To my mind's eye, my buried memories of Brandham Hall are like effects of chiaroscuro, patches of light and dark: it is only with an effort that I can see them in terms of colour. There are things I know, though I don't know how I know them, and things that I remember. Certain things are established in my mind as facts, but no picture attaches to them; on the other hand there are pictures unverified by any fact which recur obsessively, like the landscape of a dream.

An old man's recollection of the summer that formed the turning point in his life comprises the principal narrative vehicle in *The Go-Between*. As the author of the novel, L. P. Hartley, develops the story, Leo Colston, the narrator, discovers his childhood diary for the year 1900 and endeavors to reconstruct his experience of that year through the information contained in the diary and through that which he retains in his mind. As the above quote suggests, the gaps and inconsistencies between these two sources of information describe a repeated (and metaphoric) tension in the work. Leo's memory has stored up the distorted impressions of a child: a chiaroscuro of horseshoe staircases, rustling silk skirts, and dilapidated outhouses. He laments now his lost image of the reputedly imposing southwest prospect of the Hall: "I laboriously transcribed into my diary a description of it that I found in a directory of Norfolk... I can see the front of the house now, but through the eyes of the directory, not through my own" (pp. 32-33). The completion of this particular chink in Leo's memory occurs as the final statement, the final unity, of the novel when, as he revisits the place of his past, "the south-west prospect of the Hall, long hidden from my memory, sprang into view" (p. 311). We realize, however, that he confronts a spectacle incapable of surrendering the secrets of his
past, the object of his pilgrimage. The fifty intervening years have altered both the image itself and his mechanism for comprehending it, allowing the activated gap between memory and "fact" to survive the story unchallenged.

The mind of a child, both in its evasions and exaggerations of social codes, provides the perfect vehicle for Hartley's concerns. The peculiarities of Leo's perceptions underline the interdependency of experience and bias; his experience of the summer, now so frustrating for him, exists in images screened through a paradoxical filter of childish self-involvement and schoolboy codes. What Leo's life has become, "all dried up inside," as Marian describes it, remains an incontestable product of this pivotal summer, but actual substance of the period is forever lost. Leo's present enterprise serves only to confirm this loss at every level. The uncensored egocentricity of childhood's viewpoint and experience deprives Leo of the comprehension he now craves. His journal and memory lack the materials for assembling a total, objective, "adult" reconstruction because they consist resolutely in the perversion of his childhood view. Repeatedly during the account of his tale, the older Leo discounts his recollections as the invalid misunderstandings of his youth, but he can spell out no other version than the one which they prescribe.

The perceptual handicaps of Leo's childhood describe a metaphoric condition for all humankind. His experience, and his memories of it, depend not only on the egocentric notions of youth, but also on the simple functioning and storage capacity of his mind. The final episodes of the story are absent from the novel because the shock of its climactic event has deprived the narrator of these memories.

Hartley accentuates the gaps in his story and allows the shortcomings of his narrator to determine its scope and nature. One of the chief corollaries to emerge from this process consists in the locking and unlocking properties of codes. From the opening words of the work, in which the old Leo struggles to recall the lock combination of his diary, codes persist on all levels of the story. Leo's ruminations, as he fingers the ancient lock on the diary, establish three of the major themes of Hartley's work: in the first place, the diary's contents lie inaccessible without possession of its lock code; in the second, Leo can simulate spiritual divination of the code while actually cracking it by superficial techniques; and in the third, the lock's combination actually consists in the simultaneously meaningless and profound letters of his own name. Each of these circumstances operates to characterize the past as both essentially alien from and obscurely implicit in the present milieu.

The past is contained in codes on every plane of its existence. Once
Leo has satisfied the combination that produces a text of the past, he yet confronts the tasks of deciphering the schoolboy articulations of this text: "The last few entries are in code. . . . There are still two or three sentences that don't give up their secret. . . ." (p. 31) and of entering the alien experiential conventions it contains: "It is like knowing the figures in a sum without being able to add them up. At least, if I added them up, they wouldn't make a game of cricket as I used to know it" (p. 138). The permeation of the novel with references to schoolboy codes, honor codes, nonsense codes, game codes, lock codes, and incomprehensible messages echoes Leo's dilemma: he encounters the signs of his past, but nowhere discovers its substance, which exists in an investment of the codes that he can neither recover nor honestly reissue. As Sartre has suggested, all experience becomes alien and incomprehensible to those who do not share its conventions; knowledge and acceptance of the code are prerequisite to genuine participation. When Leo attempts to review his past without complete knowledge of and belief in its codes, he can forge only a "series," rather than a "group," of actions and events; connections wax inscrutable, sequence becomes random. Absent codes hold the keys to understanding, and the codes of the past cannot be retrieved. We can guess at them, analyze them, and perhaps even decipher them, but we can never again invest them with our innocent belief. All experience occurs in codes, and simultaneously cancels them out.

Codes maintained with conviction retain the power to transform reality. Leo's childhood subscription to the zodiac and to the power of black magic symbolizes this phenomenon. He writes of his youthful belief in hierarchies and circles, of how in the past things possessed the properties of order and renewal; but we see clearly that his withdrawal of faith, rather than any alteration in the nature of things, has produced the change. Indeed, the significance of his summer of 1900 lies in its reversal of the code/reality paradigm, marking a new effort in Leo to translate reality into codes. As R. E. Pritchard has noted, "Leo composes fictions; and Hartley's fiction in turn parades its fictional devices and echoes, so that this almost seems the real subject: the fictionalisation of experience into art."

Oppositions between planes of expression and planes of content are manifold in Hartley's novel, revealing Leo's fateful tendency to project experience into artifice. He develops an incessant reliance on the thermometer as an index of heat, he accepts fashion as a signal of his character, he acknowledges the letter of the law rather than its spirit, he invokes the contours of fact over the content of intention, and he forsakes Ted's earthy world for the emblematic world of Lord Trimingham.
Even his daily journal entries are consciously manipulated to reflect the grandiose pretensions of the art of writing, the turn of the century, and the decor of the diary. His worst mistake, however, consists in his attempt to exchange the figures of the zodiac for the figures of Brandham Hall: his effort to endow them with the deified perfection of mythical symbols leads inevitably to final disillusionment.

Young Leo's attempt to affix the static ideals of form and order to the fluid realities of life deprives him at once of his conviction and harmony in both realms of experience. His matured preference for emblem over content empties his living, and his misdirected assignment of content to emblem enervates his believing. Old Leo accuses his younger persona: "You flew too near to the sun, and you were scorched. This cindery creature is what you made me" (pp. 17-18). The figurative, like Icarus, cannot be issued with impunity into the milieu of the literal; the vicissitudes of life will not conform to art.

Thus Leo retains his ability to replicate experience, to invoke the past, by simulating its codes; he can trace the facts and images of the past with verisimilitude, but he can no longer provide these with understanding. The schism between the fixed and the fluid, between the past and the present, although irreducible, remains active. From Leo's recollection that the diary's lock combination consists in the letters of his name to his conviction that his past has determined what he has become, we see that the inscrutable retains potency. The past contains the key to us, but we possess no key to it. It has made us what we are: so altered that we become incapable of determining its effect on us or its nature, incapable of understanding ourselves in it.

