This story is about Tony. Therefore I only want to introduce people whose actions affected Tony. I must resist the temptation to write of events which were important in my life during this period. . . . This suppression of events may possibly appear unlikely and eccentric and it may distort the account of my relationship with Tony, because it will seem as if he was more important in my life than he was in fact. It will seem as if I met and thought about no one else. Whereas during this period, although I was fond of him, our casual meetings were only pleasant interludes in the busy life we both led.

Pinter's first screenplay excises the principal figure in the novel on which the story is based. Robin Maugham, who wrote the novel, develops it through the eyes of a third-party, first-person narrator, whom I have quoted above. The episodes of the novel thus depend on the experience and hearsay of an old military chum, Richard Merton. As a device for structuring and editing material, Maugham makes clever application of the narrating Merton. The gaps of time between Merton's encounters with Tony, or with news of Tony, provide striking contrast and a sensation of the rapidity and extremity of Tony's demise. The narrator serves to compress the expanse of Tony's story into a dozen vivid pictures of its progress. "Perhaps if I had seen him every month or so I would not have noticed the change in him and therefore could have done nothing to prevent it. Yet I was only six months in the Middle East that winter, and when he came to lunch with me the day after my return I noticed the difference. He had put on weight, and there was a coarse look about him which I had never seen before" (p. 18).

Merton plies other figures who have contact with Tony for information as well. The collection of viewpoints that finally make up the story
includes those of Merton’s housemaid, who provides a peer’s-eye view of Barrett; Sally, who contributes a rival’s view of the situation; and Vera, who casts a self-interested doubt over our previous impression of the affair. The third-party narrator and his informants protect the story from the conceit of author-omniscience and endow it with a stubborn untrustworthiness. Our perceptions of the bizarre relationship between Tony and his manservant Barrett never acquire the weight of fact; they are invariably filtered through the bias and happenstance of other characters. Furthermore, Maugham treats these factors of unreliability as an articulated subject of the novel. Several times, as the two previous quotes demonstrate, Merton warns of the peculiarities intrinsic in his perception of the tale. Vera’s remarks late in the novel, although Merton apparently chooses to believe them, wax unreliable when she clearly betrays them as a seductive ploy. Ultimately, we possess a dozen impenetrable vignettes from dubitable points of view, from which we must make any conclusions we can, according to our own individual biases.

Maugham’s narrator, however, assumes only a peripheral role in the action of the novel. He partakes directly in the plot only once, when he discovers Vera and Barrett together in Tony’s bedroom. Otherwise, Merton functions merely to draw out the combatants, and to set their stories in print. In such a capacity, Merton poses certain problems of artifice and awkwardness, which Maugham does not manage to avoid. In several episodes Merton’s voyeuristic style becomes conspicuous.

At that moment a tide of passion swept over him, and the room turned black before his eyes. It was as if he had given his sight to increase his sense of touch, for he felt intensely aware in all his limbs. He felt his arms encircle her waist and crush her body to him. He felt his lips on her skin searching for the moist softness of her mouth. Then with a spasm of joy he felt her tongue sliding through his lips and her hands stroking his hair. They stumbled through the door to her little room. [P. 35]

Then, one afternoon, or perhaps as he lay in bed at night, the animal would turn over uneasily. His heart would begin to beat faster as the creature stirred into consciousness. Until, finally awakened, desire stroked his guts and clawed at his heart and his head and throat took control over him so that his whole being was aflame with passion and he could scarcely stop himself clambering down the stairs and bursting into the room where lay the only object in the world into which he could plunge his pain and pour out its fierceness. [P. 39]

Merton’s claim that he has “tried to piece the scene together from the halting phrases which Tony used when he told me about it six months later,” hardly accounts for the luridness of these two descriptions. If the passages are not evidence that Maugham expects us to mistrust his
narrator, then they certainly reveal the shortcomings of the third-party narrative device.

Pinter easily excludes Merton from his cinematic version of the story. The camera waives his need for a voyeuristic middleman, presenting the opaque vignettes directly to the viewer's own prejudice, and he readily substitutes other characters in the one instance of Merton's participation. Although Pinter consequently loses the qualities of viewpoint and ambiguity that the narrative device contributes to the novel, he eliminates the quantities of explication and justification that attend the literary form. Pinter makes the basis of Tony's attraction to Barrett implicit; Maugham supplies articulated analyses of Tony's childhood deprivations and weaknesses of character. "Tony was silent. I could guess some of the thoughts passing through his mind. Tony had left Cambridge, where he was reading law, to join our regiment as a trooper in August 1939. Both his parents were dead, and he was unmarried. The regiment had taken the place of a family in his life" (p. 9). Subsequently in the novel, Tony comments to Merton that Barrett "insulates me from a cold, drab world" (p. 31), and both Merton and Sally refer frequently to Tony's weakness for comfort and sloth, and to Barrett's ability to exploit it. Pinter captures all of this in oblique dialogue and pictures, projecting a different brand of inscrutability over the action.

