I might always be writing of myself. Charlie might be writing this story.

I have tried to explain all this. I want to say—this is the letter from Charlie, this the football game with William. There were other things at this time—driving in and out of Oxford, my pupils, the common room, going for walks under the willows by the river. But I have to say—This and that have a meaning.

Charlie is the writer: he will write this book. But I wanted to say—This is the point of it. Remember it happy; the sun in your eyes.

The screenplay for Accident also entails an intricate transformation of its source material, although the revisions are less extensive and less discordant than those in Pinter’s script for The Quiller Memorandum. If author Nicholas Mosley’s performance of a small role in the film constitutes his approbation, then he apparently found Pinter’s broad liberties consistent in some way with his intentions for the novel. Mosley’s narrative whirligig exceeds those of the preceding three source novels in its convolutions and ambiguities. In addition to invoking narrative disclaimers similar to those we have experienced in the novel versions of The Servant and The Pumpkin Eater, Mosley obscures the identity of his medium for the story until we cannot determine with any certainty which of the central figures in the story has relayed the tale. The last of the three quotes that introduce this chapter appears as the final statement of the novel, and although the identity of the narrator has been questioned before in the story (see first quote), we are left to ponder the sudden implications of authorship by Charlie, the retroactive imposi-
tion of his strong point of view, and the impossible question of to whom 
"I" refers. As before, Pinter has substituted the camera's nonin­
terpretive record for the sensibilities of this technique. He shifts the 
ambiguities from device to condition, utilizing a flashback structure to 
evoke a subjectivity that remains, nonetheless, inaccessible.

Mosley's apparent narrator is Stephen Jervis, a professor of philoso­
phy at St. Mark's College, Oxford. Repeatedly, in his narration Stephen 
notes the inherent fallaciousness of his endeavor, observing that he sees 
in others only what they care to exhibit to him, and that he then knows 
this only through the range of his own bias. "When she had gone, I 
stood with my arms on the ledge of the window and looked out on to the 
lawn. I thought—You never know a person; only what you put into 
them, their effects. A platitude. The shadow from the roof of the build­
ing made a line with two angles at the gutter and the ground. Once I had 
wanted to be an architect. Fitting things in: filling spaces" (p. 17). 
Hence we discover the nature of his effort in this forthcoming account: 
to fit things in, to fill spaces. The burden of this responsibility on him 
becomes apparent in the second quote of the prefatory three, and in 
numerous other references to the fabricated nature of his conclusions.

In Stephen's view the assignment of meaning to experience perverts 
it; to see is to alter, to interpret, worse. "I am looking back on all this 
not to explain it, nor to describe it, but to say what it means. In­
comprehensible. But what else? Choices" (p. 60). Stephen stresses the 
unreliability of memory itself, imputing a dozen pages of recollection 
to an "Angus MacSomething-or-other" who was "a procurer for my 
imagination" (p. 65) and ascribing the use of the past to the need for 
"colour, tolerance" (p. 67). He frequently laments the absence of "con­
nections" and the indeterminacy of motives. Charlie describes the 
writer's process: "You take some things from real life, but you invent 
the story and all its connections and so on" (p. 72). Stephen remarks, 
"Motives are different from actions" (p. 32). The impenetrability and 
ambiguity of the consequent story, the characters' exertions against 
these conditions, attracted Pinter to the work.

I do so hate the becauses of drama. Who are we to say that this happens 
because that happened, that one thing is a consequence of another? How do 
we know? What reason have we to suppose that life is so neat and tidy? The 
most we know for sure is that the things which have happened have happened 
in a certain order: any connections we think we see, or choose to make, are 
pure guesswork. Life is much more mysterious than plays make it out to be. 
And it is this mystery which fascinates me: what happens between the words, 
what happens when no words are spoken. . . . In this film everything hap­
pens, nothing is explained. It has all been pared down and down, all unneces­
sary words and actions are eliminated.
The problems of verification in the novel extend to the natures of time, past, others, and self. Stephen claims to write in the present tense because “there seems something timeless about this scene.” (p. 20). Time is vertical in the novel; its entire narrative journey is punctuated by the inciting and concluding incident of the car crash, which hovers over the ruminative temporal scheme. Mosley compresses the elapsed, horizontal time frame of the novel because his concern lies with the exploration of internal time: that nebulous expanse of the past that qualifies, enriches, and betrays the present moment. We know the past, however, only as it is sustained in the present, and the present seeks inevitably to erase it. Time reforms external reality, just as it reforms memory.

I think Oxford is conducive to all this; a very old place there for the young—old men, buildings, ways, for something which has nothing to do with them, and which they can only deal with by defeating. What else can the old do to the young? Sometimes at Oxford you come across a scene of extraordinary beauty—deer in front of an eighteenth century facade, trees growing out of the water of the river—and you stop to watch; and all around you there is the roar of traffic, dim at first, then growing; the blossom and the grass and the traffic pressed tight around Oxford in a circle of smoking vehicles like an army. I do not know what one makes of all this—we understand now only workings and not meanings. The traffic is undermining the structure of the buildings and the buildings crumble. [P. 28]

As in Mortimer’s novel, the themes of aging and the advancing young comprise a wistful refrain in the story. The old cherish the lifeless forms, and the young ascend to challenge and destroy them. For both parties, however, the meanings are nowhere available. Time operates not only to reform, but also to alienate. This inscrutability of the reified affects our impressions of others: “People are not characters but things moving occasionally in jumps and mostly in indiscernible slowness.” (p. 46). It also prevents our perceptions of ourselves: “I remember this time of my life very well. But we change too much; its not ourselves that we remember” (p. 44), and: “If you look into your experience you find a succession of impressions of, for instance, thinking, desiring, hoping, fearing; but you don’t have a continued impression of a self that thinks or desires or hopes or fears. So the description of the self as an enduring entity is again impossible” (p. 29).

Although Pinter excludes the self-conscious exacerbations of the narrator, he meticulously retains and focuses the ramifications of this tension between the perceiver and the perceived.

At first we thought of perhaps trying to do it the way the book does, to find a direct film equivalent to the free-association, stream-of-consciousness style
of the novel. I tried a draft that way, but it just wouldn’t work—anyway, I
couldn’t do it. You see, suppose a character is walking down a lane... You
could easily note down a stream of thought which might be perfectly accurate
and believable, and then translate it into a series of images: road, field,
hedge, grass, corn, wheat, ear, her ear on the pillow, tumbled hair, love, love
years ago... But when one's mind wanders and associates things in this
way it's perfectly unselfconscious. Do exactly the same thing on film and the
result is precious, self-conscious, over-elaborate—you're using absurdly
complex means to convey something very simple. Instead, you should be able
to convey the same sort of apprehension not by opening out, proliferating, but
by closing in, looking closer and closer, harder and harder at things that are
there before you.¹

Pinter opens, as does Mosley, with the automobile accident involving
two of Stephen's students, William and Anna. The montage preserves
Mosley's opening mood of horror within a panoramic indifference. The
camera initially remains focused on Stephen's "silent, dark" house
while the sound track monitors the growing hum of a car, and then,
"closer but still distant, a sudden screech, grind, smash and splintering."² As Stephen emerges from the house to run to the scene of the
wreck, the camera picks out the shapes of animals, the play of trees, the
stars in the sky, and moonlight on the fields. We are subjected also to
Stephen's experience as he approaches the scene: the camera jolting
down the lane, to the sound of footsteps running. It moves in suddenly
for a close-up on the wreckage:

The smashed mass of the car, shooting at passenger seat front section, lying
on camera.
Broken metalwork, jagged shapes of glass.
Two bodies heaped together, still, forming one shape.
Silence but for the ticking of ignition. [P. 220]

This shot cuts to a long shot, once again placing the tragedy in its
context.