As a "go-between," Leo has become permanently trapped in the no-man's-land between these various oppositions. He runs messages with no understanding of their origins, destinations, or contents. In his present enterprise, he performs as a liaison between the past and the present, and between the diary and its referent. In the diary's reality, he mediates between artifice and instinct, between the spiritual world and the real world, between childhood and adulthood, between the upper class and the lower class, and between the nineteenth century and the twentieth. For Pinter's purposes the themes of Leo's enterprise come tailor-made.

The first words of Hartley's novel become the first words of Pinter's screenplay: "The past is a foreign country. They do things differently there" (p. 3). This statement captures the essence of the past as Pinter habitually regards it: the past is rather than was ("do" not "did"), and it involves others and never ourselves ("they" not "we"). Alive, but not real, the past exists as a property of the imagination, as a fictive
rather than a factual phenomenon. Its inhabitants are strangers, and it bears no continuity with the present time or present self, existing as a product and origin of these, but neither part of nor apart from them.

By leading with this quote, Pinter signals his special interest in the relationship between the two disparate time periods that the novel treats. Pinter underlines this relationship immediately and throughout the script by utilizing the final episode of the novel, Leo’s return to Brandham Hall, as the inciting incident of the screenplay. Hartley restricts present time developments to an opening and concluding frame for the novel, but Pinter intersperses present time sequences throughout the film, often overlapping time periods by separating sound and picture into independent eras. By moving the two periods forward in tandem, Pinter establishes their mutual exclusion and paradoxical interdependence with an economy impossible in the novel form, and he maneuvers the entire issue of time (replete with an emphasis on clocks and appointments, similar to this motif in The Servant and Accident) into a more conspicuous role in the story.

The opening sequence in Pinter’s script provides an immediate example of simultaneity through audiovisual divorce. While the screen imagery depicts the English countryside of 1900, complete with pony carriage and antique horse-drawn farm machinery, the sound track amplifies the voice of elderly Leo making the statement from the novel cited above. As with his initial shots in Accident, Pinter focuses the imperviousness of humanity’s environs to its passage, here keeping the camera still, monitoring the detail of the countryside, as Leo’s carriage “glimpsed only fragmentarily through the leaves . . . passes.” Because of the double time scheme, however, Pinter materializes in this film a sentiment that has already occurred in The Pumpkin Eater and Accident, and that will recur emphatically in The French Lieutenant’s Woman: that the efforts of humankind are steadily eroding the face of the earth, converting nature into a technocratic wasteland.

Pinter’s second shot juxtaposes the previous flash of Leo’s passage through the countryside with the countryside’s fleeting passage through Leo’s field of vision. From the viewpoint of the carriage, we catch a glimpse of Brandham Hall, as the carriage loses it in a descent downhill. These two initial shots together make a subtle and masterful statement of the work’s central idea: that a kind of permanence and significance exists in things that human circumstance constrains us from ascertaining. This particular style of juxtaposition, the still view of an interior or exterior that precedes and succeeds the appearance of figures contrasted with a fluid view that trails the figures at the obtrusive expense of delineating their environs, recurs as characteristic technique in
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all of Pinter’s screenplays. We have already noted the existence of a similar piece of camera work in *Accident*, during Stephen’s walk with Anna. In that instance the image of empty landscape seems to have originated with Losey, but the device appears often in Pinter’s scripts, as well. Its chief impact consists in an estrangement of human characters from their natural and manufactured surroundings and in a questioning of the consequences of viewpoint.

Pinter next sets about to draw a rapid contrast between the world of the children and that of the adults. In a sequence of brief shots that alternate the ennui of croquet and hammocks with the staircases and dog-greetings of Leo’s arrival, Pinter establishes the groundwork of his situation. The thumbnail images introduce Leo’s status as first-time guest at the house, his excitement at the prospect of such apparently unaccustomed grandness, his schoolboy relationship of mock rivalry with Marcus, and his adventurous, energetic, unrefined taste. Concurrently, Pinter develops an impression of the house, with its endless rooms and servants, and of its inhabitants, in their white-clad elegance and interminable leisure.

The recurring focus of this second group of camera angles consists in a female figure, not yet identifiable, who swings gently in a faded crimson canvas hammock, and who we later discover is Marcus’s sister, Marian. Pinter invents this initial picture of Marian to represent with characteristic economy certain elaborations of her personality which the novel provides, but which he otherwise trims from his version. Her ensconce in the red hammock at once establishes Marian’s apartness from the others, her aloofness and indifference to their doings. Hartley makes Marian’s distractedness, her absentminded self-centeredness, pronounced in her dealings with Leo, but Pinter paints her insular concerns in subtler strokes. As we have noted in *Accident*, Pinter tends to play off vividly developed situational demands against the veiled activities of his characters; what we witness perpetually belies what we know, and we are abandoned with two irreconcilable versions of truth. Pinter refuses to bend Marian’s behavior toward what we can guess must be fact (although Hartley does so at length), allowing situations to enforce a mysterious incongruity.

While Hartley’s Leo jealously guards his private discovery of the belladonna shrub in the outhouse, Pinter includes Marcus in this scene to excuse some dialogue necessary for clarification of the incident and its significance. Although Leo does not immediately recognize the plant, once Marcus has identified it as “deadly nightshade” Leo clearly has the botanical edge on him. “Atropa belladonna. It’s poisonous. Every part of it is poison.” Leo informs him (p. 290). For Pinter the extraordinary shrub remains primarily a visual metaphor for the sexual
The Go-Between indulgence with which he later associates it, but Hartley articulates the parallel elaborately. In the novel Leo's initial response to the belladonna formulates a detailed prediction of his upcoming dilemma.

It looked the picture of evil and also the picture of health, it was so glossy and strong and juicy-looking: I could almost see the sap rising to nourish it. It seemed to have found the place in all the world that suited it best.

I knew that every part of it was poisonous. I knew too that it was beautiful, for did not my mother's botany book say so? I stood on the threshold, not daring to go in, staring at the button-bright berries and the dull, purplish, hairy, bell-shaped flowers reaching out towards me. I felt that the plant could poison me even if I didn't touch it, and that if I didn't eat it, it would eat me, it looked so hungry, in spite of all the nourishment it was getting.

As if I had been caught looking at something I wasn't meant to see, I tiptoed away, wondering whether Mrs. Maudsley would think me interfering if I told her about it. But I didn't tell her. I couldn't bear to think of those lusty limbs withering on a rubbish heap or crackling in a fire: all that beauty being destroyed. Besides, I wanted to look at it again. [P. 38]

Leo's role in the Marian-Ted sexual affair and the impact of this affair on his life correspond precisely to this botanical forecast. Much of the 311-page novel consists in this kind of literary explication, which Pinter has deleted as unsuitable to the cinematic medium. Camera angles, visual images, and truncated dialogue chronicle the hyperbolic impact, proliferation, and deterioration of the plant, opaquely preempts Hartley's articulated elucidations. Here, the boys' horseplay becomes subjugated to the plant's preeminence: "MARCUS runs through the outhouses, LEO following. The camera watches them with the bell-shaped flowers of the shrub in the foreground" (p. 290). As Neil Sinyard argues, in his article on The Go-Between, the belladonna shrub, together with Leo's drying bathing suit, become principal emblems of the enticement-taboo rhythm of the text.3

Pinter does make occasional concessions to the film audience's taste for explicated clarity: despite Leo's conspicuous awe of his host's surroundings, a scene between Marcus and his mother, Mrs. Maudsley, original to the screenplay, reiterates his humble origins, confirming our observations even in its token retraction of verification.