Pinter's opening sequence of shots, our first glimpse of Barrett and Tony, predicts the dynamics of their relationship and condenses much of Maugham's explicated background information into pictorial equivalents. The camera follows Barrett as he approaches and then enters Tony's house, moving from room to room and finding no sign of occupation. Barrett's efficient and alert intrusion into the unfurnished vulnerability of Tony's home finds immediate contrast with Tony, as Barrett discovers him: "Low down in an old deckchair lies a body."

BARRETT approaches, stops a little way from the body, regards it. He bends over TONY.
BARRETT. Excuse me... (TONY starts up) My name's Barrett, sir.
TONY stares at him, clicks his fingers.
TONY. Oh God, of course. I'm so sorry, I fell asleep.
We've got an appointment.
BARRETT. Yes, sir.
TONY. What time?
BARRETT. Three o'clock sir.
TONY. Well what time is it now?
BARRETT. Three o'clock sir.
TONY. Too many beers at lunch, that's what it is. Do you drink beer?
BARRETT. No I don't, sir. [Pp 3-4]
Tony is caught off guard; he is dozing and tipsy, and he explains too much. Barrett takes the upper hand immediately; he commands the time, and he does not drink beer. In their discussion of the Pinter-Losey collaboration, Beverle Houston and Marsha Kinder note that Barrett's punctuality in this opening sequence prevails over the time signature during the earlier portions of the film; "The Servant begins punctually with the appointed meeting between master and servant; it ends at some unlocatable time when the power relationships have been reversed." Their observation of this patterned temporal dissolution might answer other objections that Pinter's control of filmic time goes awry near the end of the screenplay. Time, which becomes an increasingly prominent and problematic element in Pinter's work, already assumes a tricky role in his first adaptation: it remains familiar and intact to the extent that other social artifices in the story retain these qualities, and it disintegrates as these societal conventions founder. Punctuality here operates as a foil for the final scenes of the film and as a ploy in Barrett's strategy for manipulating Tony. Barrett's ironic promise of order is merely a conceit intended to appeal to Tony's self-image and to invite Tony's dependence on the miscreant servant.

In an attempt to regain his superiority over Barrett, Tony rises after the preceding dialogue, leads Barrett to another room for interrogation, seats him in a chair, and remains standing himself through the next segment of the encounter. Pinter gives Barrett a more respectable past than the sordid one that Maugham attributes to the servant. Vera supplies the only description of Barrett's background in the novel, and she speaks vaguely of some shady seaside dealings he had with her father. Pinter's Barrett has (possibly) acted as "personal manservant to various members of the peerage" (p. 5). We grasp his background and a significant bit of Tony's in the following exchange.

BARRETT. I was with Viscount Barr until about five weeks ago.
TONY. Oh Lord Barr? My father knew him well. They died within a week of each other as a matter of fact. [P. 5]

From this brief remark, Pinter conveys that Tony issues from solid stock, and that he has, within the last five weeks, lost his father. Maugham's Merton contributes that Tony grew up as an orphan, but Pinter evinces a greater vulnerability of his character from this terse reference to his father's recent death. Additionally, this connection of their pasts implies the truth of Barrett's pretentious reference by subjecting it to ready verification.

Tony interviews Barrett manipulatively: he stares out the window at the square, his back toward Barrett, studying Barrett's reflection in the
glass. In two respects, the turned back and the observation of the un­
seen, Tony's posture represents an attempt to subordinate Barrett. The
lines of the battle for dominance form rapidly.

TONY. Can you cook?
BARRETT. Well it's . . . if I might put it this way, sir, cooking is something in
which I take a great deal of pride.
TONY. Any dish in particular?
BARRETT. Well, my . . . my souffles have always received a great deal of praise
in the past, sir.
TONY. Do you know anything about Indian dishes?
BARRETT. A little, sir.
TONY. Well, I know a hell of a lot.
TONY sits in the other chair.
You'd have to do all the cooking here.
BARRETT. That would give me great pleasure, sir. [P. 5]

Clearly, Barrett has Tony on the defensive over the beer-drinking in­
feriority of his background. Barrett has a natural edge of elegance and
savoir-faire, which Tony plainly lacks, but desires. The aspiring aristoc­
crate questions his prospective manservant about the preparation of ex­
otic dishes: a form of intimidation familiar from Pinter's earlier play,
The Dumb Waiter. When Barrett indicates pride and seems to gain an
edge, Tony tries to stump him, hotly and inarticulately announces his
own superiority, and then, at last, sits. Barrett assumes an ingratiating
air, instantly.

