During Oktober’s attempt to interrogate me under pressures induced by my fears for [Inga] while she was apparently being tortured in my presence . . . I was aware that (1) she was not in fact suffering distress but lending herself to a new method of inducing me to talk, (2) I must appear to believe that she was being tortured, and (3) I must get out of the corner without revealing that I knew her to be an agent, in case I could use her later as a source of information. (Reference Point 2: the moment I realized that Oktober had come to simulate a torture scene, I made myself believe in it, so that all my subsequent actions should appear consistent. This deliberate self-deception was an aid in throwing the faint.)

Although Adam Hall adopts a first-person narrative structure for his novel, *The Quiller Memorandum*, the perceptual difficulties he explores through this form differ from those of the other novels that Pinter has adapted. In this text the problems of observation intrude between the narrator’s character and his experiences, rather than between the narrator’s viewpoint and the story. The game of interpretation comprises the fabric of the plot, but its implications never reach explicitly beyond the internal action of the novel. Instead, the narrator Quiller confronts a series of impenetrably ambiguous situations that he must interpret correctly, since one misstep will cost him his life and bring global disaster. Quiller must choose and act rapidly according to his instincts and calculations, but his data is neither verifiable nor sufficient. Although the reader shares this handicap, the limitations of viewpoint complicate the novel’s narrativity in an exclusively implicit manner. Unlike *The Servant*, where the narrator’s fabrication is emphatic, or *The Pumpkin Eater*, where the narrator’s perception is flawed, this novel describes the efforts
of a candid, incisive narrator to render a recondite situation in the present
time. The excerpt above, for example, necessitates a retrospective revi-
sion of the episode it annotates; because Quiller’s original description of
Inga’s torture issued from his contrived point of view, it produced a false
impression of the incident, requiring the reader to reevaluate this epi-
sode, and others, as succeeding perspectives qualify it.

The urgency for guesswork in impregnably mysterious circumstances
commends this novel to Pinter as a suitable exercise for his aesthetic.
His adaptation, however, deviates radically and necessarily from the
source: more so than any other of his screenplays. As constituted, Hall’s
novel is virtually impossible to render cinematic, due to its indispensa-
ably interior nature. Although the novel abounds with action, the in-
trigue is enormously complex and entirely private, existing exclusively
within the mind of Quiller. In order to draw the conflict to the surface
and convey it through cinematic language, Pinter overhauls even the
fundamental premises of the story. Without resorting to the clumsy,
trite device of voiceover narration, Quiller’s extreme reticence and soli-
tude must somehow yield their secrets. To achieve this revelation,
Pinter liberally adds, subtracts, and changes characters and situations.
Hall’s “I” emerges as an obscure accumulation of his own calculations
and impressions, remaining chronically elusive and subjective through-
out the novel. Pinter, therefore, must invent Quiller’s outward, objec-
tive personality which, for purposes of cinematic legibility, seems more
aggressive, congenial, and debonair than the furtive, amorphous figure
in Hall’s story. The screenplay substantially diminishes the atmosphere
of silence and strain that pervades the novel. Not only does the material
Quiller acquire the characteristics of a playboy, he also is forced to
tolerate the nuisance of accomplices, which he so scrupulously avoids
in the novel. Both of these devices, Quiller’s new affability and his
 provision with foils, serve to externalize the involuted complications of
the intrigue.

Even so, Pinter’s adaptation grossly simplifies and reorganizes the
novel’s plot, shifting the story’s emphasis from its thematic network to
its surface action. The intricacies of Nazi and neo-Nazi activities disap-
pear from the screenplay to reveal a simpler story of thrills and sus-
pense. Pinter, for example, radically alters the role of Inga (which he
spells “Inge”), whose complexity and mystery dominate the novel. For
Hall, the significance of Inga’s psychology, appeal, and betrayal is
paramount. The horrors of Hitler’s aftermath have served only to exac-
terate her neurotic obsession with the immolated Fuhrer, and through
her dependancy on Nazi authority, Hall elucidates his contention that
Germany, if allowed, will reproduce the Third Reich. Furthermore,
Inga's apparent frankness and self-incriminations, coupled with her impervious androgyny (the casting of Senta Berger in this role, consistent or not with Pinter's intentions for it, removes the character in the film itself even further from its counterpart in the novel), challenge Quiller and pose the most devious of the opposition's traps. Her ambivalent posture as a double agent provides a rigorous test of Quiller's cunning, since his belief in her wavers. Ultimately, her attempted betrayal of him and his treacherous rejection of her become the novel's chief statements of omnipresent deception and threat.