MRS. MAUDSLEY. Didn't you say his mother is a widow, Marcus?

MARCUS. I think so. I don't really know very much about him.

MRS. MAUDSLEY. Seems to be a nice lad.

MARCUS. I do have an impression that he lives in rather a small house with his mother.

MRS. MAUDSLEY. Yes. He seems to be a very nice boy. [P. 291]

The point of this brief exchange, however, exceeds its informational face-value; Pinter is still laying the groundwork of his situation. Mar-
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cus's practice of clandestine gossip sessions with his mother provides a crucial link in the plot development and, although Hartley treats Leo's suspicion of these in ruminant fashion, Pinter indicates their existence by this vignette. Typically, Pinter adds a further dimension to this exchange by focusing the camera not on Mrs. Maudsley and Marcus, but on Leo, who eavesdrops anxiously at the door.

At dinner we learn of Leo's penchant for witchcraft through a playful bit of dialogue that Pinter partly reproduces and partly interpolates from the novel.

MARCUS. His curses are fearful. He cast a fiendish spell on two boys at school. They fell off the roof and were severely mutilated.
DENYS. Did they die?
LEO. Oh no. They were just a little... you know... severely mutilated. [P. 292]

Leo answers their curiosity about this with a statement that later is rebroadcast over the image of old Leo standing in the distance, looking down a deserted present-time village street: "Well, it wasn't a killing curse, you see. There are curses and curses. It depends on the curse." Although Leo denies any intentions of practicing spells at Brandham, Pinter alerts us to an ominous development of events.

Hartley's Leo dwells at length on the extraordinary heat of the summer and on the enigmatic taciturnity of Mr. Maudsley. Pinter summons up both of these qualities in his next scene, which occurs by a thermometer on the wall of a disused game larder. (I note here that Pinter has changed the time of the action from July to August, probably to invoke the natural termination of the season.)

MR. MAUDSLEY. Hello. Enjoying yourself?
LEO. Yes sir.
MR. MAUDSLEY. Good. Pretty warm. What does it say?
LEO. Eighty-three.
MR. MAUDSLEY. Warm.
MR. MAUDSLEY studies LEO'S clothes.
Suit a little warm, is it?
LEO. No sir.
MR. MAUDSLEY taps the thermometer.
MR. MAUDSLEY. Enjoying yourself?
LEO. Yes thank you, sir.
MR. MAUDSLEY. Good. [Pp. 292-93]

As she does in the novel, Marian moves quickly to Leo's rescue, seeming initially to divine Leo's concealed embarrassment over his apparel, but appearing in retrospect to have acted out of her own self-
interest. Marian spares Leo the agony of writing his mother to request nonexistent summer clothes by volunteering to purchase him a new outfit for his upcoming birthday. Coolly, she fences her mother's protestations and wins the opportunity to escort Leo to Norwich without the accompaniment of a Hugh Trimingham, who will arrive on Saturday. In scenes that follow, we observe that Marian meets an obscure male figure while shopping with Leo, and that she stands to make a profitable marriage with this Hugh Trimingham.

Leo's infatuation with Marian is underway, and it proceeds under a prediction of doom. As Marian and Leo trot into the distance on board the pony carriage, old Leo's voice murmurs on the sound track: "You flew too near the sun and you were scorched" (p. 295). The sequence of shots marking their shopping adventure includes the earlier noted present-time image, under the repeated explanation of the curse. Pinter notes in this direction that "The sky is constantly overcast in all present-day shots" (p. 296). Later, as the others admire his new clothes, Leo increases his complicity with Marian by concealing her hour-long abandonment of him to the Cathedral, after expressing a desire to do some shopping for herself.

MRS. MAUDSLEY. You've chosen very well, Marian. Did you do any shopping for yourself?
MARIAN. Oh no, Mama. That can wait.
MRS. MAUDSLEY. It mustn't wait too long. You didn't see anyone in Norwich, I suppose?
MARIAN. Not a soul. We were hard at it all the time, weren't we Leo?
Pause.
LEO. Yes, we were. [P. 298]

In the novel Leo stresses the rapidity of his avowal, here. Pinter, however, employs a pause to convey Leo's bewildered computation of the situation, his digestion of the two lies, and to signal the importance of the three lies, now including Leo's, to the audience. The pause usurps the function of several paragraphs that the novel devotes to deliberation of this conspiratorial leap.

Following the novel Pinter uses the bathing episode to introduce Ted Burgess and to further Leo's infatuation with Marian. The scene initiates via the audial portion exclusively, while the camera records the older Leo's arrival at the present-day train station. Over this image we hear that Leo will accompany the other bathers to the river despite his prohibition from swimming. The conjunction of these two ideas, audial and visual, accentuates the tension between taboo and temptation as a key to past mysteries and their impact on the present. As in Accident this patterning of time also implies the presence of older Leo's mem-
ory over the tale through its suggestion of retrospective association, an
artifice Pinter will explore further in The Proust Screenplay.

When the past regains the screen, we hear the unintelligible chatter of
approaching voices, as we observe the emergence and dive of an uniden­
tified male in "tight woolen trunks." The members of the bathing
party decide against ordering the "cheeky trespasser" off their land
when they recognize him as the neighboring tenant farmer, Ted Bur­
gess. One of the women admires his build, but Marian discreetly avoids
any observation, spoken or otherwise, of Ted. Pinter signals our atten­
tion to Ted, however, in accordance with the novel, by marking Leo's
observation of Ted's sunning and by focusing upon Ted's hurried depar­
ture at the sound of Marian's voice. Later in the scene, Leo again comes
forward to rescue Marian from disaster; he offers his dry bathing trunks
to protect her dress from the dripping of her fallen hair.

The following morning brings two developments, both directly from
the novel: the scaraced Trimingham has arrived and become the center
of attention, and Marcus has been stricken with measles, causing Leo's
relocation to a private room. Returning from church, Trimingham
strikes up a conversation with Leo, revealing himself to be a Viscount,
and packing Leo off on an errand to Marian. Leo conveys Trimingham's
message that Marian has left behind her prayer book, but Marian's
response to the news is cool: "How careless. I forget everything. Please
thank him for me" (p. 307). Pinter omits Trimingham's reaction to this
message, however, which, in the novel, certifies the snub her words
carry. Throughout the screenplay Marian's treatment of Trimingham
proceeds much more guardedly than in Hartley's version, where she
openly spurns and resents her aristocratic fiance. Pinter, again, relies on
our perception of the situation to penetrate the facade of her behavior
and never spells out Marian's feelings about Trimingham. Her dilemma
communicates perfectly. And, as Sinyard has observed, her preference
for Ted Burgess makes this Pinter's third screenplay that treats taboo
relationships: "... between master and servant (in The Servant); be­
tween teacher and student (in Accident); and between aristocratic lady
and farmer (in The Go-Between)." Nazi-hunter Quiller, who enjoys an
affair with a Nazi, may also qualify for this category. In each of these
cases, as in the case of Marian and Ted, the intrinsic appeal of the
forbidden operates as a subtextual, presumable force on the otherwise
often inscrutable actions of the characters.

