Harold Pinter's reputation as a playwright precedes and surpasses his work in the cinematic medium. His screenplays, however, have proliferated steadily to dominate his later career, in terms both of quantity and celebrity. Although studies of Pinter's work as a playwright have reached epidemic proportions in published criticism, scholars have generally neglected his career as a screenwriter. To date, the screenplays have received only superficial attention through reviews, in narrowly focused articles, or as obligatory and often cursory portions of Pinter monographs. The need for a closer examination of these film scripts has arisen from their prominence, their quality, and their utility as illuminations of Pinter's dramaturgical practices. Furthermore, since all of Pinter's screenplays are adaptations of material written originally for other media, analysis of his screenwriting process will promote generic distinctions among the various media implicated in their development.

The material for Pinter's screen adaptations originates in one of two sources: his own stage plays (The Caretaker, The Birthday Party, The Homecoming, Betrayal) or novels written by other authors. The present study will address exclusively this latter category of adaptations, thereby limiting itself to evaluation of narrative discourse peculiar to the novel and film media. Those distinctions between the medium of stage and that of screen which emerge from examining Pinter's film adaptations of his own work will remain prospects for a subsequent study. Because Pinter's adaptations of the novels provide a capital basis for revealing certain aspects of his original dramaturgy, however, the exegeses in this study are intended partly for that purpose. His personal aesthetic and technique become clear through comparison of the adaptations to their original sources. Where unilateral studies of Pinter's stage plays have sometimes found them mystifying and unyielding, scrutiny
of his method as an adapter may facilitate comprehension of his prac­tices as a dramatist. Thus, although this volume will serve primarily as an explication of his screenplays as adaptations of the novels, it will also yield certain insights into the less accessible dimensions of Pinter's work for the stage and trace correspondences between his writings for each medium.

Fundamental similarities exist between Pinter's original work and his eight adaptations. These resemblances occur due partly to Pinter's idio­syncratic manipulations of the source material, but due chiefly to the novels' ideological and methodological consonance with Pinter's own evolving precepts. When questioned, during his work on The Proust Screenplay, about his method of selecting the novels, Pinter replied: "They've been proposed to me. . . . It's always been Joe Losey who's given me the books to read. But of course I have been asked to do many other things and declined. These are quite rare items. I've chosen them because I thought something sparked." The eight novels promulgate, or at least accommodate, a view of perception that allows Pinter to deploy his own approach to phenomenological complexity in the screen adaptations. Because Pinter's artistic biases figure prominently in both his selection and revision of the novels, a summary of his characteristic practices will prove helpful at this juncture.

Obfuscation has become Pinter's trademark. His habit of obscuring motives and situations has provoked innumerable tempers and inspired a broad spectrum of extravagant criticism. Bert O. States exemplifies this frustration when he defines Pinter's mystique as "a peculiar activity of mind. We have invented special words for this activity ('Pinter­course,' 'Pinterism,' 'Pinterotic,' etc.), which Pinter understandably detests, but it seems we have needed them as semantic consolation for his having hidden from us the thing they refer to."

Typically, misconstruances of Pinter's work arise when critics offer their perplexities to extrinsic formulas for resolution. Since the impact of his drama depends on certain carefully developed doubts, these misguided efforts to decipher puzzlements by imposing patterns from outside the plays yield distorted impressions of the action. Designs of certitude and in­certitude in the scripts contrive to engender special recognitions by the audience, and any importation of accessory perspectives, however well­intentioned, upsets this balance.

The preponderance of exotic interpretations of his plays has contrib­uted to Pinter's valuation of the film medium. The advantages of film over stage, he claims, lie in its increased possibilities for articulating reality. He describes these advantages in the following two statements, which refer to the filming of The Caretaker and are taken from different sources.
What I'm very pleased about myself is that in the film, as opposed to the play, we see a real house and real snow outside, dirty snow and the streets. We don't see them very often but they're there, the backs of houses and windows, attics in the distance. There is actually sky as well, a dirty one, and these characters move in the context of a real world—as I believe they do.  

... (the play) got taken out of its natural place which was a room in a house in a street in a town in the world, so I was very glad of the opportunity to go outside and just show that people did come in, when they came in the door they had come in from the street you know and also there was a garden when in the play the man said "... all that wood under that tarpaulin in the yard" when given there to build his shed, there was wood under a tarpaulin.  