We next learn of Tony's natural aversion to women and of his incip­
ient helplessness and dependency on Barrett.

TONY. I could have got a housekeeper of course, to look after the place and run
the kitchen, but quite honestly the thought of some old woman running about
the house telling me what to do . . . rather put me off.
BARRETT. Quite, sir.
TONY. Now apart from the cooking, I'll need . . . well, everything . . . (He
laughs.) General looking after . . . you know.
BARRETT. Yes, I do, sir. [P. 6]

We are, indeed, prepared to believe that Barrett does. And the themes
of Tony's trouble with women, of Tony's impractical nature, and of
Barrett's inexhaustible capability dominate the following several
scenes.

The Sally of Maugham's novel has become the Susan of Pinter's
screenplay, and, although her character remains largely the same, she
stays in the game much longer, partly to compensate for the loss of
Merton as a foil for the Tony-Barrett relationship. Pinter introduces her
in the scene following Barrett’s interview, where she and Tony are dining at a restaurant. Their conversation confirms our previous impression of Tony as an extravagant dreamer. He is describing his plans to clear the jungle in Brazil, build three cities, and stock them with peasants from Asia Minor. Twice, during the course of this scene and the one between them that follows in Tony’s drawing room, Pinter drops clues that Susan is a drag on Tony’s aspiring self-image.

HEAD WAITER. Sir?

TONY. I’ll have another bottle, and by the way, this one’s corked.

HEAD WAITER. I’m very sorry, sir.

SUSAN. You’re corked. [P. 6]

TONY. Oh by the way, I forgot to tell you, I’ve found a manservant.

SUSAN. (laughing.) What? [P. 7]

Barrett offers Tony an opportunity to better his persona, but Susan constitutes a clear threat to Tony’s self-delusions and designs.

In Maugham’s version of the story, Tony rents his new home furnished. Pinter omits the furniture in order to depict Tony’s initial vulnerability and the dynamics of the Barrett-Tony affair through interior decoration. This device of the perpetually transforming house replaces written descriptions of the struggle between the two with a pictorial gauge that derives clearly from Pinter’s medley of playwriting symbols. The hyperbolic deployment of living quarters not only jibes with Pinter’s earlier fascination by rooms as prospects for sanctuary (as in *The Room, The Dumb Waiter, The Birthday Party, and The Caretaker*), but also anticipates the significance of redecoration in his subsequent plays, *The Homecoming* and *The Basement*. Although Tony’s stamp dominates the house initially through the presence of his parent’s household (and the consequent retention of his connection with his past), Barrett dictates the remaining considerations, commands the work crews, and eventually expels or obscures Tony’s familial artifacts altogether. His dealings with the work crews, in the scenes following those between Tony and Susan, expose the domineering side of Barrett’s character by presenting another viewpoint. Susan and Barrett clash instantly over the style of the place; their oblique confrontation is thick with innuendo and jockeying for position.


TONY and SUSAN sitting at dinner. BARRETT with wine. He wears white cotton gloves.

SUSAN. The whole place needs brightening... more variety you know... colour.
TONY. Oh. Do you think so?
SUSAN. Yes, and tomorrow I’m going to organize a proper spice shelf for the kitchen.
BARRETT. Would you like to taste the wine, sir?
TONY. Thank you.
SUSAN. What ducky gloves.
TONY. Barrett’s idea. I like it.
BARRETT. It’s Italian, miss. They’re used in Italy.
SUSAN. Who by?
TONY tastes the wine.
TONY. Excellent.
BARRETT. Just a Beaujolais sir, but a good bouler.
SUSAN. A good what?
TONY. Bouler.
BARRETT slightly inclines his head and goes. [P. 11]

Susan’s incipient sensation of exclusion from the burgeoning coalition between Tony and Barrett leads her to adopt unfortunate weapons; she strives to undermine Barrett’s sophisticated airs with vulgar naivete. This tack serves only to forge a stronger alliance between Tony and Barrett. In their chapter on Pinter’s films, William Baker and Stephen Ely Tabachnick observe that, “the masculine bond based on rivalry . . . excludes women. . . . Barrett literally supplants her in all the feminine functions of decorating, cooking for, and comforting her lover.”5 The following scenes explicate this trend, as we observe Barrett removing Tony’s wet shoes and socks and placing Tony’s feet to soak in a bowl of warm salt water. When he uncannily interrupts Tony and Susan on the floor of the drawing room, Susan finally articulates her animosity, and leaves abruptly. After she has left, Tony attempts to upbraid his servant.