Once Leo has obtained the safety of his own room, he unpacks his
witchcraft paraphernalia, but leaves it to explore the countryside on his
own. Eventually he discovers a strawstack in a strange farmyard and,
sliding down it, injures his knee on a chopping block. Ted Burgess
appears and, after recognizing Leo as a guest at Brandham Hall, invites him inside to dress the wound. When Ted has satisfied himself with Leo's trustworthiness, he presents Leo with a message for Marian, which he explains must be delivered or destroyed in absolute secrecy. Leo's career as a go-between begins as a matter of personal pride in his reliability as a confidant, and in his special favor with Marian.

Having thrust Ted's note up the sleeve of her dress, Marian showers her attention on Leo, absently endeavoring to bandage the wound she has already bandaged (salvaging Ted's handkerchief in the process), and enjoining Leo to secrecy. Pinter draws their words through a double twist of referents.

MARIAN. You won't . . . tell anyone about this letter will you? You won't . . .

LEO. Of course I won't.

MARIAN'S hand smooths the stocking and touches the bandage.

Close-up of MARIAN doing this.

MARIAN (Softly). There.

Exterior. Outhouses. The deadly nightshade.

The camera is still, looking at it. It glistens.

VOICES HEARD OVER:

COLSTON'S VOICE (Older Leo)

Of course I won't.

MARIAN'S VOICE YOUNG (softly)

There. [Pp. 312-13]

By invoking the visual image of the belladonna and the aural impression of the future (present), Pinter explodes the dimensions of this exchange. The shrub's image expresses all of Leo's dread, ecstasy, and confusion, and it links the affair between Marian and Ted with the belladonna. Beyond this, the superimposed image implies Leo's association of sexuality with the nature of the vegetation, an idea that Hartley labors over throughout the novel.

The voice-overs of old Leo and young Marian similarly serve multiple purposes. That Leo repeats his vow from memory fifty years in the future underlines its significance to him, both at the time of its initial utterance and in the last years of his life. The youthful voice of Marian's reply suggests his fixation of her in his mind as she was then, his inability to project the figures of his past into any kind of future beyond his experience with them. Marian, for him, has become an inalterable figment of the past, a fixture of "they" rather than a possibility of "we." Hartley's Leo elaborates this point in the novel. "As to these 'others' of Brandham Hall, somehow I could not think of them as going
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on after I had stopped. They were like figures in a picture, the frame enclosed them, the two-fold frame of time and place, and they could not step outside it, they were imprisoned in Brandham Hall and the summer of 1900. There let them stay, fixed in their two dimensions: I did not want to free them” (p.296). Pinter has focused all of Leo’s reflections on this theme, in this passage and elsewhere in the source work, into this multiple-edged moment.

The potential for humor in Leo’s situation does not escape Pinter’s keen eye for ironic fun. Generally he restricts his jokes to those designed or implied by Hartley, but Pinter’s mark unmistakably dominates their executions. Although Pinter’s Marian maintains her equilibrium under stress with much greater success than Hartley’s counterpart, Pinter cannot resist milking the false-alarm panic that attends Trimingham’s dubbing of Leo as “Mercury.”

TRIMINGHAM. Hello, there’s Mercury!
MARIAN. Why do you call him Mercury?
TRIMINGHAM. Because he takes messages.
Over the back of MARIAN’S head, rigid, to TRIMINGHAM and LEO.
MARIAN turns away.
You took a message for me, didn’t you old chap? To this young lady, on the way from church. But it didn’t fetch a very warm response.
MARIAN laughs.
Three shot. Relaxed.
MARIAN laughing.
(to LEO.) Do you know who Mercury was?
LEO. Mercury is the smallest of the planets.
TRIMINGHAM. Ah, but before that he was the messenger of the gods. He went to and fro between them. [Pp. 313-14]

The final portion of this dialogue, between Trimingham and Leo, touches two matters of chief importance to this work: the form and substance of Leo’s reply contrast poignantly with the spiritual aim of Trimingham’s question, focusing an icy turn in the concerns of humanity, and the supernatural function Trimingham’s words assign to Leo plays directly into his obsession with sorcery. Leo becomes simultaneously cemented to his liaison role and symbolic of the rising tide: a herald of facts, figures, and signs. (Again, Hartley provides much more extensive treatments of both these points throughout the novel.)

As a first-person narration, much of Hartley’s novel is expended on Leo’s unspoken thoughts and impressions. Pinter captures some of this internal activity by reflecting Leo’s states of mind in vistas seen from his vantage point. Thus, at the picnic outing that follows Trimingham’s alarming proclamation of Mercury, Leo’s pleasure upon overhearing
what he construes to be Marian's concern for him (actually a ploy in her scheme to exploit his services as a message carrier) is manifest in the following vision.

**LEO sits up.**

*From his viewpoint on the grass:*

*The carriages drawn up in the shade. Horses whisking their tails. The coachmen high up on their boxes, hats almost touching the branches. [P. 314]*

During the ride from the picnic, Pinter communicates Leo's frustration over his failure to comprehend the answers to urgent questions about Ted Burgess in a slightly different fashion.

**LEO.** Do you know Ted Burgess?

**BUFF.** Ted Burgess? We all know him. He's a bit of a lad, Ted Burgess.

**LEO.** What do you mean by a lad? I should have said he was a full grown man. *The carriage has reached the top of a steep hill.*

**BUFF.** Hold on, hold on. Here we go!

*The descent begins, the coachman grinding the brakes, the horses' hindquarters sweating. LEO clutches the rail and turns sharply to look behind him up the hill. His face into the camera. [P. 315]*

Here, the isolation of Leo's face from the circumstance that immediately inspires its expression suggests the broader sources of his anguish. Curiously, Leo's reaction to the downhill peril in the novel consists in exhilaration and delight, a dreamy orgy of smells. Pinter's amendment of this is conspicuous, and suggests his practice of harmonizing the invisible dynamics of mood with the screen image. Although Hartley can explain away Leo's abrupt transition from exasperation to ecstasy here, Pinter must buy the obvious. But he buys it with style.