All of these circumstances, however, are absent from the screenplay, where Inge becomes a schoolteacher whose affiliations remain relatively speculative and impotent. Although her death or arrest may be presumed from the final action of the novel, Pinter stipulates her exemption from the raid, preserving her ambiguity into the final scene of the screenplay where, surrounded by her students, she bids Quiller an inscrutable goodbye. Martin Esslin captures their relationship in his reference to "the scenes between Quiller and the German girl, where we sense that he knows that she is not what she pretends to be, and that she knows that he knows, and that he knows that too, while yet carrying on as though neither of them suspected anything beneath the surface of what looks like an ordinary love affair." Our sense of her complicity and of the vertigo of deceptions it produces, however, derives from the slightest evidence in Pinter's script. Although Berger's performance in the film contains rather broad indications of secretive subtext, the screenplay tends to incriminate Inge only in her inexplicable release by the neo-Nazis which results in her survival of the raid. Quiller's provision of Inge with an incorrect telephone number, an idea that Pinter retains from the novel, serves also, through its suggestion of Quiller's mistrust, to implicate her; but Pinter's characteristic penchant for ambiguity emerges conspicuously in his revision of Inga's role.

Extensive differences between the novelistic and cinematic versions of the story preclude rigorous comparison of the two works. Pinter's initial deviation from the novel occurs in the opening sequence of the screenplay: the murder of Kenneth Lindsay Jones. In both accounts this incident triggers the subsequent action, since Quiller assumes the operations of the deceased KLJ, but the episode precedes Hall's entry into the narrative and emerges only through cumulative reference. Pinter sacrifices the mysterious, less cinematically communicable, circumstances of this murder in order to exploit its value as an indication of tone and as a harbinger of later images. By establishing this sequence of images and associating it with the murder, the screenplay's subsequent repetition of this montage approximates the climactic recognition by
Hall’s narrator that he is tracing the fatal footsteps of KLJ. The significant difference in the function of this incident as it operates structurally in the screenplay as opposed to the novel, however, lies in Pinter’s use of it to effect our, rather than Quiller’s, recognition of this duplication and threat.

Succeeding episodes of the screenplay develop this pattern of divergence from the novel. Immediately following Pinter’s dramatization of the KLJ murder, the screenplay includes a conversation between Rushington and Gibbs: two characters of Pinter’s invention who materialize a minor theme from the novel suggesting the imperious indifference of the executive echelon. Rushington and Gibbs appear twice during the screenplay (but only once in the film), contributing exposition and juxtaposing their idle dinner banter with preceding scenes of extraordinary tension and violence.

In accordance with his campaign to render his protagonist cinematically accessible, Pinter next overhauls the initial meeting between Quiller and the liaison, Pol. Where Pol originally entraps Quiller into accepting the assignment, the screenplay changes the circumstances of their encounter and depicts Quiller as the aggressor in this matter. Thus, the reluctance of Hall’s Quiller to undertake the mission transforms into the eagerness of Pinter’s Quiller to replace KLJ. Quiller also agrees, at least initially, to cooperate with his cover men, although he refuses all cover in the novel (and many of the references to this situation were deleted from the film), so that Pinter may exploit their interaction to reveal Quiller’s waggish sense of humor and otherwise unintelligible working strategy.

