And so it is with our own past. It is a labour in vain to attempt to recapture it: all the efforts of our intellect must prove futile. The past is hidden somewhere outside the realm, beyond the reach of intellect, in some material object (in the sensation which that material object will give us) which we do not suspect. And as for that object, it depends on chance whether we come upon it or not before we ourselves must die.

How paradoxical it is to seek in reality for the pictures that are stored in one’s memory, which must inevitably lose the charm that comes to them from memory itself and from their not being apprehended by the senses. The reality that I had known no longer existed. . . . The places that we have known belong now only to the little world of space on which we map them for our own convenience. No one of them was ever more than a thin slice, held between the contiguous impressions that composed our life at that time: remembrance of a particular form is but regret for a particular moment.

The Proust Screenplay poses special problems in treatment here. Although preceding screenplays may contain compromises generated in filming, this script assumes plainly a "pure" form; it makes no concession to production exigencies because no film has evolved, to date, from the text. Joseph Losey commissioned Pinter to develop a screenplay from Marcel Proust’s *À la recherche du temps perdu* in 1972, and Pinter completed the task over the following year. Losey, however, has been unable to raise money for filming the script, partly, Pinter suspects, due to its unusual length (estimated at three and a half hours). In 1977 Pinter published his adaptation as an autonomous work, but, in a *Village Voice* interview, he remained optimistic over its chances for eventual production: “Oddly enough, quite recently we’ve had a burst of activity and
interest. We have had some rather—what appear to be—serious and concrete inquiries from America."

Hence, the uncompromised state of this screenplay may differ in nature from the scripts in preceding discussions.

Secondly, although more significantly, Proust's seven-volume masterwork demands labors of analysis beyond the scope of my focus here. As a strategy for avoiding overlong treatments of Proust and his interpreters, I shall delineate his concerns strictly in terms of the screenplay and omit any direct approach to the novels. This seems the only plausible approach to Pinter's adaptation, particularly since the need for cinematic distillation and transformation of material, in this case, is so overwhelming that only a general basis for comparison of themes and structure in the two versions materializes. Pinter's remarks in the Village Voice interview render a rudimentary grasp of his own tactics and misgivings with respect to this problem.

I remember my first conversation with Joe Losey just after I'd finished the reading. I went to him and said, "Well, what the hell do I do?" We hadn't made any decisions whatsoever at that point. Nobody knew what was going to go or be sacrificed, or what form the thing could possibly take. Eventually, one day when I was in more than my usual despair, Joe said, "There's only one thing to do. Go home—tomorrow morning—and start. Just start."

So what I was immediately plunged into was the question of what caught me—well, everything caught me. I was totally consumed—but what I was aware of in terms of film. I'm pretty sure that I suddenly went straight into images. I actually threw a lot of images down on paper and found myself left with them. And that's how I got started.

I'm not fitting to write a masterpiece, but what I wanted to do was to try to express it in terms that would be true to it, so that the thing would work in itself and yet have a truth of a different nature.

In the introduction to his published script, Pinter elucidates some of the criteria that determined his final choices of material and presentation.

The one thing of which I was certain was that it would be wrong to attempt to make a film centered around one or two volumes—La Prisonnière or Sodome et Gomorrhe, for example. If the thing was to be done at all, one would have to try to distill the whole work, to incorporate the major themes of the book into an integrated whole. With this Joe [Losey] and Barbara [Bray, a script editor and Proustian authority at BBC Radio who advised Pinter during this process] agreed. We decided that the architecture of the film should be based on two main and contrasting principles: one, a movement, chiefly narrative, toward disillusion, and the other, more intermittent, toward revelation, rising to where time that was lost is found, and fixed forever in art.

... The relationship between the first volume and the last seemed to us the crucial one. The whole book is, as it were, contained in the last volume. When Marcel, in Le Temps Retrouvé, says that he is now able to start his
work, he has already written it. We have just read it. Somehow this remark-
able conception had to be found again in another form.

. . . We evolved a working plan and I plunged in the deep end on the basis
of it. The subject was Time. In Le Temps Retrouvé, Marcel, in his forties,
hears again the garden bell of his childhood. His childhood, long forgotten, is
suddenly present within him, but his consciousness of himself as a child, his
memory of the experience, is more real, more acute than the experience
itself.3

Stanley Kauffmann, who reviewed the screenplay soon after its pub-
lication, praised Pinter's success in this mission: "It's incomparably the
best screen adaptation ever made of great work. . . . I would insist that
this screenplay far surpasses anything conveyed by the term "adapta-
tion" and becomes a re-composition in another art."4 By working
through the screenplay, we can clarify the mechanics of his adaptation
and its relationship to Proust's work; we can identify the bias and craft
of Pinter's interpretation in "another form."