A back-and-forth montage of Leo's messenger adventures comprises the next stretch of film script. The sequence commences with Trimmingham's request that Leo retrieve Marian "dead or alive" to make a fourth at croquet. Although Leo wanders aimlessly and cheerlessly along the cinder path to the outhouses, apparently without any faith that he can succeed in his mission, Marian materializes unexpectedly coming up the path from the decaying buildings. Hartley makes Leo's initial dejection and surprise upon discovering Marian clear in the text, but Pinter relates Leo's mood by activity: "LEO wandering along, looking vaguely about, picks up a stone, throws it. Suddenly stops" (p. 317). In both versions Leo's instinct for locating Marian is nonetheless notable, and both Marians react anxiously to his presence along the path, coolly to his message (Hartley's more so than Pinter's in this regard), and finally by packing him off with a message for Ted Burgess.
In three swift scenes, containing altogether only three lines of dialogue, Leo trades messages between Ted and Marian. Ted phrases two replies, the first in the midst of reaping cornfields ("Tell her it's all right"), and the second with hands bloodied from rabbit-shooting ("Tell her it's no go"). We witness Marian's receipt only of the first message, as she pauses in a long corridor to look at a painting and then walks silently away. After the second message from Ted, Marcus's recovery interrupts the sequence. Hartley's Leo makes much of the welcome release from his go-between duties he assumes Marcus's presence will necessitate, for his boyhood dread of wrongdoing had begun to rob the adventure of its relish. Pinter communicates Leo's situational and psychological crises here by following his immediate action with the camera: he runs down the back stairs, walks quickly down a passage, enters Marian's writing room abruptly, and attempts to blurt out his news. "Marian, Marcus is—" (p. 319). But the sound of the door latch interrupts him, and Marian has just time to slip him a letter as Trimmingham intrudes on them to lead Marian away.

Leo's enthusiasm for his work has ebbed, however, and his curiosity and impatience have ascended to replace it. His participation in the affair is rising to a crisis, and his discovery that this letter is unsealed proves an irresistible goad. Leo's decision to read the letter, and his reaction to its romantic contents, represent matters of strict schoolboy code observation to Hartley. In the novel Leo tests his justification for reading the note against all the intricacies of boarding school convention and ultimately rules his guiltlessness according to a number of criteria. His disgust upon learning its ignoble message likewise conforms to peer scorn for "spooning." These attitudes, explicit in the source work, communicate only through their outward signs in the screenplay. Leo's reluctance to open the letter locates in his several aborted impulses to do so as he crosses the fields to Ted's farm. His amazed distaste for its message clarifies in an elaborate direction.

Close-up of LEO, his mouth open.

LEO sits down by a tree.
His expression is one of utter disappointment and disbelief.
He leans on his elbow. He grimaces.
He emits a number of short noises, grunts, and "hahs", hollow laughs. He sits baffled. Looks at the words again.
He sighs, stands, seals the letter. He walks on, uttering further short noises. The loudest of these alarm some birds. They fly up. [P. 321]

Instances of facial expression description are rare in Pinter's work (he claims that such reactions must be clear from an understanding of the dialogue and that he is "unable to write very explicit stage directions in
the old sense”?), but even these permit latitude in our interpretation of Leo’s response here. Pinter resists the awkward device of a monologue, which could clarify the nature of Leo’s facemaking: whether it belongs to queasiness over sex, jealousy of Ted, loyalty to Trimingham, or a sense of his own abusedness. The quality of Leo’s response, however, strikes Pinter as more significant than its motive, which he discounts as cheating in the terms of his medium. Leo’s preoccupation, in any case, will clarify in the following scene.

With Ted, Leo finally gets an opportunity to explain his predicament: Marcus’s recuperated presence will prevent Leo from carrying any further messages. Ted, however, rejects Leo’s assessment and appeals to him for the sake of Marian’s emotional well-being. When this conversation deadlocks, Ted temporarily changes the subject, and Leo seizes its potential.

TED (To himself). I’ve been busy. Smiler’s going to have a foal. She’s ill.

LEO. Why does she have it then if it makes her ill?

TED. She hasn’t much choice.

LEO. What made her have one? [P. 322]

A page of dialogue ensues, as Leo pursues and Ted evades this line of questioning. Finally, Ted strikes up a bargain with Leo; he will provide the answers to Leo’s inquiries if Leo will continue to “go on being our postman.”

One of the central incidents of the novel consists in a cricket game between the townspeople and the members of Brandham Hall. The episode opens with Leo’s explanation to Marian that he will participate as twelfth man. In the novel she quickly forgets this information in her selfish distraction, and Leo has to repeat it to her, painfully. Pinter describes her imperviousness to Leo and to his entire situation in a different fashion. After Leo explains to her that he will play only as first reserve, Marian, who is arranging flowers by a window, replies, “Ah. Well maybe someone will drop dead and then you can play. (She pricks her finger on a thorn.) Blast!” (p. 327). Her punishment for this heedlessness is swift and serves also to focus attention on the crime. Similarly, though for different purposes, Pinter softens Marian’s snub of Trimingham’s request (delivered by Leo) that she sing at the concert following the game. In both versions Marian agrees to sing if Trimingham will do likewise. Trimingham’s crestfallen “But I don’t sing.” which elicits pangs of understanding and a white lie from Leo in the novel, is here broadcast remotely over a present-day image of old Leo crossing a street towards an unidentified young man. The sting of Marian’s game is all but lost, as Pinter redirects the moment in order to exploit its value as an adumbration of future betrayals.
The events of the cricket game elucidate several situations. As we have noted in preceding chapters, Pinter seizes upon the metaphoric potentials of gameplaying, and he scripts this portion of the story with faithful alacrity. Ted’s formidability on the cricket field dominates the conversational prelude to the festivities. The screen pictures and dialogue snatches delineate the tensions inherent in the situation: the elegance of the Hall’s team versus the savagery of the town folk, the grace of Trimingham versus the primitivity of Ted, the reserved etiquette of the ladies versus the physical exertions of the game, the determination of the older players versus the restraint of the young, and the impressiveness of Ted’s triumphs versus the impassiveness of Marian’s reaction. The game’s final irony occurs when Leo goes to the field to substitute for an injured player. In a moment of ambivalent glory (Leo has earlier needed to cover his spontaneous applause of a spectacular hit by Ted), Leo catches Ted out. As the teams return to the pavilion, Leo apologizes miserably to him.

LEO. I didn’t really mean to catch you out.
TED. It was a damn good catch. (He laughs. Then murmurs.) I never thought I’d be caught out by our postman. [P. 330]

Leo brings Ted’s ruin, the graceful elegance of the Hall defeats the primitive appeal of the townspeople, and the day’s events project a picture of what will come.

The concert that follows the game occasions three major developments. In a sequence that Pinter alters from the novel, Marian volunteers as a pianist when the scheduled one defers to illness. Hartley’s Marian offers her services before the proceedings have commenced, but Pinter initiates her action after Ted has already moved to the stage, preparing to sing. Thus, in the film, although no observable communication passes between them during the performance, Marian’s offer refers directly to Ted’s need, while in the novel its origins are not specified. Pinter exhausts the situation of all its potential for tension, recording Mrs. Maudsley’s watchful presence, Ted’s awkward agony, and several overlaid images of present-time desolation. Subsequently, Leo’s innocent rendition of a virginal hymn inspires a similar sequence of shots. Marcus’s news on the way home, however, packs the greatest force of the sequence. Pinter exploits the occasion to convey the natures of the Hall’s elitism and of schoolboy camaraderie.

MARCUS. Well, thank goodness we’ve said good-bye to the village for a year. Did you notice the stink in that hall?
LEO. No.
MARCUS. What a whiff! I suppose you were too busy mooing and rolling your eyes and sucking up the applause. Still, toadstool, I must admit you didn't do too badly.