The car seen clearly lying on its side in the middle of the road. Mounds of
earth rise at either side of the road, by the hedges.
Trees stand sharply against the sky.
Moonlight passes gently over glass of the car. [P. 220]

Throughout Stephen's effort to administer to the bodies in the car, close
shots alternate with long shots, producing a vacillation between intense
involvement with and indifferent alienation from the situation. Pinter's
reproduction of this clash of sentiments conveys masterfully the
ruminations of Stephen's mind in the novel as he sifts through the
disaster.

Pinter diverges from Mosley's story almost immediately in his treat-
ments of Anna and of her interaction with Stephen. After three pages of
camera directions, and aside from his speaking once each of the vic­
tims’ names, Stephen abruptly screams out the first line of the screen­
play: “Don’t! You’re standing on his face!” (p. 222). Pinter’s phrasing 
here represents a shocking variation of Mosley’s line, “You’re standing 
on him!” (p. 6). In both versions Anna in fact steps on William’s face to 
boost herself out of the automobile, but Pinter will carry through the 
characterization of a more exploitative Anna which his phrasing im­
plies. Both authors, for example, return Anna to the car to retrieve her 
handbag as Stephen inspects the dead William, and both subsequently 
portray her wiping off her face with a handkerchief. Pinter, however, 
takes her self-concern beyond this business.

ANNA takes out a comb and combs her hair. 
STEPHEN. (looking down at her). Can you walk?
ANNA quickly completes her combing, puts comb, mirror, handkerchief into 
bag, closes bag. 
She sits still. [P. 223]

During this opening sequence, not only does Pinter paint in Anna 
hints of some ambiguous complicity, but he increases Stephen’s con­
federacy as well. In the novel Stephen leaves Anna by the wreck and 
goes to phone the police. Although Anna follows him, appearing at the 
door to Stephen’s house after the call is completed, Mosley’s Stephen 
does not attempt in any way at this point to protect Anna from the law. 
The “unplanned” nature of his ultimate protection of her from retribu­
tion becomes a major issue at the end of the novel. In Pinter’s screen­
play, however, Anna leads off toward the house with Stephen trailing 
her, until he finally closes the distance between them.

Long shot. 
They walk slowly up the lane towards the house. STEPHEN is no longer 
following. He is equal with her, but ANNA keeps a distance between them. 
[P. 224]

Although he returns to the developments of the novel for the next se­
quence of action, Pinter will veer sharply from the original at the con­
clusion of the script, redeeming this modified portrayal.

Once Stephen has completed his call to the police, in both texts he 
tries to discover from Anna whether, in fact, she was driving the car, as 
her position on the driver’s side suggested. Although Mosley refers here 
several times to Anna’s lack of a driver’s license, Pinter’s script ac­
knowledges this fact later and only briefly, during a dinner scene where 
Anna volunteers to drive William home, causing Charlie to betray both 
himself and Anna by remarking, “You haven’t got a license” (p. 251).5 
For Pinter, the motives and intricacies of Stephen’s harboring of the girl
become subordinate to the fact and consequences of his doing it, so that the details of Anna's jeopardy go unmentioned for now. In this respect Pinter remains truer to the milieu of the novel than Mosley, who articulates a similar sensibility, but then violates it in practice with too much rationalization. In Pinter's script the motivational information exists, but it no longer controls the organization and presentation of the material. He allocates these functions to the patterning of surface images and situations, and to the subjective properties of Stephen's memory.

In both versions Anna does not respond to Stephen's interrogation, and in both he serves her tea now, as he awaits the arrival of the police. Apparently Mosley's Stephen leaves her there and goes to meet the police at the scene of the crash. (We learn this in retrospect, however, as Mosley's time scheme exists in difficult convolutions, frequently lurching abruptly into the future and then describing broken circles into the past to return to its starting point, as reflected in the overall structure of the novel. In this instance he cuts abruptly to Stephen, who is sitting where Anna had been and talking to a policeman, having already returned from a second visit to the site.) Pinter's Stephen steps out the door to greet the police when he hears the sound of their car drawing up to the house. Cleverly, Pinter has added a second policeman to this scene: the configuration of two against one intensifies Stephen's vulnerability as he attempts to conceal certain facts from the pair of officers. The widely recognizable syndrome of the two-cop interrogation team contributes liberally to the sensation of threat and imminent exposure in Pinter's rendition. Like Mosley, Pinter cuts abruptly to an interior scene in which Stephen responds to the officers' questions from the chair where he last saw Anna. Both authors, by this ploy, pose the question of what has become of the girl; and both Stephens remain innocent of the answer.

After the policeman has left, Mosley's Stephen finally discovers Anna in the spare room, "lying on the bed with shoes off and her skirt in the air, no stockings" (p. 11). Taking his cue from the nature of these perceptions, Pinter locates Anna in Stephen and wife Rosalind's bedroom (a change that lends support to Tom Milne's insightful argument regarding the role of memory in creating a kind of "osmosis" among the various women in the film), and alternates images of her sexuality with shots of Stephen's gradual approach to the bed. The final camera angle shows Anna's feet: "One shoe is on. The other lying on the bedcover" (p. 228). Pinter instantly articulates the previously undepicted image of Anna's brutality to William, and then cuts pointedly to the past in a striking series of juxtapositions involving contrasting views of Anna's shoe and of William's face.
Accident

Interior. Car.
ANNA’S shoe, standing, digging into WILLIAM’S face.
STEPHEN’S hands on her legs.
STEPHEN’S voice. Don’t.
Close up. WILLIAM’S face. Dead.

Interior. STEPHEN’S study, college.
Morning.
WILLIAM’S face, smiling. [P. 228]

Mosley’s work also shifts backwards into the past at approximately this point, but he omits the momentary recollection of Anna’s shoe, and he concludes the opening scene with Stephen’s phone call to Charlie, an incident that never occurs in Pinter’s version of the story. Instead, Pinter invents a transition into the past that is cinematically effective as well as consonant with the manner in which the imagination organizes experience. The linkage among the images in the preceding montage suggests that Stephen’s mind will preside over the subsequent narrative, and that its content and structure will be informed by his memory.

