, dated December 1997, has not yet been deposited in the Pinter Archive, but Harold Pinter generously let me see a copy.

screenplay Pinter recreates Proust's timeless moments through repetitions within a fragmented structure, the screenplay of *The Dreaming Child* offers the spectator a series of subtle resonances, placing the spectator in the gap between two parallel and acute worlds of desire.

The screenplay opens not with little Jens (Jack in the screenplay) but with Emily and her last passionate meeting in the moonlit garden with Charley.<sup>9</sup> Through film form, Pinter is able to make rapid transitions between the two narratives, and the opening sequence offers 23 shots which cut between her intense relationship with Charley (Emily and Charley in the moonlit garden) and her dignified relationship with Tom (a grand ball, Emily dancing with her future husband while Charley looks on), and a woman in labour in a house in the slums. The sequence ends with the death of the woman in childbirth and Emily sitting up 'abruptly' as if awakened from a nightmare. Across this shot of Emily, Pinter installs the voices from the slum: 'Who was she then?' 'I don't know who she was.' From the start, therefore, Pinter creates a profound resonance between the two scenarios. By giving no background to the mother, the ties between birth mother and adoptive mother build. (Dinesen opens her narrative with the mother firmly rooted in an impoverished and feckless clan.) In this way Pinter places the child, from the beginning, as part of Emily's dream, the child that she might have had with Charley had she not refused him, had she risked the fate of the woman dead from childbirth in the slum.<sup>10</sup>

Resonances build throughout, both in the world of external reality and in the world of dreams. Emily's wedding is intercut with Charley's burial (shots 30-38), and the rich house is intercut with the slum. As Jack walks with Miss Scott, the seamstress, she tells him that he 'doesn't belong in this place' adding 'Your time will come, Jack. I swear to you.' Meanwhile 'In the street above the canal, a carriage goes by. Tom and Emily are in it' (shot 64).<sup>11</sup> But the deeper resonances belong to the dream world. For example, a shot of Jack 'trapped' in cold, wet sheets (shot 43) is followed by Emily woken by 'Sound

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<sup>9</sup> Pinter changes the names to Emily and Charley, and Jakob (Emilie's husband) becomes Tom.

<sup>10</sup> Shots 20 - 23 suggest such a resonance:

20. Emily asleep in hammock with Charley's passionate voice over.

21. Emily running from Charley in the moonlight.

22. Slum house. Mother dies.

23. Emily in hammock, sitting up 'abruptly' with slum woman's voice over.

<sup>11</sup> This intercutting carries at times a political weight, as with the elaborate menus Emily arranges with her staff, and the cut to Jack in the privy in the slum, menaced by a drunk (shots 68-69).

of a cloth flapping. She opens her eyes [...] A maid shaking a tablecloth out of the window' (shots 44-45), followed by Jack asleep, woken by rats; he screams (shots 46-48). We know that Emily's reality is Jack's dream,<sup>12</sup> but we also come to understand that Jack's reality is Emily's nightmare.

Jack dreams himself into Miss Scott's tales of grand houses, and finally does arrive in his dream home, with the dream parents that become his new reality. Once installed, however, Jack's dreams return him to the nightmare of the slum. Blixen tells us that 'The essence of his nature was longing.' With nothing to long for, without his fantasy object (since the dream has become reality), Jack fails, and dies. Before he dies, Pinter has given him the line: 'I sometimes wonder who I was' (shot 206), not only recalling the mystery of his birth, but suggesting a more immediate, supernatural link with Charley. It is that mystery which, in Pinter's screenplay, strengthens the position of Jack as Emily's own object of desire.

In the opening shots we have seen Emily flee from Charley's passionate entreaties (shot 21), a flight repeated immediately after his burial.<sup>13</sup> Emily's rejection of Charley, forever regretted, causes an emotional numbness, and Pinter reflects this fact not only by Emily's passivity in the external world,<sup>14</sup> but by the omission of glimpses of Charley from the central narrative. However, once Tom and Emily decide to adopt the child we are once more offered brief glimpses of Emily and Charley's last meeting. But now, that opening scene in the moonlit garden is extended. Pinter intercuts a series of shots in sepia and slow motion which carry the narrative beyond the garden and into Emily's bedroom, where they make love.<sup>15</sup> Because of the treatment of these shots, we understand the scenes to belong neither to the central narrative, nor to Emily's memories of her last meeting with Charley. Through these extended scenes Pinter suggests, earlier than the novel, that in her dream Jack is Emily and Charley's own child. And Pinter extends the link between Charley and the child, with Jack's description of that early scene:

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<sup>12</sup> Jack tells the other children : 'I've got a mother and father. They've got lots of horses in their stables' (Pinter, shot 76, follows Blixen, p. 85).