LEO. Oh thank you.

MARCUS. Except that it was rather horrific to see your slimy serpent's tongue stuck to the roof of your mouth and your face like a sick cow.

LEO seizes him.

LEO. You pot-faced pot-bellied bed wetter!

MARCUS. Pax! I'll tell you a secret.

LEO. What?

MARCUS. Marian's engaged to marry Trimingham. It'll be announced after the ball. Are you glad?

LEO lets him go.

LEO. Yes, I am. I'm sure I am. [P. 334]

What we note here as Leo's hesitant ambivalence, due apparently to his mood of personal triumph, his anxiety over the secret letters, and his now clear fondness for Ted, Hartley explicates in detail along with a description of Leo's repeated relief upon expecting a cessation of the mysterious letters. Pinter holds the substance of Leo's thoughts for later clarification, monitoring Leo's observation of Marian and Trimingham together at croquet and his temporary abandonment by Marcus, until a scene along the cinder path brings Marian and Leo together alone.

Here Leo's feelings surface irrepressibly when Marian presents him with a letter intended for Ted.

LEO. But I can't.

MARIAN. Can't? Why not?

Pause.

LEO. Because of Hugh.

MARIAN. Hugh? What has Hugh to do with it?

LEO. He . . . might be upset. [Pp. 335-36]

At this, Marian turns abruptly against Leo, abusing him viciously as a stupid, ungrateful wretch, and finally makes to pay him for his labors. Leo runs off with the letter, sobbing, as the screen image follows his journey to Ted's farm, "a tiny figure in the landscape, walking, kicking a stone," and the sound track broadcasts the first substantial present-time dialogue, as if to explicate further the painful significance of this action to the older Leo.

MARIAN'S VOICE OLD (OVER)
So you met my grandson?

COLSTON'S VOICE (OVER)
The Go-Between

Yes. I did.

MARIAN’S VOICE OLD (OVER)
Does he remind you of anyone?

COLSTON’S VOICE (OVER)
Of course. His grandfather.

MARIAN’S VOICE OLD (OVER)
That’s it, that’s it. He does. Yes, he does. [Pp. 336-37]

Although this bit of dialogue occurs again, intact, later in the film, it never reveals the intended identity of this “grandfather.” Except for the conspicuous resemblance of the grandson to Ted, as the roles were cast in the film, we could construe their words to imply either Trimingham or Ted, as, conceivably, could either of the speakers.

When Leo arrives at Ted’s, Pinter creates an image which appears almost casually in the novel, but which deals a shock on the screen.

TED is sitting alone holding a gun between his knees. His chest is naked. The barrel is pressed against it. The muzzle just below his mouth. He is peering down the barrel.
The shot holds.

Sound of a knock and a door opening. [P. 337]

Leo’s mind in Hartley’s work is already racing with fears of a duel over Marian by the two men. His now reinforced association of Ted with firearms exacerbates his dread. (Trimingham, already scarred badly from war, bears a characteristic identification with military achievement.) Pinter’s Leo will voice his fears in an upcoming scene, but for now the image contributes to our earthy and potent impression of Ted, and to our rising certainty of imminent disaster. The shot is a clear harbinger of the future’s direction.

Ted attempts to placate the tear-stained Leo by offering him a shot at some rooks with the gun. Although Leo declines, he goes to watch Ted, who handily shoots down one of the birds. Leo is obsessed with one question; he presses Ted insistently for the facts of “spooning.” Again, Ted eludes the questions, but both build to a peak of urgency that climaxes in Ted ordering Leo off the farm. The confrontation serves to provide Leo with even more questions than before, and he runs from the premises enriched by only one bit of hard information.

TED. You’d like some tea, wouldn’t you? I’m on my own to-day. My daily woman doesn’t come on Sundays.

LEO. Oh, do you have a woman every day?

TED looks at him.

TED. No. I told you she doesn’t come on Sundays. [P. 338]
Although the basis for this exchange derives from the novel, Pinter develops a nasty payoff for it later in the script, when Leo corners Trimingham in the smoking-room. Frustrated by Ted’s evasions, Leo attempts to pump the opposition for information, describing the hypothetical duel as a starting point for the interrogation. Mr. Maudsley’s entrance interrupts their talk, however, before Trimingham has managed anything beyond confusing Leo with still more unfamiliar terminology. From Trimingham’s conversation with Mr. Maudsley, Leo learns of the plan to hustle Ted off to the army, and, in the course of this dialogue concerning Ted, Pinter lands his punch.

Mr. Maudsley. They say he’s got a woman up this way.

Leo. I know.

Close-up of Mr. Maudsley.

Mr. Maudsley, in the act of pouring sherry, stops and looks over his shoulder at Leo.

Trimingham and Mr. Maudsley looking at Leo.

Close-up of Leo.

But she doesn’t come on Sundays. [P. 347]

While he bides his time awaiting his mother’s response to his freshly penned request to come home, Leo accompanies Marcus to check on the deadly nightshade’s progress. As they walk Marcus mentions that his mother is ill in bed, but he does not know the nature of her malady. This bit of news derives from the novel, where Mrs. Maudsley’s attacks of hysteria are well known to Marcus, who conveys the information to Leo, here. Pinter accomplishes almost the same purpose by keeping Marcus ignorant of the cause of his mother’s disappearance, since illnesses kept from children usually imply something along this line. For both authors the grotesqueness of Mrs. Maudsley’s hysteria will become crucial in the final scenes of the story.

Marcus also confides that Marian will leave for London tomorrow in order to shop for the ball and to purchase Leo a green bicycle for his birthday. He contributes that the bicycle will be green because Marian feels this to be Leo’s true color. (Presumably, however, Marian takes more interest in the vehicle than in its color, since the bicycle will expedite Leo’s missions as liaison.) Enraged by this teasing, Leo is goaded into almost betraying her confidence, and here Marcus’s hotline to his mother becomes operative.

Leo (violently). Do you know where Marian is at this moment?

Two shot.

Marcus stops still.

Marcus. No. Do you?
Their arrival at the deadly nightshade, however, interrupts Marcus's attempt to pry his sister's whereabouts from Leo. Pinter notes that "It has grown out of its door, and spread. It emerges over the roofless wall. It is heavy, purple, oppressive." As the boys regard the transformed shrub, they suddenly hear the murmurs of first a man's and then a woman's voice. Marcus concludes that a couple must be spooning, suggests they "rout them out," and then announces his intentions to tell his mother. Leo successfully advises him against the first plan ("It will be too boring!") but his success against the second seems unlikely.

In the two days remaining before his ill-fated birthday party, Leo wins apologies for their unseemly behavior from both Ted and Marian. He declines Ted's offer to explain about spooning, and volunteers, after learning of Ted's misery over Marian's engagement and his probable departure for the war, to take one more message. Hartley's Leo deliberately confuses this message when he delivers it to Marian in order to clear himself of any implication in what he suspects is wrongdoing. In the screenplay Leo repeats the message correctly, through the tears of his sudden understanding that Marian cannot possibly marry Ted and hence resolve her predicament, voicing concern only that she return in time for his cake-cutting party. She assures him that she will.