Pinter provides the character Charlie with a new spelling (“Charley”) and a whole new background to accompany it. Mosley’s Charlie exists as an endearing figure: an old school chum of Stephen’s who writes unconventional works of literature with uneven success, lives some distance away with his wealthy wife and their three children, and invades Stephen’s life at regular intervals with offbeat antics and welcomed affection. Pinter takes certain elements from this characterization, combines them with those of another figure in the novel, and invents from this hybrid a Charley who possesses a touch of the sinister, and who represents a head-on competitive threat to Stephen.

We know nothing of Charley’s past relationship to Stephen from Pinter’s script; he portrays them simply as well-acquainted colleagues on the faculty at Oxford. Charley apparently enjoys more popularity than Stephen; he dominates the scenes where the two mix with their peers or with students, and he hosts his own show on television. This last honor belongs to a minor character in the novel: another professor who occasionally appears on a telecast interview program; and whom Stephen bitterly envies. Both Pinter and Mosley feature Stephen’s unsuccessful effort to gain a spot on this show later in the course of events. Pinter retains Charley’s wife and three children, but he associates Charley with sexual mischievousness in our first glimpse of the character.

CHARLEY. A statistical analysis of sexual intercourse among students at Colenso University, Milwaukee, showed that 70 per cent did it in the evening, 29.9 percent between two and four in the afternoon and 0.1 percent during a lecture on Aristotle. [P. 233]
These words derive directly from the novel, but Pinter alters their speaker in order to delineate Charley, and he invents the Provost's subsequent quip: "I'm surprised to hear Aristotle is on the syllabus in the state of Wisconsin." Pinter's adaptation of Charley's characterization provides a simplified representation of and focus for the complex network of fears and doubts that Stephen articulates in the novel. As Pinter described his method of attack on the source work, "In this film everything happens, nothing is explained. It has all been pared down and down."

Between novel and screenplay, the character of William and his relationship with Stephen also undergo modification. In the first place, Pinter has stripped Stephen's tutorials with William and Anna of all academic substance. Mosley parallels the prevailing themes of the story's action in the ongoing philosophical debates between Stephen and the students over empirical versus metaphysical sensibilities. Mosley's tutorial dialogues include consequent moments of stunning insight and irony, but Pinter deletes all of this in favor of straightforward and more filmic development of these themes in the action. The encounters between William and Stephen in Pinter's script become duels of wit and supremacy, so that William emerges more as Stephen's equal, and their relationship tends more toward the competitive. In their first scene together, William presses Stephen for information about Anna and introduces a hint of their sexual rivalry.

STEPHEN. You realize I'm her tutor?
WILLIAM. Naturally. I also realize you're my tutor.
STEPHEN. And that being her tutor, her moral welfare must be my first consideration.
WILLIAM. Ah. You mean besides being her tutor you are also her protector.
STEPHEN. I mean that I refuse to countenance or encourage male lust as directed against any of my woman students.
WILLIAM. Well said.
STEPHEN. Thank you. . . .
WILLIAM. Well, come on! What do you think of her?
STEPHEN. I don't think.
WILLIAM. I thought that was your job!
STEPHEN. Not about that.
WILLIAM. You're not past it, are you? Already? [Pp. 229-30]

Mosley's Stephen acknowledges bouts of this sort with William: "We used to talk like this, showing off, perhaps learning something from each other. . . . But I sometimes found myself almost flirting with William, which I afterwards hated" (p. 23). But in the novel Stephen's extensively elaborated pedagogical interests add a dimension to the
relationship that we can only hypothesize, based on superficial configura­tions, in Pinter’s screenplay.

The exclusive informality of the Stephen-William relationship in Pinter’s adaptation also implies the intensity of Stephen’s distress over William’s death: a sentiment that Mosley establishes in dialogue and articulated thought, but one that obtains no outlet, otherwise, in Pinter’s version. Pinter’s characters rarely verbalize their real concerns: “What I’m interested in is emotion which is contained and felt very, very deeply... But, perhaps, it is ultimately inexpressible. Because I think we express our emotions in so many small ways, all over the place—or can’t express them in any other way.”

Our perception of the depth of Stephen’s grief consequently depends on the nature of their relationship previous to the tragedy. When we take into account Stephen’s apparent disregard for William following his death (and Pinter paradoxically exaggerates this repression or diversion of feeling as well, to the point of introducing a sex scene between Anna and Stephen on the night of William’s death), we encounter a mystification of motives that actualizes the philosophical ruminations of the novel.

The elaborate intellectual substance of Stephen’s appointments with Anna has been still further “pared down.” I quote their first meeting in its entirety.

**Interior. Study.**

ANNA sitting, knees together, with notebook. Her face, listening.

STEPHEN’S VOICE. Philosophy is the product of enquiry only. It does not attempt to find specific answers to specific questions.

Close up. His face, looking at her. [P. 230]

Despite his simplification of the philosophical and interpersonal stakes of the story, Pinter has not discounted Stephen’s character through negligence or default; the screenplay includes several deliberate inventions that shift Stephen in the direction of a “dirty old man” figure. The episode in which Anna, William, and Stephen glide down the river in a punt, which occasions a burst of lyric eloquence from Stephen in the novel, reduces to the following sequence of images on film.

**Long shot of STEPHEN stepping into punt.**

The punt rocks. WILLIAM pushes off. STEPHEN squats by ANNA.

The punt.

STEPHEN settles into half-leaning, crouching position by ANNA’S legs.

The punt.

WILLIAM’S legs.

Through them. ANNA sitting, STEPHEN reclining along punt, his head on the cushion by her hip.

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Her legs are bare, crossed.
Vapour on her legs.
Left foreground STEPHEN’S head. Above him ANNA’S back.
Her hair glinting. Light in her hair.
Beyond them WILLIAM standing, punting.
Her arm, still.
Her arm, moving.
Her armpit, fuzzy hair.
Hole at the side of her dress.
STEPHEN’S body, stretched.
Her hip. His head.
Her eyes closed.
The punt pole, dipping. [P. 235]

I break the quote at this direction to underline its suggestive overtone.
Through this sequence of contrapuntal images, Pinter manages to capture the fantastic flights of Stephen’s mind that Mosley recounts during this trip down the river.

In both versions the outing ends in disaster for Stephen when he topples into the water. Mosley cleverly delays this information until a later scene, when Stephen’s colleagues humiliate him over the incident. Pinter, however, includes the mishap as part of the sequence and capitalizes on its aftermath to stress Stephen’s anxiety over his advancing age: “I’m getting old!” he complains to William. “Don’t you understand? Old. My muscles. The muscles. . . . No judgement. No judgement of distance. It’s all gone. Vanished!” (p. 236). Although the aging syndrome certainly contributes to Stephen’s crisis in the novel, Pinter makes the issue more explicit and more central. We have already noted the presence of a contest between generations in The Pumpkin Eater and The Homecoming, and this rivalry recurs in Accident. Stephen’s fascination with Anna in the screenplay becomes more urgent; Mosley’s William manipulates Stephen into inviting himself and Anna over for a Sunday, but Pinter’s Stephen initiates the idea on his own.