Four of the images that persisted from Pinter's reading of Proust
alternate with a yellow screen to form the first eight shots of the pro-
spective film. Except for the first of these, which Pinter describes as
"Yellow screen. Sound of a garden gate bell," the sequence occurs in
silence. Thus he materializes, with unpredictable success, Proust's
notice of the heraldic bell. It summons Marcel's four epiphanic recol-
lections, which Pinter lists as follows:

2. Open countryside, a line of trees, seen from a railway carriage. The train
is still. No sound. Quick fade out.
4. The sea, seen from a high window, a towel hanging on a towel rack in
foreground. No sound. Quick fade out.
6. Venice. A window in a palazzo, seen from a gondola. No sound. Quick
fade out.
8. The dining room at Balbec. No sound. Empty. [P. 3]

Intervening shots each receive the same description: "Momentary
yellow screen." The significance of this yellow screen lies in its invoca-
tion of synecdochical relationship, but we do not learn this until shot
#22.

Yellow screen.
The camera pulls back to discover that the yellow screen is actually a patch
of yellow wall in a painting. The painting is Vermeer's View of Delft. [Pp.
4-5]

In the relationship between these two views of Vermeer's painting, we
have a metaphor for the central tension and technique of Proust's writ-
ing and for the prevailing concern and mechanism of the film. The
discrepancy between detail and the overall view, the insistent return to
the incomprehensible, but magnified, patch, focuses at once the attitude

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and impossibility of both authors’ efforts. The relative insignificance of the wall to the statement of the full painting exacerbates this discrepancy, suggesting the pitfalls of describing an elephant by the nature of its tail. For Proust, however, in a passage strongly evocative of the older Leo’s plight in *The Go-Between*, the restriction to detail proves endemic:

... as though all Combray had consisted of but two floors joined by a slender staircase, and as though there had been no time there but seven o’clock at night. I must own that I could have assured any questioner that Combray did include other scenes and did exist at other hours than these. But since the facts which I should then have recalled would have been prompted only by an exercise of the will, by my intellectual memory, and since the pictures which that kind of memory shews us of the past preserve nothing of the past itself, I should never have had any wish to ponder over this residue of Combray. To me it was in reality all dead. [P. 33]

As Proust suggests again in the quote that opens this chapter, all of memory, all of perception, belong to elicitation of detail. Even detail, however, remains incapable of surrendering its substance, its secret, its meaning. For reasons similar to those encountered by Leo, the sum of all Proust’s detail and intimacy will not yield the complete picture in all its parts, relationships, and contexts. Pinter, in the *Village Voice* interview, explains his adoption of this yellow screen device as a strategy for rendering the quality of Proust’s immersion in detail: “There are only a handful of scenes (in the novel’s entirety). It’s more like the little patch in Vermeer, magnified many times.”

The gradual expansion to the full picture from detail comprises a major structuring technique in the film script. As Enoch Brater has noted, “Pinter accomplishes pictorially what Proust accomplishes verbally: the wonder of a fragment which only slowly reveals itself as a small part of a far more comprehensive canvas.” Pinter introduces the themes, situations, and characters of his work in piecemeal fragments, which he often recognizably cues by some triggering event, such as the garden gate bell in the opening sequence, or the crackling napkin, which initiates the same sequence of images only a page afterwards. Each of the milieux depicted in this sequence will gain clarity through the accumulation of detail and context as the film progresses.

In a cinematic confusion of time periods similar to the one that Pinter developed for *The Go-Between*, the thirty-four shots that comprise the preamble to the film anchor in a series of “present-time” scenes at the Prince de Guermantes’s, variously without sound, with sound, and with unrelated sound. From the middle of the sequence, the garden gate bell is again heard, “becoming gently insistent,” and continuing irregularly
over the concluding shots. Several new images are introduced and re­
peated, including the three church steeples and the three trees, the
yellow screen returns once, with the music of Vinteuil tracked over it,
and the preamble terminates in a shot and note that Pinter states as
follows:

34. Calm, still shot of the garden gate.
The bell is slightly shaking but silent.
(Note: In the preceding opening sequence, all scenes in the drawing
room of the PRINCE DE GUERMANTES'S house are to be shot on
colour stock in black and white.) [P. 6]

In the Village Voice interview, Pinter outlined his intentions for this
unusual cinematic process: “It’s a question of very old age and decrepi­
tude. The manufactured faces . . . they look as if they’re made up.
Proust describes it so vividly and remorselessly that it seemed to us that
we should employ all means available on film to make it as vivid and
remorseless.” The significance of this technical draining of life from
image will become clear when we turn to the concluding statement of
the prospective film, since these “present-time” developments operate
as a frame for the work. For now, we note merely that they serve, much
like the overcast and desolate depiction of the present in The Go-Bet­
tween, as a distinct and contrasting anchor situation at the commence­
ment of the film, during the apparently random montage of recollected
images.