His strain compounded by the receipt of his mother's letter, denying his petition to return home, Leo ventures out at midnight to uproot some belladonna which he takes to his room. Chanting, crushing, mixing, and gesturing, Leo performs a rite of exorcism at his writing table, and then pours the mashed potion into the lavatory. Throughout this process Pinter refers variously by sound track and picture into the present time, recording old Leo's simultaneous memories and new adventures. As the story approaches its climactic scene, Pinter forges a rhythmic build from accelerated alternation between the two time periods, the present-time inter-cuts becoming more and more frequent.

Pinter increases the suspense by yet another episode, drawn as others from the novel, but meticulously contrived to maximize the tension. The novel's faults of sogginess and overwriting vanish when subjected to the simplifying demands of Pinter and the cinema. As Sinyard has suggested, Pinter's revisions act almost as a critique of the novel, which he transforms from a love story into a mystery, relocating the
tension between the present and the past, and rebuilding the plot to emphasize its suspense. As a part of this program, Pinter sees clearly the value of Hartley’s scene that runs Leo afoul of Mrs. Maudsley: the two must be armed and primed for battle; they must become aware of each other’s advantage and strength.

The preclimax scrimmage between Leo and Mrs. Maudsley erupts when she spots him tussling with Marian in the garden. Marian skillfully covers the nature of their altercation, but Leo blunders and drops the letter, which he was resisting, onto the ground.

Leo looks sharply into camera.
Marian remains composed.

Close-up of Mrs Maudsley.

Mrs. Maudsley. Was that the bone of contention?
Three shot.

Marian picks up the letter and puts it into Leo’s pocket.

Yes it was, Mama. I wanted him to take this note to Nanny Robson to tell her that I will go and see her some time this afternoon. And would you believe it, Leo didn’t want to! He pretended he had something on with Marcus.

Leo looks at her.

Yes you did!

Mrs. Maudsley. I shouldn’t let it worry you, Marian. You say she often doesn’t remember whether you’ve been or not. She is certainly growing old, poor Nanny Robson. I think it’s about time Leo and I took a walk in the garden. (She takes Leo’s hand.) Come along Leo. I don’t believe you’ve seen the garden properly, have you? (She turns to Marian.) You can spare Leo now, can’t you Marian? [Pp. 355-56]

Mrs. Maudsley drags Leo into the garden and readily traps him in the lie. Discovering coyly that he does not know the way to Nanny Robson’s, although he claims to have taken Marian’s messages before, Mrs. Maudsley summons a gardener to deliver Leo’s letter for him. In a panic Leo states he has lost the letter, but Mrs. Maudsley seems satisfied to have made her point and does not press him to produce the paper, although she clearly knows he has it.

Mrs. Maudsley: I could ask you to turn your pockets out. But I won’t do that. I’ll just ask you one question. You say you have taken messages for Marian before?

Leo. Well I—

Mrs. Maudsley. I think you said so. If you don’t take them to Nanny Robson—


Time Neutral

MRS MAUDSLEY and LEO standing.
LEO sitting on lavatory lid.

MRS MAUDSLEY’S VOICE (OVER)—to whom do you take them? [P. 358]

The temporal permutations of the screenplay are becoming marked. Several swift vacillations between past and present immediately follow this scene, culminating in the image of Leo in the lavatory as we hear a repetition of the “grandson-grandfather” dialogue between old Leo and old Marian. At this point (or perhaps before, if we are ingeniously observant), we become aware that the present-time scenes have been occurring in loops and jumbled order. Old Leo has been admitted by Marian’s maid, visited with Marian, and appeared on the street in segments devoid of linear order. The repetition of this dialogue alerts us to the present-time warp, which in turn suggests the film’s prevailing statement on the nature of time. Pinter develops this notion of time from the attitudes of the novel, but the time-matrix mechanism and its unique implications remain his own invention. Time for Pinter becomes indeed a fourth dimension, so that even present time is already acquiring dislocated characteristics of remembered time. Nothing happens once, but many times simultaneously and infinitely, perhaps altering or perhaps defying change, but never yielding its totality or its secret, always glimpsed through artifice and corrupted senses.

At the conclusion of the second “grandson-grandfather” dialogue, a new stretch of present-time conversation occurs in which, as Pinter notes, “we see the faces of Colston and Marian old for the first time.” Old Marian is pleading with old Leo to relate the story of the summer of 1900, the story we are witnessing, to her grandson.

They tell me he wants to marry a girl—a nice girl—but he won’t ask her . . . he feels . . . I think he feels . . . that he’s under some sort of spell or curse, you see. That’s just plain silly. Now this is where you come in. . . . You know the facts, you know what really happened. Tell him, tell him everything, just as it was. Every man should get married. You’re all dried up inside, I can tell that. Don’t you feel any need of love? Speak to him, tell him there’s no spell or curse except an unloving heart. [Pp. 359-60]

Apart from Leo’s endemic inability to discover the facts of his situation or of the affair between Marian and Ted, whatever insight or experience he could claim for the summer would hardly resemble Marian’s golden memories. Pinter’s particular placement of this present-time scene seems calculated to expose this discrepancy in views; and, as if to underline the agony of Leo’s current straits at this moment in the past story, Pinter broadcasts old Marian’s final line of this present-time dialogue (“Tell him that”) over the image of Mrs. Maudsley descending
the stairs as thunder sounds, ominously. Leo, "all dried up inside," and
the environment, overcast and bankrupt, and the grandson, cursed and
immobilized, represent the "facts" of the summer. Just as old Marian
yet claims the fact of her title—"I was Lady Trimingham, you see. I
still am. There is no other" (p. 366)—the facts are clear; there are no
others. The disparities and obscurities endure without solution. Losey,
who directed this film also, hints at this condition in a statement printed
in a review of the film. "Perhaps the film is different from anything I've
done in its period look, what some people may call 'romantic.' But I
think there's a bitter core there for those who can taste worm."9

The bitter taste of worm worsens when we consider the pathetic
quality of Marian's old-age prattle. An enigmatic figure in her youth,
Marian becomes ridiculous when we learn the level of her perceptions.
Whether the shallow selfishness of her garrulous old age derives from
her present deterioration or her past mysteriousness, from aging distor­
tions or youthful masks, its effect on Leo and on the audience remains
equally dismaying. The insensitive self-aggrandizement of her present-
time words suggests that Marian is nothing, really, but a bored and
banal over-invested symbol for a twelve-year-old boy. Pinter secures
this point most conspicuously during the scene that follows Leo's return
from Ted's earlier outburst.

Interiors. House. Tea. The silver teapot. The camera withdraws to find
MARIAN presiding over tea. TRIMINGHAM sits beside MARIAN, on a
low stool, half in shadow. She regards her guests with a smile, pouring milk
in one cup, a slice of lemon in another and lumps of sugar into some. The cups
and plates of cake are passed around. When it is LEO'S turn for tea
MARIAN drops four lumps of sugar into his cup, giggling. This shot is silent.
Over the shot we hear MARIAN'S voice as an old lady.
MARIAN'S VOICE (OLD)
I rarely went to parties. People came to see me, of course, interesting people,
artists and writers, not stuffy country neighbours. There are stuffy people,
aren't there? No, no, interesting people came to see me. Artists and writers.
Modern people with modern views. [Pp. 340-41]

The voice-over here painfully contrasts the enigmatic elegance of Mar­
ian's youth with the naked insipidity of her present. For the old Leo, the
final illusion shatters; and yet it will remain intact.