Stephen’s wife, Rosalind, acquires through Pinter all of the manipulative guiles that Mosley describes, but fails to materialize, in her. Mosley’s Stephen marks the existence of a kind of silent debriefing period after he reenters his house, during which his wife and children seem to exclude him from the animal unity. Each night a testing period, of a nonspecific nature, has to elapse before his belonging is truly recognized by them. Pinter makes a scene of these ruminations. Some of the dialogue derives from the novel, but Pinter has increased its surface tension and focused its undercurrents.

STEPHEN standing at door. ROSALIND sitting, CLARISSA on her lap. TED (seven years old) lying on floor with book, looking up. The dog, asleep on the floor.
Even the dog ignores his arrival!

Stephen's first words address the three-year-old Clarissa, and receive prompt deflation by his wife.

STEPHEN. She loves her Dad.

ROSA. She hasn't eaten anything today.

After some tentative monkey-business with the children, Stephen opens a conversation with Rosalind as she is sewing. (The two hiatuses in this quote involve brief activities with the children.)

STEPHEN. I've got a new pupil.

ROSA. Uh?

STEPHEN. She's an Austrian princess.

ROSA. Is she?

CLAR. A princess?

STEPHEN. (whispering to CLARISSA). I think so.

TED'S VOICE. I can't find the book!

ROSA. How do you know she's a princess?

STEPHEN. She's got a very long name.

ROSA. Has she got golden hair?

STEPHEN. Uuuh . . . No.

ROSA. Then she's a fake.

STEPHEN. She's very sunburnt.

ROSA. Then she's definitely not a princess.

STEPHEN. Why not?

CLAR. She is!

ROSA. Princesses keep their skin . . . quite white.

STEPHEN. Your skin is quite white.

ROSA. I know it is.

ROSA. Has she made advances to you?

STEPHEN. Oh no. I'm too old.

ROSA. You're not too old for me.

STEPHEN. I know that. (To children.) Now come on. Who's going to start?

ROSA. stands and moves across to them.

CLAR. I'll start.

TED. She can't read!

ROSA. bends over him.

ROSA. And I'm not too old for you. [Pp. 231-33]

At his mention of a new female student, Rosalind quickly, but guardedly, perks her ears. She maneuvers skillfully, using the children's
interest and language as a format for her prying. Curious about Anna’s looks, she asks about “golden hair.” Anxious already to detract from her intuited rival, Rosalind denounces her twice as a fake when Anna’s description fails to meet storybook standards. Only after she has forced Stephen into admitting his disqualification by age does Rosalind mellow in her victory and rise to greet him.

Later in the screenplay, when Rosalind learns that Charley is having an affair with Anna, she employs this same tactic with Stephen.

ROSALIND. He’s sleeping with her, is he?
STEPHEN. Who?
ROSALIND. Charley. With Anna.
STEPHEN. Of course.
ROSALIND. How pathetic.
STEPHEN. What do you mean?
ROSALIND. Poor stupid old man.
STEPHEN. He’s not old.
ROSALIND. Stupid bastard. [P. 267]

By working on Stephen’s certain association of himself with Charley, Rosalind again slips him an oblique warning, and this time Stephen takes the bait. Rosalind’s awareness of Stephen and his consciousness of her awareness of him prescribe a subtle dynamic between them. Their scenes together progress like the strategies of a fencing match.

Rosalind’s pregnancy and his own nagging guilt make Stephen cautious around his wife. He broaches the subject of his Sunday invitation with painstaking care and phrasing.

He continues kissing her fingers.
STEPHEN. Oh, I’ve asked some people over on Sunday.
(He looks at her.) Is that all right? (Pause.) Mnnn?
ROSALIND. What people?
STEPHEN. Well . . . William . . . you know . . .
ROSALIND. Mnn-hmmm?
STEPHEN. And this Anna von Graz. (Pause.) You know, that girl—
ROSALIND. The Princess.
STEPHEN. Yes. She’s William’s girlfriend. (Pause.) What do you think? [P. 239]

Although Rosalind, after another page of maneuvering, finally agrees to the gathering, Stephen’s unformulated hopes for the day dissipate when he realizes that Charley has “accidentally” turned up. Apparently his professional opponent has already gained a foothold with Anna. When Stephen returns from a walk with the dog and his children,
Anna and Charley are standing on his drive, talking quietly by Charley's sports car. William has gone inside.

Pinter's chronicle of this day comprises the largest cohesive episode of the screenplay. With minor exceptions, primarily to expand or to reflect his modifications of the characters, Pinter draws the substance of the day's events directly from the novel. In its estrangement of motive from action, the novel suits Pinter's disposition handily, and he retains intact one of Mosley's finest scenes in this vein. The scene, which occurs between William and Charley on the lawn, addresses the process of writing, and could pass as Pinter's own description of his technique. As Charley explains it to William, "You just need a starting point, that's all" (p. 243). William's curiosity elicits this remarkable elaboration from Charley.

CHARLEY. Here on this lawn. What are we up to?
WILLIAM. I know what I'm up to.
CHARLEY. What?
WILLIAM. Anna and I were invited here for lunch. We've just had it.
CHARLEY. Ah. [P. 243]

But we know plainly that William's designs for the day extend beyond this assumed naivete. Charley shatters the mood of reserve and intensifies the irony of this tack.

CHARLEY. Describe what we're all doing.
WILLIAM looks about the garden.
WILLIAM. Rosalind's lying down. Stephen's weeding the garden. Anna's making a daisy chain. We're having this conversation.
CHARLEY. Good. But then you could go further. Rosalind is pregnant. Stephen's having an affair with a girl at Oxford. He's reached the age when he can't keep his hands off girls at Oxford.
WILLIAM. What?
CHARLEY. But he feels guilty, of course. So he makes up a story.
WILLIAM. What story?
CHARLEY. This story.
WILLIAM. What are you talking about? [P. 244]

At this point, in both novel and screenplay, Charley responds by swatting nonexistent flies. He shouts at Stephen to be sure that Stephen has overheard the conversation; and both Stephens reply with a simple "yes." Pinter, however, adds to this a shot of Rosalind, "lying, eyes closed," and also commenting "yes" (pp. 244-45).

In both versions the dialogue between William and Charley drips with irony at several levels: Charley's projection is true about Stephen, at least in an imaginative sense; it derives special force from its implica-
tion of Anna, directed expressly at William, who is present because of his interest in her; by virtue of what we have observed already, it seems to describe accurately its speaker; and, by the conclusion of the story, we shall understand, by Charley’s admission, that his affair with Anna had commenced before this dialogue, thus conferring a kind of retroactive irony on the moment. Pinter, through his alteration of both Charley and Stephen’s characters, makes the statement a still more accurate assessment of the two men.