BARRETT. I do apologize for the intrusion, sir. I had no idea . . .
TONY. Don’t do it again!
BARRETT. I did knock, sir.
TONY. Oh get to bed.
TONY puts his hand to his head.
Have you got an aspirin?
BARRETT. Yes, sir. I expect you caught a bit of a chill the other day in the rain, sir. [P. 15]

Pinter’s incisive montage progresses toward a cumulative impression that Tony’s growing dependency on Barrett’s care, on Barrett’s maintenance of an illusion of order and prestige, has rendered him powerless to oppose his menial.

Susan and Barrett subsequently line up in another skirmish, this one
over some flowers she has brought to Tony that Barrett will not have in Tony's sickroom. The incident, like the previous one, derives from passing relations and references in Maugham's novel that Pinter, due partly to the novel's brevity (56 pages), is able to embellish. In his development of full-blown scenes from these items of gossip, Pinter adds characteristic wit and irony. As Susan departs after the flower confrontation, Barrett remarks: "I'm afraid it's not very encouraging, miss . . . the weather forecast" (p. 17).

The character Vera, whom Barrett introduces initially as his sister, appears at roughly this point in both the novel and screenplay. Pinter, however, in his elaboration of narrator Merton's scant hearsay, adds two scenes as a preamble to her arrival. In the first we see Barrett, fresh from his victory over Susan and the sickroom flowers, placing a call in a public phone box. As he places and executes his call to Vera, we watch him grit his teeth at a group of girls standing outside the booth. The girls giggle and chatter, and one girl's skirt repeatedly blows up in the wind. When Barrett evacuates the booth, the girl squeezes past him, causing him to jab at her and remark, "Get out of it, you filthy bitch" (p. 18). Thus, Pinter has invented another context, that of the public street and the girls, in which to develop and convey facets of Barrett's character. In the Maugham story, Barrett exhibits a sexual fetish for adolescent girls (indeed, Vera, in the original version, is a mere sixteen years old), and Pinter's interest in this trait may have inspired this brief scene. Apart from the teeth-gritting, however, and the fact of the scene itself, Pinter's script does not sustain Barrett's inclination toward teen-aged females. This episode rather suggests Barrett's disinclination toward women, and the screenplay tends generally to shift his character toward misogyny: a modification due probably to cinematic demand for simplicity and clarity. Pinter, through this change, strengthens the primary relationship between Barrett and Tony.

While Barrett meets his "sister" at the train station, Tony lunches with Susan at a restaurant in a motley scene that intersperses their dialogue with witty and cliched snatches of the conversations at other tables. Susan, apparently, has quit visiting Tony at home due to her animosity for Barrett. Over lunch, they bicker about his personality and merit, and finally reach some uneasy truce on the issue as the scene ends.

Except for a brief and ill-fated reconciliation that the narrator arranges, Pinter's retention of Susan has already exceeded Maugham's by one scene. Pinter will bring her into the action five more times, but her relationship with Tony has entered permanent decline. Susan's utility for the screenplay lies in her ability to elicit dimensions of Tony's character and metamorphosis that might otherwise be lost through the
omission of Merton's narrative. Her later appearances in Pinter's version of the story serve not only to expose Tony's thoughts, but also to protract his dilemma and to exhibit his deterioration against the emblem of his original pretensions. Twice they visit Lord and Lady Mountset, a pair of aristocratic boors whom Pinter invents from a passing reference in the novel, in scenes of spectacular wealth and acid parody. These episodes contribute to Pinter's depiction of Tony's background and aspirations while they simultaneously measure Tony's growing disenchantment with and alienation from this world.

Tony's interest in Vera, however, which sparks immediately upon her arrival, which she encourages by wearing short skirts, and which is presumably supplied and orchestrated by Barrett, has assumed obsessive proportions. We find, also, that Tony's relationship with Barrett has developed a ring of equality in the bitchy tone of Tony's address to him.

Interior. TONY'S bedroom. Day.
Close shot of silent valet. BARRETT'S hand taking jacket off it, helping TONY into it. Pause.