Although most of Pinter’s modifications in the story produce externalizations of material which, in the novel, remains entirely cranial, some new episodes seem inspired either by the serendipitous discovery of interesting locations or by a cinematic requirement for pictorially conveyed suspense. Pol’s initial meeting with Quiller, for example, transpires in Olympic Stadium: a change from the novel that seems explicable only as Pinter’s response to the need for representation of undercurrents through images and setting. Consistent with Pinter’s opportunistic choice of this location, the film adds a chorus of subliminal “Sieg Heils” to the sound track for this scene. The screenplay also depicts scenes in a bowling alley and swimming bath that have no basis in Hall’s work except as a total reworking of Quiller’s efforts to expose himself to adversary forces. Quiller’s pursuit of KLJ’s path, which leads him to the bowling alley and baths, is original in Pinter’s version of the story, and it includes only one situation with any bearings in the novel. Although Pinter revamps the episode to introduce his version of Inga,
Quiller’s visit to the school is liberally adapted from an incident in Hall’s account. Since the common denominator between these school scenes consists in the presence of ex-Nazis on the teaching staffs, Pinter presumably wished to conserve the novel’s suggestion of Nazi influence over German youth. Otherwise, no similarity exists between the two uses of the school setting.

Because Pinter’s alterations are so inclusive, even those episodes he retains from the novel exhibit substantial differences from their source. Consequently, Pinter’s account of Quiller’s capture and interrogation by the Nazi Oktober shares little with that of Hall beyond its pattern of drug injections. Pinter changes both the circumstances and the interaction in this scene, which in the novel depends heavily on Quiller’s unspoken perceptions of his situation. In both versions, however, Quiller’s evasive divulgence of his passion for Inga/Inge serves to formulate succeeding Nazi strategy. According to Hall’s account, the Nazis intrude when Quiller obeys their psychological forecast by going immediately to Inga, and they attempt to extract information from him by faking her torture. Pinter, however, deletes this episode, reserving Inge’s jeopardy for a surrogate situation in a later scene. Since he eliminates the complexities of Quiller’s dilemma and of the Nazis’ operations, Pinter employs Inge’s captivity in the Nazi headquarters as a source of suspense during the final sequence of action.

Despite bold deviations from the circumstances in the novel, the screenplay capitalizes on Hall’s description of the tensions during the climactic developments of the story. Pol explains the situation to Quiller through a metaphor that Pinter preserves intact from the novel.

You’re on a delicate mission, Quiller. Perhaps you’re beginning to appreciate that. Let me put it this way.

He takes two large cream cakes and arranges them on the table.
There are two opposing armies drawn up on the field. But there’s a heavy fog. They can’t see each other. They want to, of course, very much.
He takes a currant from a cake and sets it between the cakes.
You’re in the gap between them. You can just see us, you can just see them.
Your mission is to get near enough to see them and signal their position to us, so giving us the advantage. But if in signalling their position to us you inadvertently signal our position to them, then it will be they who will gain a very considerable advantage.
He points to the currant.
That’s where you are, Quiller. In the gap.
He pops the currant in his mouth and eats it.

Pinter embellishes Pol’s point here with both business and elucidation; in the novel this encounter is terse and outdoors. Although Pinter
ridicules Pol’s dalliance by stipulating the incongruous cream cake illustration, the metaphor retains its impact. Thus, the screenplay duplicates Hall’s fascination with the activities of a figure who occupies this gap.

For both authors the climactic scenes occur after Inga/Inge (variously) leads Quiller to enemy headquarters, and Quiller endeavors to convey its location to his own bureau without detection. Quiller, released by the Nazis for reasons that differ in the two versions, must shake his tags and signal his knowledge to his organization before the opposition sacrifices as too risky its opportunity to learn the location of his bureau. Both accounts allow Quiller until dawn to accomplish this delicate task. Hall reveals Inga’s complicity with the enemy during this action, but Pinter adds the threat of her murder to the consequences of Quiller’s failure to satisfy the Nazis. Quiller does not manage, in either version, to lose his tags, but he escapes detection finally by pretending to fall victim to the bomb they have rigged in his automobile. Their presumption of his death allows him to go freely to his bureau and to file his report.