In the screenplay the diminished rapport between Stephen and Charley lends the day’s developments an undercurrent of nastiness. Pinter describes an incisive shooting sequence for Mosley’s afternoon tennis match, depicting various combinations of William, Charley, Stephen, and Anna caught in revealing game metaphors for their predicaments, as Rosalind initially looks on, and then disappears. Pinter seems to delight in focusing the concealed tensions of real life through game mechanisms, and he faithfully reproduces Mosley’s paragraph of description in his outline for angles of “William whipping the ball fiercely over the net,” “Stephen serving, into the net,” and Charley, barefoot, lobbing balls deliberately into Anna’s backside (p. 245).

When Stephen does finally get Anna apart from the others for the walk that she declines with William, but accepts with him, Pinter remains generally faithful to Mosley’s account of their hopeless, clichéd conversation. Tom Milne’s perceptive discussion of this episode includes an example of Joseph Losey’s sensitivity to Pinter’s scripts. “By snubbing William and accepting Stephen’s invitation to go for a walk, Anna has made her intentions as plain as she can. But Stephen is still held back by his inhibitions, and nothing happens. . . . And as they turn back to the house, the camera stays where it is, gazing at the empty landscape as though lamenting the end of the affair.” This “empty landscape” image recurs in various forms in Losey’s films of Pinter’s scripts, and we shall later note its accuracy as a revelation of Pinter’s milieu. In this case the lingering camera does signify a coda in Stephen’s “affair” with Anna, since his subsequent discoveries of her involvement with Charley and engagement to William reduce his romantic prospects to the anticlimactic rape.

Significantly, Pinter seizes the chance during this scene to embroider his ambivalence toward Anna when she and Stephen encounter a spider web, absent from Mosley’s narrative.

STEPHEN. Mind. There’s a spider’s web.
ANNA looks at him.
ANNA. It won’t hurt me. [P. 247]
For both writers Anna's thoughts are a mystery; her personality is utterly withdrawn, occluded by the perimeters of its own impenetrable world. Pinter evolves this tendency into a self-centered obliviousness in her; he underscores her trampling on William's face, he invents her subsequent business with the comb, he barges her through a spider's web, and he will portray her in a laughing embrace with Stephen immediately following William's death. Pinter has again embellished a strain from the novel that invokes the inscrutable nature of human activity. He subtracts from, rather than adds to, our understanding of Anna and of Stephen's fascination with her; or better, he frustrates our understanding as we habitually constitute it. By rendering Stephen's attraction to Anna incomprehensible through usual means, Pinter focuses two almost paradoxical phenomena: the undeniable surface truth of events and actions, and the inevitable distortion of interior truth by its reflection on the surface.

The obstinate inscrutability of the affair refers our efforts at comprehension back to Stephen's motives, and these, in fact, become the subject of the piece. No one, however, spells out his motives for us. Stephen claims repeatedly in the novel that he is incapable of doing so. If Charlie has written the novel, these insights are less creditable. The camera records the action impassively. We are abandoned with two simultaneous views: one that assiduously deprives and denies us, and one we are compelled to invent from our own experience in order to "fill in" the spaces in the story's architecture. Ultimately, we confront the omnipresent disfiguring of our own perceptual machinery, which the work addresses at the levels of plot and theme in its internal constitution, as well. We experience what Pinter has expressed in an early program note: "A thing is not necessarily either true or false; it can be both true and false."10

Except for the accelerating tensions between Stephen and Charley, the events of the day, in all their frustrations and disappointments for Stephen, proceed in Pinter's screenplay exactly as they do in the novel. William and Anna become too drunk to drive home and end by spending the night with Stephen and Rosalind. Charley stays as well, and he later claims to have slept the night with Anna. Stephen, after a momentary alcoholic delusion that he has discovered Anna in his bed (again consistent with Milne's "osmosis" theory), retires in resignation with his wife.

The night's conversation over dinner, aside from providing Pinter a format for delightful replication of drunken dialogue, elicits the news that Stephen has been invited to appear on Charley's television program. In Mosley's version Charlie invites Stephen on the show in a
moment of inebriated comradeship. Pinter supplies the announcement with a less benevolent mood.

STEPHEN. But he's more successful than me because he appears on television.
ANNA. (to CHARLEY). Do you talk on television?
CHARLEY. What do you think I do, play the flute?
ANNA. What do you talk about?
STEPHEN. He talks about history, zoology—
CHARLEY. Anthropology, sociolog . . . sociologigy—
STEPHEN. Sociology!
CHARLEY. Codology.
STEPHEN. And sex. In that order.
ROSALIND. He suits the medium.
STEPHEN. (to ROSALIND). Do you mean you don’t think I would suit the medium?
CHARLEY. They wouldn’t let you within ten miles of the medium!
STEPHEN points a long arm across the table at CHARLEY.
STEPHEN. I have an appointment with your producer next week.
CHARLEY. With my producer?
STEPHEN. Your producer. [Pp. 250-51]

The scene that follows, delineating Stephen's failure, in fact, to book himself on the show, provides a heyday for Pinter. He apparently so relished the obnoxious mood of the scene that, in Losey's film of the screenplay, he took the role of the executive who obliviously evacuates Stephen's hopes. Mosley's hinted undercurrent of distraction translates into a form of bureaucratic hell in Pinter's adaptation. Ringing phones, efficient secretaries, massive paperwork, and intruding coworkers dominate Stephen's interview. The scene concludes abruptly and prematurely when the television executive flees the office with a coworker to visit at the hospital the man whom Stephen was supposed to see. In parting, the executive remarks (in both versions), "Give my love to Francesca," exhibiting his neglect of Stephen's previous response that he has not seen Francesca in some years, and presumably his indifference to everything else Stephen has said during the aborted interview.

Frustrated in all his efforts for rejuvenation and salvation as Anna and his television career recede into fantasy, Stephen conjures a retrieval of the past through Francesca. Mosley's Stephen experiences an agony of alienation during his attempt to relive his youth in the arms of his past lover. His mind drifts uncontrollably from the actual situations of the evening. Pinter contrives a stunning cinematic vehicle for this sensation
by divorcing the soundtrack from the visual depiction of their meeting, dining, and lovemaking.

The following sequence with FRANCESCA is silent. The only sounds heard are the voices overlaid at stated points. The words are fragments of realistic conversation. They are not thoughts. Nor are they combined with any lip movement on the part of the actors. They are distributed over the sequence so as to act as a disembodied comment on the action. [P. 255]

Francesca and Stephen invoke and relive the past in words, but the dialogue has no intrinsicality, no connection, in their witnessed actions. The experience serves only to confirm Stephen’s dilemma: his occupation of a present life that sustains no retrievable meaning from its past nor exciting promise for its future. In an interview several years after adapting Accident, Pinter expressed a similar sentiment regarding his own life: “Well, it [the future] ought to be fanciful really. I know the future is simply going to be the same thing. It’ll never end. You carry all the states with you until the end.”

Stephen’s return home occasions the final blow. Having entered the house and ignored his pile of mail (Pinter’s characteristic metaphor of despondency), he hears creaks upstairs and finally footsteps on the landing. Stephen endures his sudden recognition with typical reserve and guardedness, as first Charley and then Anna unexpectedly appear on the stairs.