TONY. For God's sake look at this. That's not much good, Barrett.
BARRETT. I beg your pardon, sir.
BARRETT brushes the jacket gently.

TONY. Pull your socks up now. Come on, come on, come on, give it a good brush, you won't hurt me.
BARRETT. Perhaps you'd like to take the jacket off, sir?

TONY. No, damn it. Do it on. I haven't got time to mess about.
BARRETT brushes vigorously.

BARRETT. Would you turn around sir.

TONY. No. All right, all right. (Sulkily.) All right, it'll have to do. [Pp. 26–27]

After Tony has subsided, Barrett requests permission for himself and his sister to leave for the day and visit their seriously ill mother. Tony fusses over the prospect of a lost hot meal, and finally agrees to give the two servants the following day off, so that he has time to adjust to the idea of their absence.

When Tony has left for his appointment, we get wind that something off-color is in the works: our first hard glimpse behind the scenes. Barrett goes to fetch Vera from Tony's shower, occasioning the following dialogue.

BARRETT and VERA. VERA in towel. He holds the bottle of cologne.
BARRETT. Who told you to take a bath in his bathroom? Who said you could use his bathroom? A gentleman doesn't want a naked girl bouncing all over his bathroom.
VERA. You told me to, didn't you?
The Servant

BARRETT. Me? Why would I tell you a thing like that?

He closes the door.

I'll tell you what I'm going to do now.

VERA. What?

BARRETT. I'm going to have a bath in his bathroom.

VERA turns the tap.

VERA. You're terrible.

BARRETT. And I want that... all over me.

He gives her the cologne.

BARRETT. And I want that... all over me.

He takes off his jacket. She watches him. The water boils into the bath. [Pp. 28–29]

Although the details of this scene issue entirely from Pinter's imagination, he develops this cinematically potent scenario from Vera's simply stated claim in the novel that "It was he who put me up to Tony" (p. 57).

The play-acting game that becomes apparent here, and again later when the two maids usurp Tony's bed during his temporary absence, invites comparison with Genet's play, The Maids, which develops a similar subject through similar devices and insights. In both works dominance and subservience occur as deceitful strategies in a game by which the two parties create, destroy, and exchange roles with each other. Genet's maids, who play compulsively at the game of being Madame, define themselves as much as their mistress according to their enactment of her. As Sartre has expressed their predicament: "These dream dwellers, pure reflections of a sleeping consciousness, use the little reality which this consciousness has given them to imagine that they are becoming the Master who imagines them... they are dreams who dream of swallowing up their dreamer." Like the maids Barrett and Vera lack authentic identity: in Tony's presence they fake servility, and in his absence they imitate him. Their success at the game of supplanting Tony by these tactics is accomplished through Tony's acceptance of their definition of him; his dependence on them for his identity equips them with the power to bring his ruin. The dynamics of worship and spite that incite the rituals of Genet's maids also effect the behavior of Barrett and Vera, who, in their game of deposing Tony, reveal love-hate ambivalences both in their relationship with Tony and in their exploitation of each other. Adoration fuses with animosity, and subservience operates as dominance. The vortex of disguises and pretenses that engulfs all circumstances also swallows up Tony, whose persona is an imposture: a contingency of other contingencies. Like all of Pinter's usurpers during this period (for example, Riley in The Room, Goldberg/McCann in The Birthday Party, and Mick in The Caretaker), Barrett insinuates his scheme by undermining the fabric of artifice that
affords Tony’s image. In each case the usurpers participate in the creation of the victim’s identity while retaining an inchoate, unpredictable identity for themselves, and through these means, derive the power to manipulate and overcome their prey.

While Barrett is away ministering to his mother, Tony wanders aimlessly and dissipates rapidly. Pinter’s montage depicts him listlessly studying a menu in a coffee bar, then leaving before the waitress can get to him. He returns home to drift about the halls and kitchen, throwing down the mail without opening it (a characteristic symptom of withdrawal and malaise in Pinter’s work, which he repeats in similar scenes in The Pumpkin Eater, Accident, and The Last Tycoon). Suddenly, Vera appears, stating that Barrett has told her to remain at the house because she felt ill. Pinter retains Maugham’s audiovisually sensual dripping faucet (which director Joseph Losey captures brilliantly on film) and adds the dilemma of an unanswered telephone (presumably Susan, who phoned earlier) during this brief prologue to Tony’s abrupt seduction of Vera.