<sup>13</sup> Once from the point of view of the house (shot 39) and once from Charley's point of view (shot 40).

<sup>14</sup> We see Emily 'impassive' by the side of Charley's grave (shot 37), or listening 'expressionless' as the men ridicule votes for women (shot 53).

<sup>15</sup> Shots which repeat from the opening sequence in the garden : 91, 117, 151.  
Shots in sepia slow motion which show them making love: 92, 110, 133, 171.

Jack                    When you were standing with my father  
                                  at the gate in the moonlight you plucked  
                                  a white rose from the bush and you gave  
                                  it to him.

*The Dreaming Child*, shot 205.<sup>16</sup>

As the screenplay ends, Jack's object has been lost in its attainment, while Emily's is regained through the loss of the child. He has been appropriated into her dream, and that dream now shapes and vivifies her reality. As in the novel, the death of the child enables Emily's desire for Charley, hidden for so long, to surface into the real world, which now becomes vivid once more. As she now openly mourns, she is able to claim them both for her own. In doing so, the Alaskan landscape she has inhabited dissolves. Emily brings her fantasy into play in the external world; it is the lens through which she views. Emily's fantasy sets her view of the world awry, and she sees that world vividly once more, with a look that is coloured, distorted, by her desire.

This screenplay forms a fitting conclusion to an exploration of Pinter's screenplays, since the narrative forms a paradigm of Lacan's *objet petit a*, which 'does not exist for an "objective" look' but emerges only through a gaze distorted by desire.<sup>17</sup> It is this distortion that Pinter creates for his spectator, placing her in a gap which resonates between between two different scenarios, two separate and acute objects of loss (and therefore desire).

Throughout his work for the screen, Pinter places his reader/spectator in an interspace, leading her to see the scenario which follows with a look shaped, distorted by either anxiety or desire. Blixen tells us that what is 'perhaps the most fascinating and irresistible [personage] in the whole world [is] the dreamer whose dreams come true.'<sup>18</sup> Pinter places his spectator in the role of dreamer; not one whose dreams come true, but one whose filmic dream becomes most real.

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<sup>16</sup> In Blixen and Pinter the white rose is connected with Charley - it is the rose Emily gives him in the moonlit garden (Blixen, p. 87; Pinter, shot 9).

In the novel the child tells Emily that his father called her 'My white rose', but the statement follows his description of Emily in her wedding gown, which points towards Tom rather than Charley, while creating its own complex resonance (Blixen, p. 100).

<sup>17</sup> Slavoj Žižek, 'Looking Awry', *October*, 50 (1989), 30-55 (p. 34).

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## HAROLD PINTER'S WORK ON VIDEO<sup>2</sup>

### Screenplays

- Accident*, GB 1967 London Independent Producers (Joseph Losey, Norman Priggen), director Joseph Losey.
- The French Lieutenant's Woman*, GB 1981, UA/Juniper (Leon Clore), director Karel Reisz.
- The Go-Between*, GB 1970 EM/World Film Services (John Heyman, Norman Priggen), director Joseph Losey.
- The Handmaid's Tale*, US/Germany 1990, Virgin/Cinecom/Bioskop Film (Daniel Wilson), director Volker Schlöndorff. (Video recording: Cinetude Film Productions and Odyssey/Cinecom).
- The Last Tycoon*, US 1976/GB 1977, Paramount/Academy/Sam Spiegel, director Elia Kazan.
- The Pumpkin Eater*, 1964, Columbia/Romulus (James Woolf), director Jack Clayton.
- The Quiller Memorandum*, GB 1966, Rank/Ivan Foxwell/Carthay, director Michael Anderson.
- The Servant*, GB 1963, Elstree/Springbok (Joseph Losey, Norman Priggen), director Joseph Losey.
- The Trial*, GB 1992, BBC/Europanda (Louis Marks), director David Jones.
- Turtle Diary*, GB 1985, CBS/United British Artists/Britannic (Richard Johnson), director John Irvin.

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<sup>2</sup> Details are taken from Halliwell. Dates match those given in the published screenplays except for *The Go-Between* which had no date at the time the screenplay was printed, and which is taken from Halliwell.

Stage Plays

*Betrayal*, 1982, Horizon/Sam Spiegel (Eric Rattray), director David Jones.

*The Caretaker*, GB 1964, Caretaker Films (Michael Birkett), director Clive Donner.

*The Homecoming*, GB 1973, American Express/Ely Landau films, director, Peter Hall.

## OTHER WORK ON VIDEO

*The Remains of the Day*, GB/US 1993, Columbia/Merchant Ivory (Ishmail Merchant, Mike Nichols, John Calley), screenplay by Ruth Praver Jhabvala, director, James Ivory.