Even after the “story” gets underway, brief clips involving temporal
biccups dominate the film script. The assembly of scenes amounts to a
pastiche of Proustian situations, viewed variously as fragments, wholes,
presciences, hindsights, from one viewpoint, and from another. The
introduction of Saint-Loup provides an example of how Pinter manipu­
lates the piecemeal development of character and context. After a hand­
ful of articulated scenes that elucidate the character of Marcel’s
childhood (his love for his mother, his estrangement from his father, his
fascination with Gilberte, his dread of lesbianism, and his interest in
writing) and alternate with adumbrative images, Pinter begins to insinu­
ate Marcel’s journey to Balbec. Our first glimpse, soundless, focuses
five girls (Proust’s “little band”), “strikingly dressed, quite distinct in
their carriage,” on the promenade outside the Grand Hotel. The second
shot, contiguous with the first, receives the following description:

109. INT. DINING ROOM. BALBEC HOTEL. DAY. 1898.
Very hot afternoon. The curtains are drawn, although not fully, to shield
the room from the glare.
Through spaces between the curtains the sea flashes and in one of the
spaces SAINT-LOUP (20), dressed in an almost white, very thin suit, is seen striding from the beach towards the hotel, his monocle dropping from his eye and being replaced.

The camera shifts to look through the foyer to the glass front of the hotel, the bottom half of which is filled with sea. SAINT-LOUP in foreground striding towards a carriage and pair. He jumps onto the box seat and takes the reins from the groom. The hotel manager rushes out with a letter for him. SAINT-LOUP opens the letter and, starting the horses at the same time, drives off.

No sound. [P. 35]

This depiction, the first we have seen of Saint-Loup and the second of Balbec, gives way initially to a similarly mysterious and soundless portrait of the Baron de Charlus on the promenade and then to the compartment of a moving train, in which Marcel (18) and his grandmother (66) are discussing the health-oriented trip to Balbec. We learn that Marcel has become ill and has developed, as a technique for enduring the absence of his mother, a fondness for liquor. The train scenes, shot variously from Marcel's and objective points of view, precede a sequence of brief situations, some of these clarifying earlier image fragments, between Marcel and his grandmother as they settle in at Balbec. Eventually they lead to a second viewing of the Saint-Loup action.

119. INT. DINING ROOM. AFTERNOON.
The curtains are drawn. MARCEL sits alone with coffee. From his position he can see through the foyer to the glass front of the hotel.

Against a background of sea, SAINT-LOUP strides towards a carriage and pair, jumps on the box seat, takes an envelope from the hotel manager, opens it, starts the horses, drives off. [P. 40]

This altered context and viewpoint of Saint-Loup's departure cuts to a second viewing of the Baron de Charlus, situated identically to the initial shot of him except in close-up. The next shot provides a context for the Charlus fragments, and occurs against the same background as the two previous images of him.

121. EXT. THE PROMENADE. DAY.
MARCEL, feeling he is being watched, turns.

From his P.O.V. sees CHARLUS in front of the playbill. He wears a dark suit, and slaps the leg of his trousers with a switch, staring at MARCEL.

He turns abruptly to examine the playbill, takes out a notebook, makes a note, looks at his watch, pulls his straw hat over his eyes, looks up and down the front, sighs, walks quickly away.

MARCEL stares after him. [Pp. 40-41]

The succeeding scenes at Balbec, while introducing Albertine and Andree in similar cumulative fashion, clarify the relationships between
Marcel and Saint-Loup and between Marcel and Charlus in articulated vignettes with dialogue, sequence, and context attendant. Pinter's procedure for revealing significance here corresponds to his progression from the yellow screen to Vermeer's painting. The sensibility projected by these variously reduced and expanded frames also focuses the refractive operation of the spectator; it implies that events exist apart from and accompanied by witnessing, but that witnesses serve to alter and to contribute contexts of appreciation.