Barrett returns, efficiency incarnate, and moves straight to the mail, examining it. He has clearly obtained the position where he holds Tony’s life together, providing all of its order and direction. Pinter mines the subtext for all its worth during their first meeting after Tony’s fling with Vera.

BARRETT. I hope she hasn’t been any inconvenience to you.
TONY. Oh not at all. No, she hasn’t at all.
BARRETT. Did she manage to do anything for you, sir?
TONY looks at him sharply.
TONY. I beg your pardon.
BARRETT. I hope she was well enough to see to your meals.
TONY. Oh yes, yes, we . . . I had lunch.
BARRETT. I notice she didn’t do the washing up.
TONY. Still under the weather, I suppose.
BARRETT. Under the what, sir?
TONY. The weather.
BARRETT. Oh yes. [P. 32]

Tony hastily sends Barrett out for beer, although they have plenty in the house, so that he can quickly ravish Vera in the library and establish a time to meet that night. When Vera leaves her room to meet him at midnight, we clearly see Barrett left behind in her bed, “reaching for a newspaper” (p. 35).

Over the next several scenes, the rapidity of Tony and Barrett’s alternation in her favors is conspicuous and enlightening.
Barrett, perhaps even more clearly in retrospect, apparently thrives on the kinky sharing of the girl. Through the pandering of Vera, he manages not only to satisfy certain sexual appetites that later emerge directly in his relationship with Tony, but also to contaminate and undermine the fragile conceits of Tony’s posture. The unanswered phone forecasts an incipient disintegration of order in favor of irrational ritual, and the camera’s retention of “the empty hall” (a characteristic Pinter-Losey device, which we shall examine in their subsequent films) provides visual affirmation of the ascendancy of latent, invisible corruption.

From here, the situation rapidly escalates (or perhaps deteriorates) in all reaches of the plot. Susan arrives to redecorate the house, playing out a vicious scene with Barrett in the process. She and Tony leave for the second of their two trips to the Mountsets’ estate, but decide to return early to the house in order to spend an impulsive and ill-fated night together in Tony’s room. Again by capitalizing on a device familiar from his playwriting, Pinter loads the stakes in anticipation of the story’s climactic turning point. His preoccupation with rooms as refuges builds with intensity through a montage of three quick scenes: first in Susan and Tony’s comparison of individual room views at the Mountsets’ and in their decision to return to Tony’s room in London, then in their observation from the car of an inexplicable light in Tony’s room, and finally in their discovery of the two servants, together in Tony’s bed.

The speed and force with which Pinter establishes the nature of room as sanctuary, only to reveal its desecration, exemplify his skill at reshaping this material for cinematic impact. Although the novel contains both the cue and spirit for such a sequence, Pinter’s instinct and aptitude for this particular motif of usurped sanctuary, which dominates his early playwriting, induce him to focus the process as an index of dynamics fundamental to the story. Similar uses of territory and intrusion occur throughout Pinter’s original writing, including both his early plays (The Room, The Birthday Party, The Dumb Waiter, and The Caretaker), where the theme emerges directly from action, and his later plays (The
The Servant

Homecoming, Old Times, No Man's Land, and Betrayal), where such matters become more abstract and complex. In all cases, theatrical and cinematic, the room symbol presents opportunities for rendering ideas visible, and Pinter exploits its capacity for translating time into space and language into image.

The discovery of Barrett and Vera in Tony's bedroom belonged, in the novel, to Merton, who subsequently reported his findings to Tony in a later episode. Lacking Merton and preferring the shock of firsthand confrontation, Pinter writes the scene for Tony, himself, and includes Susan to intensify the strain. When he understands the situation, Tony yells for Barrett to come down, and asks Susan to leave. She insists, however, on staying.

TONY. Do you realize you've committed a criminal offense?

BARRETT. Criminal, sir?

TONY. She's your sister, you bastard!

BARRETT looks at him.

BARRETT. She's not my sister, sir. (Pause.) And if I might say so we're in the same boat.

Silence. BARRETT looks at SUSAN.

He knows precisely what I mean. . . .

She stares at TONY.

BARRETT. . . . In any case, apart from the error of being in your room I'm perfectly within my rights. Vera's my fiancee. [Pp. 41-42]

After Vera appears and corroborates this piece of news, further insinuating Tony's complicity in front of Susan as she does so, Tony throws them both out of the house and turns to Susan. "Eventually TONY in a half-appeal, half-demand, whispers: Come to bed" (p. 43). Susan abruptly leaves the house.