In both quotes Pinter stresses the cardinal familiarity of his fictional world, urging against any inclination to abstract the plays from ordinary and meticulous reality. His works, however affected by personal milieu, neither invoke nor depend on any system other than their own: that which is contained and apparent within them.

The disconcerting qualities in Pinter's work emerge not from its chimerical dislocation but from its literal replication of ordinary reality. His writing records the surface of life with an opacity and indifference that seem uniquely suited to the capacities of the camera. Form exists everywhere without certifiable substance. The replication is undeniable; the facts are inscrutable. In several of Pinter's stage plays, photographs become significant thematic vehicles; in Night School the central problem of identity turns on recognition of a photograph that fixes its subject in an unfamiliar image, and in No Man's Land, the photograph collection serves as a key metaphoric characterization of the past. Profoundly incapable of conveying any information beyond surface configuration, the photograph expresses the prevailing sensibilities of Pinter's work. He has, in fact, credited his photographic disposition, his fascination with image as signifier, as a source of inspiration for his writing. "I went into a room and saw one person standing up and one person sitting down, and a few weeks later I wrote The Room. I went into another room and saw two people sitting down, and a few years later I wrote The Birthday Party. I looked through a door into a third room, and saw two people standing up and I wrote The Caretaker."

The opaque properties of observation inform Pinter's scripts much as the intermediate device of the camera confers precision and detachment on its subject. By making the surface of life impenetrable and its invisible components unverifiable, Pinter tries to weld each scene of his work to an obscure, inarticulate plane of reality. The inaccessibility of certain details never totally obfuscates the significant; rather it tends to bring the actual subject into sharper focus. Similar to a photographic image, Pinter's fiction merely records the superficial manifestations of its com-
plement, allowing the mysterious counterpoint to emerge, in all its ambiguity, on its own.

In Pinter's adaptation of F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Last Tycoon, Monroe Stahr's formula for moviemaking receives emphatic restatement. Stahr's insistence that an effective screenwriter simply "makes pictures" occurs twice in Pinter's screenplay, again signaling Pinter's allegiance to this practice of surface inventories. This reliance on the legibility of photographic reality introduces a collection of thematic concerns prominent in Pinter's writing. Point of view, an intrinsic and restrictive property of pictures, obtains paramount significance in both stage and screen plays. Whether it involves the characters' perceptions of themselves, each other, the past, or the present, or our own perceptions of these depictions, point of view becomes problematic. Pinter's characters suffer from chronically fixed and unreliable angles of vision, an ailment that he intends to lend to us. Like the camera Pinter manipulates not reality, but the mechanisms through which we glimpse it. The imperfections of these mechanisms receive frequent accentuation by various emblems in Pinter's work; the incidence of blindness, eyeglasses, and telescopes, for example, signifies both a desire and a failure to yield the secrets in our picture of the world.

The extensive failure of photographic reality to account for experiential reality persists as a corollary theme in Pinter's writing, drawing him instinctively to the challenge of the cinema. For all its suggestion of familiarity and intrigue, the photograph does not yield its secrets; it yields only our own. Replications reproduce gaps between what we understand and what actually exists: our understanding amounts to hallucination. The camera shares with Pinter an invocation of artifice, opacity, neutrality, and distortion. It succeeds, where the stage sometimes fails, in connecting all these qualities to our perception of ordinary reality. A photographic picture differs from a stage picture in that the former lacks inherent codification. Roland Barthes notes, "To ask whether a photograph is analogical or coded is not a good means of analysis. . . . From a phenomenological viewpoint, in the Photograph, the power of authentication exceeds the power of representation." Elsewhere in Camera Lucida, Barthes postulates that the photograph is always invisible, a contingency that, unless it assumes a mask, lacks the capacity for signification. In this respect the photograph becomes a transparent referent and escapes the representational valuations of the stage. The inaccuracies and ambiguities also implicit in the nature of photography, however, transfer their ramifications to the condition of Pinter's world. Thus, the photographic image becomes for Pinter the ideal expression of the moment, fixing it in all its authenticity, obscurity, and isolation.
Cinematic language, however, includes not only the contents of image, but also the codifications of montage, the ordering of images in time. Because pictures are always primary over dialogue in film (except as sound merges inextricably with image), montage inherits leading responsibility for the narrative. The evolution of the image in time necessitates a narrative articulation that is absent from the immobilized image of the photograph. In Christian Metz’s discussion of this difference, he elucidates the process of designation involved in montage and advocates a semiotics of denotation to explicate these codes. Noting that the cinematic designation of a “house” occurs through a progression of partial views, Metz concludes, “Thus a kind of filmic articulation appears, which has no equivalent in photography: It is the denotation itself that is being constructed, organized, and to a certain extent codified.” Montage, therefore, partly relieves the simple photograph of its mute inaccessibility by enabling a contrived articulation of its significate. Unlike written texts, which organize material temporally, this articulation depends on a “dynamization of space” and a “spatialization of time” for intelligibility.