Quiller’s success at outwitting the enemy leaves a different question for resolution by each medium; Hall’s Quiller must ferret out the unapprehended Nazi officer who was the original object of his mission, and Pinter’s Quiller must discover the final disposition of Inge. Where Quiller’s accomplishment of the former objective tends to seal the novel in conclusive fashion, his ascertainment, in Pinter’s version, of Inge’s return to her students produces a more ominous conclusion of the action. As Burkman notes, this unsettling resolution robs Quiller (and us, as well) of his victory and squares the screenplay with Pinter’s general interest in such victimized figures. “But if the gap of the isolated hero is closed at the book’s end, it remains painfully open in the film. . . . A lesser work than The Birthday Party or The Dumb Waiter, The Quiller Memorandum is illuminating as a further exploration of man as the victim of forces which he cannot subdue, of man as victim even when he is victor.” Thus, despite the lighthearted tone that Pinter incurs through his simplification and externalization of Hall’s narrative, the screenplay retrieves some of the novel’s serious, complex quality by its inconclusive ending, which pictures the ambiguous, influential Inge surrounded by her class of eager youths.

Although Pinter’s work on this screenplay (1965) tends to interrupt the pattern of temporal deformity and introverted conflict that emerges over the course of his writing career, these qualities are nonetheless present in Hall’s novel, and we may presume that they attracted Pinter to the project. The disruptions of linear time, which result in the novel
from Quiller's subjection to drugs, self-deceit, limited viewpoint, and continual revision of the apparent past, are consistent with Pinter's evolving interest in temporal manipulation and disintegration. Already, in *The Pumpkin Eater*, we have observed his deployment of a nonlinear time structure as a technique for revealing the subjective perceptions of his protagonist, and his playwriting of this period exhibits a similar trend. We have seen also that *The Homecoming* (1964) implicates the past in the present through an architectural detail that activates a certain relation between the two periods. Pinter's subsequent plays (*Land­scape*, 1967; *Old Times*, 1970; *No Man's Land*, 1974; and *Betrayal*, 1978) will elevate temporal fusion to a pivotal role in the action. However we attribute Pinter's omissions of this theme and the theme of Quiller's game against himself from his screenplay for *The Quiller Memorandum*, whether he felt their manifestation might overwhelm the genre or whether he simply failed to find some way of rendering the confusion cinematic, we may at least postulate the novel's consonance with the pattern of his concerns.

Pinter's approach to the problematic complexity and introversion of Hall's narrative lacks the ingenuity of his other adaptations, where he finds appropriate conversions of similarly difficult material. Particularly in his subsequent adaptations, Pinter has managed to invent filmic surrogates for narrative involutions, and his conceits have produced fewer distortions of the original concerns while successfully transforming them into cinematic language. In comparison with Pinter's other screenplays, this adaptation exhibits signs of hack writing for popular markets; Baker and Tabachnick suggest he may have written it "for sheer technical exercise or perhaps simply for money." Quiller's perceptions, however interior, of his situation might have emerged through a more innovative and faithful translation of Hall's story into the deceptive opacity of images. Because Quiller's predicament consists in his restriction to interpretations of an essentially superficial or filmic reality, Pinter might have discovered some cinematic exploitation of this condition. Contradictory impressions of experience, as they become available according to future qualifications and perspectives, are communicable through cinematic means. Numerous films in the detective fiction genre operate by implying and then subverting certain premises of their narratives. Francis Ford Coppola's film, *The Conversation*, for example, achieves precisely this effect in its pivotal capsizing of the tape recorded statement, "He'd kill us if he got the chance." Hall's novel and Coppola's film share a fascination with the mechanisms of mistaken and corrected impressions, and Coppola's cinematic presentation of this phenomenon reveals the facile nature of Pinter's rendering.
Although Hall's novel lacks the literary richness of Pinter's other sources, the screenplay lacks equivalents for the novel's most meritorious aspects. Pinter needed to devise some structural principle, as he has done in his later adaptations, capable of delivering Hall's dynamic of cumulative, modified, and contradictory perceptions. Such a rendering of the novel into film might have proved more satisfying and challenging than the relatively simplistic spy movie that Pinter has produced in this case.