Again, in Barrett's absence, Tony rapidly goes to seed. He throws himself onto Vera's bed (a metaphoric statement of his own servitude to his servants) and staggers through half a dozen shots enumerating his dereliction and ineptitude. The condition of the house deteriorates radically, and Tony wanders through it in an alcoholic stupor. The period in Maugham's novel witnessed Tony's almost complete rehabilitation and reconciliation with Sally (Susan), but, in both novel and screenplay, the periods end when Tony encounters Barrett in a pub. Maugham gives us Barrett's story through Merton via a postcard from Tony recounting its details. Pinter lets Barrett speak for himself. In both versions, however, the account is largely the same. Barrett claims that Vera had exploited him, told him nothing of her affair with Tony until moments before the discovery, and left him immediately upon their expulsion for a
“bookie.” He manages to insinuate himself back into Tony's graces, adopting a lackey’s humility and preying upon Tony’s pity. The halting eloquence of this lie not only recalls Aston’s recollection of shock treatment in The Caretaker, as Baker and Tabachnick observe, but also anticipates Sarah’s account of her affair with the French lieutenant in Pinter’s much later screenplay. In this respect it exemplifies Pinter’s skill at replicating the rhythms and manipulations of a liar, and it alerts us to possible instances of lying in his other works.

The artificial roles and barriers of the Tony-Barrett relationship have collapsed, however, due to their common use of Vera. After Tony agrees to reemploy Barrett, we discover, through yet another transformation of the battleground-house, an immediate change in their situation.

As the decor suggests, Barrett has clearly gained the upper hand in the struggle with his titular master. Their first dialogue in this new atmosphere has the character of a domestic spat. Tony is in his pajama jacket solving crossword puzzles, and Barrett is assailing him over the mess, always being in the way, not retaining a maid, and not having a job. "Look, why don’t you get yourself a job instead of moping around here all day? Here I am scraping and skimping to make ends meet . . . getting worse and worse . . . and you’re no bloody help . . . d’you know that butter’s gone up twopence a pound" (p. 48)? The bitching and needling steadily worsen; they nag at each other and fight over the duties of their constantly shifting roles; their contact with the outside world dwindles to nothing.

Finally, Barrett and Tony resort to party games (a standard Pinter motif that operates in his plays and screenplays as a manifestation of competition on other levels of the action) as a way of determining momentary superiority and order. In a breather between games, the two
have a conversation that recalls Tony's military background from Maugham’s novel, but the dialogue takes an odd twist.

BARRETT. You know sometimes I get the feeling that we’re old pals.
TONY. That’s funny.
BARRETT. Why?
TONY. I get the same feeling myself.

Pause.
BARRETT. I’ve only had that same feeling once before.
TONY. When was that?
BARRETT. Once in the army.
TONY. That’s funny. I had the same feeling myself there, too. Once. [P. 52]

The reiteration of the word “once” in this passage, particularly by Tony in the final line, suggests some hidden subject or reference in these lines. The all-male nature of the army, the already strongly sexual character of their relationship, and the repetition of the peculiar “once” imply that the real topic of this conversation consists in a testing out of each other’s availability for homosexual activity. The subsequent party game marks a new shift in their relationship that tends to support this reading. The game is Hide and Seek; Tony is hiding and Barrett is seeking.

BARRETT. . . . Where’s your little lair this time? Puss, puss, puss, puss, pussy, puss, puss, puss, puss, puss, puss.
. . . I’m getting warm! You’re hiding but you’ll be caught. You’ve got a guilty secret, you’ve got a guilty secret, but you’ll be caught. I’m coming to get you. I’m creeping up on you.
. . . I’m getting warm, I can smell a rat, I can smell a rat . . .

TONY shivers. The door bursts open. BARRETT charges in and confronts him. BARRETT utters a terrifying maniacal bellow. TONY faints. [P. 53]

Their relationship has indeed acquired some extraordinary, private, and intense dimension. Barrett now refers to Tony as “Tone,” and when Vera arrives to beg money from her ex-boss, Barrett ejects her from the house in the middle of her exposure of his mendacity. In both the novel, where Vera delivers this account to Merton, and the screenplay, Vera’s motives suggest that she cannot be trusted. Tony’s reaction of helplessness to her tale (conveyed to him by Merton in Maugham’s version), which lays the apparent premise of his resumed relationship with Barrett open to suspicion, confirms his doom. As Baker and Tabachnick suggest, “Tony, in true Pinter fashion, has nothing left in his life except his relationship with Barrett, to which he must cling even as it destroys him. . . . Tony’s early need for order has become an absolute desire to be commanded.”