CHARLEY. Hullo.

Pause.

STEPHEN. Hullo. I’ve just come from London.

CHARLEY. I know.

ANNA appears at the top of the stairs. She is dressed in sweater and trousers. Bare feet.

STEPHEN stares up at her.

Eventually his gaze drops to CHARLEY.

STEPHEN. To see the television people.

ANNA remains still.

Silence.

CHARLEY. Did you see them?

STEPHEN. I’m hungry. [P. 260]

Again we observe the simultaneous truth and falsehood of Stephen’s response; it represents a true fact as it occurs, but a false one as we understand it. Stephen, in fact, cooks himself an omelette, in which Charley and Anna decline interest. As Stephen literally fries his eggs, Charley and Anna twist subtle and unsubtle psychological knives in each other (Pinter subdues the game from the novel, where Charlie
Accident

relentlessly identifies her with the Nazis), and Charley opens and reads aloud a letter from his wife, Laura, to Stephen, in which she pleads pathetically for Stephen’s help in discouraging Charley’s affair with Anna. (Mosley’s Charlie remains unaware of this letter, although it exists in the novel as well. In the novel Stephen finds and reads the letter after Charlie and Anna have left.) Then Charley adroitly devours half of Stephen’s omelette.

Stephen leaves the kitchen and wanders through the house, noting the evidence of activity between his two uninvited guests. In the novel he makes an inarticulate effort to discuss things with Anna, but here he merely stops her from making the bed and offers to let them stay the night. In place of Stephen’s scene with Anna, Pinter substitutes one with Charley, which appears in a later, unretained episode of the novel. Here Charley confesses to Stephen the length and depth of his affair with Anna, and Pinter makes only two significant alterations in the substance of the dialogue. The first one is difficult to characterize: either it signals a shift in Anna’s character, a shift in Charley’s impression of Anna’s character, or a shift in the impression that Charley wants Stephen to have of Anna’s character. In any case although Mosley’s Charlie stresses that Anna was no virgin when he inherited her, Pinter’s Charley insists, “She’s not a whore” (p. 264). Probably this change results from all three shifts and certainly involves Charley’s desire to emphasize the value of his prize. As a close friend of Stephen’s, Mosley’s Charlie can afford more candor than the competing Charley of Pinter’s invention.

The second alteration in this scene, however, keynotes a more serious detour from the concluding concerns of the novel. In Mosley’s story Stephen stakes everything on his purity of motive. He does nothing consciously to encourage the affair between Charlie and Anna, and he visits Charlie’s wife, Laura, on several occasions to reassure her. Although he squirms over his inability to take the measures that Rosalind expects of him in this matter, he does not contribute actively to sustaining the relationship. The effort at self-vindication implicit in Stephen’s stand echoes in his handling of Anna after the accident; he insists to Charlie that his actions shielding her were entirely spontaneous. Stephen is speaking:

I said “No one saw her. I left her sitting in this room. Then when the policeman came she wasn’t here, she’d gone upstairs. This is important.”

Charlie said “What is?”

I said “I hadn’t planned it.” [P. 159]

The last several chapters of the novel, in fact, deal with Stephen’s attempt to define his guilt, its consequences, and its expiation. Motives
and actions, apparently, may be separated at the level of observation, but not ultimately at the level of efficacy. Chapters after Anna has been packed off to Austria, Stephen still suffers what he senses to be the effects of his complicity: Rosalind’s pregnancy has gone awry, and the baby has been born with little chance for survival. Stephen’s machinations surrounding his chasing and protection of Anna have prevented him from attending to Rosalind’s needs. He expects to lose his position, and to face prosecution in a court of law. None of his dreads, however, materializes; the baby improves, his colleagues offer sympathy, and the judicial hearing is a farce. His doubts comprise the extent of his punishment. His final and only conclusion consists in the last words of the novel: “Remember it happy; the sun in your eyes.”

Pinter begins here, in Stephen’s discovery of Charley and Anna, to deviate radically from this path. In his conversation with Charley, Stephen invites him and Anna to use the house while he visits Rosalind at her mother’s, where she has gone to relax during the last month of her pregnancy. He even presents Charley with a key to the house. But, while Stephen’s degree of “sinning” becomes greater, his share of “punishment” becomes less; his visit to Rosalind is purely casual where, in the novel, her hemorrhaging necessitates it.

The shooting sequence for this segment of film alternates snatches of dialogue between Stephen and Rosalind with snatches between him and Laura. Both scenes occur in garden settings. The irony present in Stephen’s situation clarifies in the juxtaposition of the two circumstances, which Pinter has carefully modified to resemble each other. For both women Stephen must explain and excuse the actions of his colleague, while he hides from them his own complicity in the affair and his envy of it. According to Milne, Pinter’s reworking of this material corresponds with Stephen’s confounding of the incidents in his memory, further implying an imaginative identification between the two women in their circumstances and reactions. The scenes with Laura grind to a standstill of wordlessness, as the scenes with Rosalind intensify to a similar stalemate. In the final scene at Laura’s, she stammers out inarticulate and ironic reassurance for Stephen’s benefit, and in the penultimate and ultimate dialogues with Rosalind, the strain accelerates intolerably into protracted silence and then into an abrupt temporal twist.

*Exterior. ROSALIND’S mother’s garden.*

ROSALIND. I’ve never heard of anything so bloody puerile, so banal.
STEPHEN. What’s banal about it?
ROSALIND. That poor stupid bitch of a girl.
Stephen. You just keep calling everyone stupid, what's the use—?

Rosalind. Well, they are. Except Laura. And she's stupid too.

Pause.

You chucked them out, I hope?


Laura and Stephen standing middle of lawn.

Laura. Well . . . don't worry about it.

Stephen. I'm not.

Laura. Thanks for coming.

Exterior. Rosalind's mother's garden.

Stephen and Rosalind in the deckchairs, still.

Silence.

Stephen. I think I'll pop in and see Laura. It's on my way.

Rosalind. Give her my love. [Pp. 268-69]

Since it seems unlikely that Stephen would conceal an earlier visit to Laura from Rosalind (for what reason?), the alternated encounter with Laura would occur after his scene with Rosalind in real, as opposed to reel, chronology. Pinter has developed the two episodes simultaneously to capture a sense of the ironic counterpoint between the two and of Stephen's careening perceptual experience.

Aside from the dislocating effect of the unsynchronized scene between Stephen and Francesca and the overall scheme of the flashback, this particular montage contains the only evidence of nonsequential time in the screenplay. The significance of time as a theme in the script is manifest in such motifs as the frequent chiming of clocks and the ticking of the ignition. But, as Milne points out, both the structure and content of the screenplay indict conventional measurements of time, and "in this story, nothing can be defined or limited in this way."13 In this montage, as in the previous one depicting Stephen and Francesca, Stephen's imagination emerges as a conspicuous instrument in characterization and organization of events. Milne's detection of evidence in the film that Stephen's subjectivity influences the portrayal of material is persuasive. Noting that the sequence between Stephen and Francesca, through its composition and gauzy tones, suggests Stephen's retrospective attempt to create an image of perfect romance, Milne cites further instances of the effects of Stephen's memory as it manipulates the television studio scene: an hysterical, two-dimensional grotesque.