Marian's failure to appear at Leo's birthday festivities (which may be
compared to Stanley's fete in The Birthday Party in terms of their ironic
consequences for their respective honorees) provokes the final and cli­
mactic incident of the past sequences. The scene builds through the
tense silences of those around the table as they await Marian's presence
to unveil the green bicycle. Leo's misery and Mrs. Maudsley's rising
hysteria form an ironic counterpoint to the gay trappings of the occa-
sion, and the irony increases as Mrs. Maudsley sends out a carriage to fetch Marian at Nanny Robson's. A storm dominates the proceedings. When a butler announces that the carriage has returned without Marian and that Marian has not been at Nanny Robson's all day, Mrs. Maudsley seizes Leo and drags him out into the rain, insisting that he show her the way to Marian. Apparently, however, she has already guessed Marian's whereabouts, and she leads the way through the gardens toward the outhouses in a crazy-quilt sequence of temporal overlays. As they approach the row of overgrown outbuildings, the camera holds momentarily on a stump of deadly nightshade lying on the path and then records the following shots.

Interior. Outhouse.
A lantern on the ground.
A shadow moving on the wall like an umbrella opening and closing.
Close-up of LEO mystified.
The shadow.
Close-up of MRS MAUDSLEY.
The shadow.
Close-up of MRS MAUDSLEY.
Her face contorts. She lets her breath out in a long exhalation and groan.
The shadow ceasing to move.
Close-up of MRS MAUDSLEY. Her face contorted. No sound.
Close-up of LEO.
The faces of TED and MARIAN on the ground.
They are still. TED'S head is buried in MARIAN'S shoulder.
MARIAN looks up through half-open eyes. [P. 365]

This grotesque montage of images, which served in the novel to erase Leo's subsequent memories, leads also in the screenplay to a sealed, composite view of Marian, in all her irresolvable incongruity. Pinter accomplishes this duplication of Leo's final bewilderment through a double temporal dislocation, invoking, together with the preceding sequence, all three impressions of Marian in rapid succession: corrupt, innocent, banal.

In the foreground a shape of a girl lying in a hammock.
The wide lawn falls away before the house on a gentle slope. Cedars. elms.
The hammock, faded crimson canvas, swings gently. In background figures in white playing croquet. Over this MARIAN'S voice.
MARIAN'S VOICE (OLD)
You came out of the blue to make us happy. And we made you happy, didn't we? We trusted you with our great treasure. You might never have known what it was, you might have gone through life without knowing. Isn't that so? [Pp. 365-66]
As Marian continues her deluded prattle, exhorting Leo to recount the "facts" of her affair to her grandson, the camera focuses first the image of "TED dead. He is slumped in his chair, his gun against his leg. His shirt is bloody. His head cannot be seen," and then the "Car windshield. Moving towards Brandham Hall" (p. 366).

The final montage occurs in silence and consists in the south-west prospect of Brandham Hall: not the issue for Pinter that it had been for Hartley, but an ironic invocation of the opening shots of the screenplay, nonetheless.

The elms have been cut down.
The car stops.
Brandham Hall.
A cloud of dust from the car slightly obscures the view [P. 367]

The view, still obscured, but now by dust rather than by leaves, at once encloses the work and symbolizes its themes. The imperious facade of Brandham Hall, so rich with its history and so inscrutable, so altered by time and so immutable, presides as the ultimate figuration of the relationship between past and present. Our final impression enlists yet another quirk of perspective, one which Pinter deleted from Accident, but which becomes fundamental in The Proust Screenplay: we leave the story on the verge of its telling. What we have witnessed has not just been told, but is about to be told, here to Marian's grandson. As Proust's Marcel expresses it, "It was time to begin."¹⁰

Pinter's cinematic manipulation of time and viewpoint has increased steadily over the course of his screenwriting career to dominate The Go-Between (1969) and his other recent film scripts. As narrative complaint against the fallibility of memory and perception has become more pronounced in his source literature, Pinter has developed and sophisticated an audiovisual expression of this tension between "author" and product that extracts the device of schizoid narration and substitutes a schism in the condition of perspective. His optical games with viewpoints and images refract against unsynchronized sound tracks to produce a sensation of contextual distortion that parallels the narrative agony in the novels; he shifts the perceptual liabilities of omniscience from a matter of content to a matter of form. Thus he invokes the themes of the narrator's suffering without recourse to the narrative device; he builds these tensions into the structure of his text.

Except for his adoption of linear time sequences for The Servant, The Quiller Memorandum, and The Last Tycoon and his adoption of a diachronic time scheme for The French Lieutenant's Woman, Pinter develops his screenplays across chaotic time circuits that travel a vertical
The Go-Between

shift into the past, and often span little or no time in the present. The Servant, a novice work and one that predates Pinter’s shift toward cinematic manipulation of time, lacks this looped design, but The Last Tycoon escapes circularity through a surrogate subject matter; here the problem of discernment operates primarily on the present, and perceptual complications derive chiefly from the lure of overt fabrication rather than from the lure of the covert past. Accident, The Pumpkin Eater, The Go-Between, and The Proust Screenplay, however, describe virtual circles between their opening and closing scenes. Curiously, these bear further resemblances through their uniform initiation in an approach to a house that occupies a crucial role in the drama, and conclusion in a reprise of this image, sharpened by our altered perceptions.11

The Go-Between marks a new development in Pinter’s progressive erosion of consensual reality. In the disparities of time and viewpoint that emerge from this screenplay, we find intrinsic flaws in the tasks of perception and recollection that will recur emphatically in Pinter’s next two plays: Old Times (1970) and No Man’s Land (1974). As the reliability of memory, always questionable in Pinter’s writing, becomes increasingly doubtful and increasingly the subject of his work, Pinter’s characters must confront the tricky business of inventing themselves through uncontested, or unsuccessfully contested, claims about their pasts. This new milieu, in which nothing exists except that which the characters manage to allege into being, evolves from the gradual alienation of experience that we have observed in Pinter’s literature. A corollary theme in The Pumpkin Eater and Accident, this process becomes the subject of The Go-Between, in which Leo struggles hopelessly to understand the present through what he can make of the past. Unlike Teddy, who simply leaves the game when it threatens to defeat him, or Ruth, who believes she can play the game and win, Leo is condemned to a new kind of game in which both victory and desertion are impossible. A similar game will envelop the characters in Old Times and No Man’s Land, as escape and triumph prove inaccessible except through fleeting manipulations of the game, which has now confiscated all of its alternatives for recourse. The characters in both of these plays have moved beyond the inconclusions of Leo, and into a world in which the past may be improvised according to the convenience of the present. In The Proust Screenplay, the central figure, Marcel, chooses to retreat altogether from living into the aesthetically manageable game of remembrances and their ceremonial invocation.