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At this point in the novel, Tony retires to the kitchen where Barrett and a female child await his participation in a sexual ménage. Pinter, who makes Barrett and his revamped sexual taste more respectable, brings Susan into the milieu for one final cut. The situation between her and Tony is hopeless, and a party is commencing in other rooms of the house as they attempt to talk. After trying to convince her to leave, Tony leads Susan into the bedroom, where Barrett and four women are drinking and playing a recording of Susan and Tony's "song": one that has played several times during their scenes together.

Leave it alone
It's all gone
Leave it alone
It's all gone
Don't stay to see me
Turn from your arms
Leave it alone
It's all gone
Give me my death
Close my mouth
Give me my breath
Close my mouth
How can I bear
The ghost of you here
Can't love without you
Must love without you
Now while I love you alone. [P. 13]

As the song plays, the women converge on Tony. He lies on the bed, staring vacantly at Susan, as she moves to Barrett and kisses him. Barrett's ascendancy, certified even by Susan's recognition, is now complete. Tony smashes the record player and commands from the floor, "(in a sudden dazed childish horror, in a monotone) Get out, get out. Get 'em all out" (p. 59). Barrett clears the house, recovering his composure to incline his head to Susan as she leaves the house after hitting him in the face with her closed fist. In our last view of them, Tony crawls onto the landing and sits in a corner, as Barrett mounts the stairs, his hand trailing along the banister. (The film adds the plainly visible figure of Vera to this final image, effecting a clearer sense of her continued complicity with Barrett and of Tony's deposal.)

Pinter's screen adaptation (1962) of Maugham's sinister tale of the intricate and almost incomprehensible relationship between Tony and Barrett contributes a heightened menace to the proceedings. Because Maugham's novel is short and consists largely of narrative discourse that the screenplay omits, Pinter is free to embellish incidents where, elsewhere in his adaptations, he works chiefly to condense and edit
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material. His skill at reshaping the piecemeal plot for cinematic impact and at capturing its subtextual dynamics in pictorial images is evident throughout his revisions of the novel.

He capitalizes, in the first place, on the struggles for dominance and insularity that are present both in the novel and in his original writing of this general period (The Room, 1957; The Birthday Party, 1957; The Dumb Waiter, 1957; and The Caretaker, 1959), and he accentuates these through such devices as the party game and the perpetually redecorated house. Examples in the plays of these struggles and devices are both numerous and conspicuous: Rose, Stanley, Gus, and Davies all fail in their efforts to secure territory because they manage to assert authority over neither others nor place. Party games achieve prominence in Goldberg and McCann's strategy for overpowering Stanley in The Birthday Party, while explicit and implicit games of manipulation account for much of the interaction in all of these plays. In each case, during this early period of Pinter's writing, the games occur as techniques for protecting or interrupting routines that are closely associated with territory. The eruption of the contest between Tony and Barrett into coups of sport and decor may illumine similar patterns in the stage plays wherever these are obscure, as the screenplay shares the characteristics of Pinter's early dramaturgy while revealing these more clearly, perhaps, through their derivative process. Pinter's emphasis, for example, on Barrett's skill at conforming milieu to his taste and expediency contrasts sharply with the domestic inefficacies not only of Tony, but also of Stanley, Gus, and Davies, each of whom reveals an impotence at this task which forecasts his eventual expulsion. Although the notion of redecoration finds expression only in the dialogue of the plays that precede The Servant (most notably in The Caretaker), the introduction of material changes in the settings of succeeding plays, such as The Homecoming, in which Jessie's absence presides over the action through an architectural hiatus in the set, and The Basement, in which a duel for supremacy is waged through fickle interior design, suggests Pinter's enthusiasm for this device.

Above all, Pinter's screenplay for The Servant exploits the opaque and objectified communicative facility of cinematic expression; due to relative impartiality of the camera's eye, he retains the inaccessible, mysterious, and incredible levels of the action without elucidating them or necessarily subjecting them to narrative apologies. These disclaimers by Merton in the novel tend themselves to reduce and resolve the inexplicable developments of the story. Pinter, by virtue of his reliance on cinematic impassivity and of his attunement to subtextual contours, preserves the inscrutability of the story, the fallibility of perception,
without recourse to obvious negations of omniscience or to the alternative perspectives that Merton implies. The simultaneous close scrutiny and analytic indifference of the camera exempt Pinter from the need for such a device while generically focusing the dilemma that the device serves. Consequently, we, as audience, suffer the frustrations mandated by viewpoint without the awkward, and explicative, nods to inexplicability that the narrator entails.