In a way, of course, being Stephen's recollection, the whole film (with the exception, naturally, of the accident and last scene) is his fabrication, with
Charley being beastly, Anna provocative, Rosalind patient, and William callow. (It is interesting, in fact, to note the disparity between the dignified, hesitant Stephen of the flashbacks, and the man who virtually rapes Anna after the accident.)

The nonlinear structure of the scenes with Laura and Rosalind likewise reflects the conjurings of Stephen's mind and, as Losey has noted, the capacity of the film medium to evoke multiple facets and layers of experience.

No stunt was intended at all, but simply two dialogues inter-cut in time and place; and at the end a deliberate sense that he is going to do—or is talking about doing—something he may already have done, which is part of his deception. If it seems a trick, then it is a failure; if it doesn't, then I think it's as much an extension of the medium as Picasso in his medium when he began to paint three or more aspects of the same face in one portrait.

The tensions continue to build, and to deviate slightly from conventional experience, in the succeeding scene. Again, Pinter finds keen cinematic expression for Mosley's savage description of game dynamics. This game, waged by a gathering of aristocrats at William's estate, focuses and symbolizes the unspoken opposition between Stephen and William. A homicidal variation of football, the action pits Stephen against William in a series of vicious, bloody combats, which Pinter (and moreover Losey) characterizes in an almost expressionistic mood. The game serves metaphorically to elucidate Stephen's inescapable betrayal of William and his rising sensation of personal jeopardy. Both men fail ultimately in this rite of primitive brutality: Stephen falls to the ground, and William loses the ball. Pinter wickedly punctuates the contest with angles of the onlooking ladies, and finally cuts abruptly to the civility of the cricket field at Oxford, where William is "hitting the ball savagely . . . immaculate in white" (p. 272). The impenetrable deceit of life's surface prevails on all layers of the script.

Pinter strips Mosley's elaborate description of the cricket game scene to its bare essentials, adding somewhat to these by his incorporation of material from novel scenes that he has dropped entirely. Anna's announcement to Stephen of her engagement to William constitutes Pinter's major interpolation in this scene. In both versions Anna follows up her news with a blithe request that Stephen convey it to Charley. Mosley's Stephen, through several chapters of anxious rumination, insinuates his fear that Anna's request represents a sinister manipulation of Charlie through William. Pinter, however, reduces these protracted doubts to an angle of Stephen, looking at her, and interrupts the moment immediately by the appearance of William.

Significant differences also exist in the two authors' treatments of
William's announced desire for a conference with Stephen. Mosley's meeting time remains vague, some time later in the day, either in Stephen's office or later still at home; and Anna's inclusion in the meeting evolves ambiguously as a natural assumption by either Anna or William. In the screenplay William insists expressly on a "man to man talk," saying "I don't want her." Here, Stephen arranges Anna's presence, suggesting, "We can talk when she's in bed. She can sleep in the spare room" (p. 273). The three establish a meeting time to occur after a party that William and Anna plan to attend that evening. These two modifications of the original story possess strong ramifications; Anna's presence at the wheel of the fated vehicle and the post-party drunkenness of the two become direct results of Stephen's arrangements, amplifying his culpability in the disastrous outcome.

As Pinter shifts through a rapid sequence of shots recalling the accident (William's face dead, Anna's head emerging, Anna sitting on the bank, and Anna in Stephen's bed) and into the present time of Stephen's predicament, we discover no evidence of Mosley's pangs of conscience in Stephen. He does not contact Charley, as he does in the novel, where the subsequent scene between them elicits Stephen's agonized deliberations over the moral dilemma of protecting Anna from legal sanctions. This dilemma, indeed, remains entirely absent from Pinter's version, which plainly discounts the possibility of its existence. After brutally interrogating Anna about whether anyone knows of her presence at his house and receiving no decipherable response from her, Stephen suddenly kisses her. As an unanswered phone rings in the background (ringing telephones, usually proclaiming the urgencies of neglected affairs and usually ignored, occur almost invariably in Pinter's screenplays whenever characters attempt to suspend exigencies for the sake of indulgence), the camera concludes the scene with an angle of the two standing in dim light by the bed.

When the story picks up the next morning, a telephone call interrupts Stephen and Anna as they prepare to leave. From Stephen's end of the conversation, we learn that his wife is in some trouble ("But she's all right?") and that the hospital has been trying to reach him all night. Although Charlie returns Anna to her dormitory the same evening of the accident (without any sexual interaction between her and Stephen) in the novel, Pinter delegates this task to Stephen, whose execution of it smacks of morning-after strain and of his hospital-bound anxieties. He dully hoists her over the wall and grimly observes her disappear into the dormitory. The deadly mood of anticlimax and vague antagonism permeates the scene, insinuating our only hint of Stephen's guilt over his actions.
Pinter develops this motif of iniquity and retribution briefly in the two scenes that follow. The first describes a shot of the incubated infant as Stephen exits the room and omits the epiphanic glorification of life that accompanies Stephen’s vision in the novel of the helpless baby. The entire theme of Stephen’s magnified dependence on the child’s survival escapes the screenplay. His subsequent dialogue with Rosalind reiterates his guilt (“They phoned you. You weren’t there.”), but Pinter terminates this situation without further elucidation. Whereas for Mosley Stephen’s culpability remains minimal and his bad conscience becomes preponderant, for Pinter the inverse of this prevails: Stephen’s complicity is amplified and his repentance is undetectable. Within the discrepant motive-action system of Pinter’s milieu, we can predict Stephen’s feeling of guilt, but we cannot ascertain it anywhere. We experience only the gap between what we know to exist and what irrefutably does exist, the two defiantly contradicting each other.

The final sequence of the film script confirms this theme of paramount indifference. After a rather long scene in which Stephen and Charley help Anna pack up in her room, where Stephen enjoys the bleak triumph of Charley’s exclusion and of Anna’s coldness to her bewildered ex-lover, Pinter snaps a masterful frame on the cinematic work. Over camera shots of Stephen’s return to his usual existence, the sound track monitors, once again, the progression of the accident.

Note: The following scenes until the end of the film are silent except for:
The hum of a car growing on the soundtrack. The sound grows. It includes jamming gear changes and sharp braking. The sound begins very quietly.

STEPHEN walks through cloister towards his study slowly.