George Bluestone clarifies this procedure through his discussion of distinctions between the two media. “Both novel and film are time arts, but whereas the formative principle in the novel is time, the formative principle in the film is space. Where the novel takes its space for granted and forms its narrative in a complex of time values, the film takes its time for granted and forms its narrative in arrangements of space.” Consequently, Pinter’s principal task as an adapter of novels for cinema consists in a conversion of temporal values into spatial counterparts.

Despite its increased capacity for manipulating and developing information, montage retains the “zero degree” qualities associated with the operation of the camera. In this respect film superficially resembles the non-omniscient neutrality of the nouveau roman, and it accommodates the narrative indifference peculiar to Pinter’s aesthetic. The camera passes as an acceptably passive and omnipresent recorder of action, conferring a generic objectivity on its subject. Picture images, of course, can and do insinuate narrative bias, but they escape the mire of narrative explication almost indigenous to the novel. In his essay on the differences between narrativity in the novel and that in film, Robert Scholes is critical of modern writing that emulates cinematic inscrutability.

Some movements in contemporary fiction can be seen as attempts to acquire a cinematic opacity and freedom from conceptual thinking. Alain Robbe-Grillet has tried very hard to be a camera and produced some interesting verbal tours de force. But these experiments in writing against the grain of
verbal narration are limited in their developmental possibilities. A writer who wants to be a camera should probably make a movie.¹²

Scholes also indicts films that "founder in seas of rhetoric," and encourages each medium to discover and exploit its appropriate narrativity. Regardless of its apparent impartiality, however, cinematic opacity actually substitutes its own sets of biases and artifices for those peculiar to the novel. As Scholes observes the reader supplies visualization for the printed text, where the spectator supplies a more categorial and abstract narrativity for the film. Pinter's treatment of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, through its obtrusive attention to artifice, suggests not only that he recognizes the contrivance inherent in cinematic visualization but also that he intends to capitalize on its pretense of literal documentation. In this manner Pinter trades on film's capacity for opaque description while evoking its ability to deceive.

Cinematic adaptation of the novel involves the discovery of both spatial equivalents for time and perceptible equivalents for thought. The difficulty in translating thought from the page to the screen extends not only to the internal monologues of the characters but also to the descriptive, historical, and analytical commentary of the narrative. In his foreword to Pinter's screenplay for *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, John Fowles elucidates his awareness of film's inadequacies in these respects and confesses that he holds "strong and perhaps idiosyncratic views on the proper domains of the cinema and the novel."¹³ Fowles cautions against screenwriters who try "to remain faithful to the book," observing that such efforts tend to result in prolix scripts that lack dramatic dialogue. Noting the simultaneous advents of film and psychoanalysis, Fowles hypothesizes a complementary relationship between these two methods of organizing experience; "It is not perhaps entirely chance that the invention of motion photography, this sudden great leap in our powers of exploring and imitating the outward of perception, coincided so exactly with the journey into inner space initiated by Freud and his comppeers."¹⁴ According to Fowles the novel belongs to the Freudian expedition because the role of language is to designate the invisible and because the concerns of the novel, as it has evolved, lie with "all those aspects of life and modes of feeling that can never be represented visually."¹⁵ Where cinematic equivalents for the novelist's narrative do not exist, or where the narrative bulk proves too complex or unwieldy for cinematic legibility, the adapter must find some approach to editing the text for film. Ideally this reductive tack produces minimal distortion of the source work.