(Identical shot as at the beginning of the film.)
CLARISSA and TED running over gravel towards front door.
CLARISSA falls. holds her leg. cries.
The sound of the car draws closer.
STEPHEN comes out of house. picks her up. comforts her. carries her into house. her arms around him. TED following. The dog runs after them.
Camera slowly moves back to long shot outside the gate.
It comes to rest.
Sound of the car skidding.
A sudden screech. grind. smash and splintering.
Camera withdraws down the drive to the gate.
The house still. in the sunlight.
Silence.
Sound of ignition. ticking. [Pp. 283-284]
In this schism between sound and image, Pinter captures the pages of incomprehension that Stephen experiences in the novel as his life resumes its normal track. Like motives, desires, guilt, and all things invisible, the past slips with barely a trace from reality. Stephen’s actions in this sequence mirror the opening indifference of the environment to the tragedy, at once framing the ordeal and sealing it from the present and future. As Milne explains it, "Seen in broad daylight (no moon, no horse, no shadows) the accident is simply an accident; and by implication the only fact of the . . . accident is that William dies." The incident and its repercussions are absorbed into a final layer of opaque veneer.

Baker and Tabachnick observe that the dynamics of the "accidental" provide the unity of the piece. The ironic relationship between the surface of life and its invisible components prevails across the story’s complexities. "Pinter teaches us that no pure 'accidents' occur in the world, that all events result from unspoken and uncomprehended needs and desires." Similarly, Katherine Burkman states that the automobile accident "is in a sense no accident at all but an inevitable part of the ritual that patterns the film." William’s defeat (symbolizing the obsolescent aristocracy), the crumbling buildings, the indifferent trees, the inexplicable lovemaking, the absence of consequence, all signify this consumption of meaning by the surface: this supremacy of accident in a world of indeterminate causation. Those who invest forms survive; those who invoke substance fall. Thus Mosley carries the self-depreca
tions of reluctant narration into the condition of the narrator’s world: not only do his sensibilities impede the narrator in telling the story, but they also formulate the primary obstacle in his experience of the events. In both the form and content of his novel, Mosley negates omniscience and indscts perception, displacing the pansophic author by one who remains a victim of his perspectives and their fallibility. Painful description substitutes for glib insight, and “accident” becomes the final condition of incident.

These themes become increasingly pronounced in Pinter’s original work as his career continues. In the context of his major plays, Accident (1967) follows The Homecoming (1964), an obfuscated anatomy of Ruth’s decision to leave her husband and remain with his family. Pinter’s depiction of this action exhibits the same fidelity to impervious surfaces that meticulously betray their resonant depths. In this play, a work relentlessly harnessed to external and internal verisimilitude, Pinter exorcises all tendencies toward lucid, artificial expression of the sorts that occur in his earlier characters. Only in the most surreptitious of activities and inactivities do we grasp the natures of the game and of
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its stakes, for self-exposure has become equivalent to self-annihilation in this domestic jungle, where every expression must contain the capacity to deny its meaning. Peter Hall, who directed the original production of The Homecoming, provides an amusing description of the game’s format:

The phrase always on our lips when we were doing this play was “Taking the piss.” It’s a Cockney phrase meaning getting the better of your opponent by mockery. This play doesn’t take the piss in a light or flippant way. It takes the piss in a cruel and bitter way. The characters are all doing this to each other. They take the piss—this Cockneyism is central to the play. But of course one of the great factors about taking the piss is that if you’re taking the piss satisfactorily the person whose piss is being taken must not be sure whether or not it is being taken.  

In The Homecoming the legitimate roles of familiar domestic structure appear only as tactics in an unrestricted game of exploitation that the characters wage against each other. Traditional valuations persist only as a pretext, and the characters contrive throughout the play to explain, conform, and conceal their objectives according to the superficial configurations of models and games. Teddy, who prefers to “operate on things and not in things,” abandons Ruth the moment their marriage no longer projects the appearance he strives to transmit. Her decision, also explicable as preference for a winning game over a losing one, to remain with Teddy’s family as a prostitute enables Teddy to forsake her as inconsistent with his marriage ideal. The shock of his departure is comprehensible only in terms of subtextual currents: the earlier games of antagonism between the two and the premiums inherent in the game of affecting appearance. The confounding of the literal and the figurative permits the incidents of the water glass and the cheese roll to acquire their own potencies, and the world of emblems and metaphors becomes equipped with its own consequential, if fragile, authority.

Thus, in the absence of alternative possibilities for interaction, the games in Pinter’s work escalate, and their imperialism will be progressively manifest in his subsequent writing. The subjection of ulterior reality to the authority of the game, a shift in Pinter’s work that occurs most notably in The Homecoming, facilitates the experimentation with time already prominent in his screenplay for The Pumpkin Eater and continued in his adaptation of Accident. Because of its capacity for temporal suspension and manipulation, the game, in its new omnipotence, provides Pinter a device for further exploration of time in its subjective mode. As a device particularly suited to the confusion of time on stage, the games will become increasingly significant and

In *The Homecoming* Ruth's widely discussed "underwear" speech serves as a conspicuous treatise on the subtextual, or possibly supertextual, mechanisms of *Accident*. She assumes a stance opposite to that of her credential-waving, intellectually-equilibrated husband, suggesting that significance often eludes its apparent form.

Don’t be too sure, though. You’ve forgotten something. Look at me. I... move my leg. That’s all it is. But I wear... underwear... which moves with me... it... captures your attention. Perhaps you misinterpret. The action is simple. It’s a leg... moving. My lips move. Why don’t you restrict... your observations to that? Perhaps the fact that they move is more significant... than the words which come through them. You must bear that... possibility in mind.31

Even as she attacks conventional forms of meaning, though, Ruth merely substitutes alternative indices that, while subverting habitual modes of communication, rely still more exclusively on superficial signification. In Pinter's writing, as Ruth's speech suggests, articulation, motivation, justification, and designation fail to explain the truths of human action. Truth is sophisticated or disguised by the characters of *The Homecoming* in their contrived behavior, but it is revealed through a cognitive dissonance similar to the one which operates between our knowledge and our observations throughout *Accident*, and which abandons us, in both works, with two irreconcilable impressions of the same thing. The actions, apparently inexplicable and almost attributable to "accident," of Ruth and the other characters in this play derive from carefully plotted undercurrents that are detectable through patterns formed on the surface of the play.

The fascination and expertise Pinter brings to this parallax view of behavior suit him perfectly to the themes in *Accident*. Because his exclusion of narrative disparagement from the screenplay diminishes the role of inscrutability in the piece, Pinter reworks the characters and situations of the novel to produce a greater tension between implication and explication. This exacerbated tension, its resultant unanswered and unanswerable questions, states the narrator's dilemma through alternative means. Again, Pinter has exploited the reticence of the camera to instigate his perceptual agonies in us.

Since the vector of the past comprises a significant component of the inscrutable present, as the very structure of *Accident* implies, Pinter's emerging preoccupation with the past is a natural consequence of these earlier themes. Following his work on *Accident*, he wrote the stage plays *Landscape* and *Silence* (1968), adopting a view of the past that, in
accident

its subjectivity, ambiguity, and potency, is similar to the one in the screenplay. His growing interest in the ideas of the past, time, and memory, a thematic shift in his work which occurs most conspicuously with Accident and which, as we noted in the discussion of The Pumpkin Eater, seems to have been technically facilitated by his experience in film, is evident in all of his subsequent writing, original and adaptive, to date.