Significantly, each of the eight novels that Pinter has adapted for filming develops through the cinematically anathematic first-person nar-
rative form. The stories evolve for us through the conspicuous contrivance of one person's eyes, one person's point of view. The authors have made no effort to disguise or to exempt the presence of bias and manipulation in the storytelling; they avoid suggesting that the yarns unfold in some third-person wonderland where all motives and actions are objectively manifest. The mind of the narrator presides over the tale. We see only what the narrators see, and only in the way that they see it. None of the eight authors indulges our penchant for omniscience, and none admits the practice into his or her own work. These eight fictions, however, go beyond assumption of the bold narrative device in their indictment of omniscience; each designates the unreliability of the narrator as a central theme of the piece. The narrators unanimously confess to incompetence at explaining themselves and their stories, and their frustrations in this matter contribute liberally to the substance of their tales.

The screenplays that Pinter concocts from the eight novels, however, discard the first-person narrative structure. He excises the device due primarily to two main considerations. In the first place, narrators make tedious devices in films. Their speeches lack genuine activity, becoming awkward and burdensome, and their persons violate the narrative conventions of omnipresence and immateriality when (or if) they become visible. We must question, in cases where the narrator becomes an objectified presence, whose eyes we then actually obtain; and ultimately, unless the narrator remains wholly invisible—a yet clumsier undertaking—the format renders itself improbable and dishonest. Pinter actually considered employing an absent narrator in his screenplay for Remembrance of Things Past, but he withdrew the idea due to technical worries along these lines.

Naturally, we did have discussions, early on, about whether it was possible to have Marcel as the subjective camera. But I certainly felt that it becomes a device, it becomes a burden in itself, and you're not facing the fact... it's just too bloody,... So that was that. I just simply feel that if the film, in action as it were, was persuasive, then these particular problems of verisimilitude just would not be raised in the viewer's mind.

Marcel's subjectivity and the subjectivities of the other seven narrators lie outside the effective capabilities of film. The viewpoints, however, are not only difficult but also unnecessary to sustain, as Pinter indicates in his statement, above. Because the camera has less responsibility to justification and explanation than does the writer, and because it permits a broader freedom of interpretation and a scantier volume of mandated signification, the self-deprecating narrator is deleted. Through its fundamental opacity and apparent impassivity, the camera is capable of (although certainly not limited to) describing while with-
holding insight. Thus, the problems of omniscience and narrative bias may be more gracefully eluded in the cinema than in the novel.

Although he omits the narrative device as such, Pinter's attraction to these eight novels certainly derives from a shared sensibility, and he does retain the subsuming tension between the narrative figure and his material. Since the nature of this tension varies among the novels, Pinter's articulation of it in the screenplays differs accordingly. We shall examine these treatments individually in the following explanations of each script, but we can conclude here Pinter's apparent attraction to eight novels sharing this focus on narrative culpability, this rejection of authorial omniscience.

Beyond the bonds that exist between Pinter's original writing and the qualities inherent in both film and the eight adapted novels, a pattern of development emerges when we compare corresponding periods of his playwriting with his screenwriting. The themes and techniques of his work in both media describe a parallel evolution and appear generally to conform to three phases of this process, which involves shifts in focus from the dynamics between self and other, to the dynamics between self and self, to the dynamics between self and nothing. Each of these phases exhibits a range of distinctive characteristics, including most notably certain depictions of time and game-playing, which we shall identify in the screenplays and link with Pinter's stage plays of the same period.

In the discussions that follow, I have distinguished among three separate renditions of each narrative: the novel, the screenplay, and the film. Each of these versions merits consideration as a distinct, authentic entity and, despite the value and utility of comparative study, each requires ultimate appraisal as a fully synthesized, autonomous texte. The relation between novel and screenplay is the primary subject of this study, however, and the films themselves receive direct attention only when they exhibit significant discrepancies, for better or worse, with Pinter's screenplays. The discussions address two questions for each screenplay: What in the source work captured Pinter's imagination? What modifications of the original does Pinter make in his version? Through deliberation of these issues, the individual chapters will amplify the observations stated in this introduction and will illuminate Pinter's working methods and concerns. The last chapter will include an exploration of correlations between the screen adaptations and Pinter's original playwriting as well as a provisional evaluation of his development as a screenwriter.