The patchwork of temporal fragments persists in this manner throughout the screenplay. They echo the mechanism of the magnified patch of yellow wall and formulate the philosophical disposition of the work. Often, temporally manipulated sequences include an isolated "future" shot amidst several from the past, suggesting a linkage among events similar to that inherent in the prophecies of Greek tragedy: the notion that the past contains a prediction of the future if we simply complete the paradigms that the past assumes, but that the relationships among events are generally teleological and inscrutable, cohering only as manipulated by the imposition of imagination. For example, Marcel's announcement to his mother that "it is absolutely necessary that I marry Albertine," whom he suspects of lesbian attachments, precedes a sequence of images from previously developed situations concerning Mlle. Vinteuil and Odette, all involving innuendos of dreaded and tragic lesbianism. The sequence initiates with a close-up of his mother's face, and culminates in the forecast circumstance of Albertine's fate.

275. MOTHER'S FACE.
276. MLLE. VINTEUIL RUNNING TO THE WINDOW TO CLOSE SHUTTERS.
277. ODETTÉ PLAYING VINTEUIL'S SONATA. SWANN LISTENING.
278. EXT. FIELD. DAY.

A riderless horse gallops away from the camera. [P. 117]

Thus Pinter suggests another pattern in artificial organization of events that attacks notions of omniscience through substitution of ordering principles conspicuously native to perspective, subjectivity, and aesthetics. If the concept of fate generates from the hindsight of remembrance, then forecast merely represents a form of dishonest narrative inspired by a limited and biased impression of past and present experience. Such pretense of omniscient authorship, either of literature or of life, runs contrary to Pinter's (and Proust's) growing view of life and perception as the victims of endemic subjectivity, and he undermines all tendencies toward imposition of artificial designs on life by exposing and juxtaposing the false contrivance of their premises. Like Vermeer's painting Marcel's story is fait accompli; the part anticipates
or unifies with the whole by virtue of completion, only. As Sartre expressed this idea, "Proust never discovered the homosexuality of Charlus, since he had decided upon it even before starting on his book." The construct and significance of things become properties of projected or retrospective artifice.

Beyond establishing the thematic and procedural groundwork for the film, the yellow screen from the opening sequence serves as an emblem of the sympathy between Marcel and Charles Swann, whom Marcel invests as his spiritual father. Pinter articulates this symbol during the scene in which we learn that Swann will shortly die of a terminal illness. The immense pathos of this scene develops in the petty, banal chaos of the Duc and Duchesse de Guermantes's home, as they prepare to leave for a dinner engagement, and Marcel encounters Swann after a long period of separation.

DUC. You're writing a book about Vermeer, aren't you?
SWANN. Oh, hardly a book. . . . Just an article, about one painting.
MARCEL. View of Delft?
SWANN. Yes.
MARCEL. That patch of yellow wall.
SWANN. Yes.
DUC. Patch? What patch?
SWANN suddenly recognizes MARCEL.
MARCEL turns to the DUC.
MARCEL (to the DUC). I think it's the most beautiful painting in the world.
[P. 89]

Marcel's identification of his own plight with that of Swann persists after Swann's death, occurring conspicuously during Marcel's misery over Albertine. As Marcel struggles to reconcile the death of the mysterious Albertine, Swann's image appears on the screen. The voiceover broadcast of Swann's epiphanic pronouncement accompanies, and according to the technical fracture dissociates itself from, this image, implying that this particular combination of image and sentiment is Marcel's retrospective formulation of Swann. "To think I have wasted years of my life, that I have longed for death, that the greatest love I have ever known has been for a woman who did not appeal to me, who was not my type" (p. 156). Only twenty shots into the future, during a reminiscence with the widowed Gilberte, Marcel will make a similar appraisal of his own life.

GILBERTE. Why are you laughing?
MARCEL. Because I didn't understand. I've understood very little. I've been too . . . preoccupied . . . with other matters . . . To be honest, I have wasted my life. [P. 164]
Shortly after reviving this bond between Marcel and Swann through Odette’s remark near the end of the screenplay, “Charles always intended to write himself, you know, but (she giggles) I think he was too much in love with me to find the time” (p. 175), Pinter will repeat the yellow image under the final words of the script: “It was time to begin.”

The deployment of the opening sequence as a frame for the film serves multiple purposes. Some of these depend on specific developments in the action of the film, and these I shall table for later discussion. In bold terms, however, the “present-time” opening situation invents a context for what follows while it anticipates a context for itself. The completion, through intelligibility, of its conundrum will signal at once the unity, conclusion, and commencement of the story. This suggestion of beginning represents precisely what Pinter was striving for in his planning of the adaptation. Again, I quote from the Village Voice interview: “Eventually, you see I got to the structure at the end . . . and I suddenly realized that that (‘It was time to begin’) was the crucial and absolutely essential sentence—in that, if we’ve just seen the damn thing, or read the damn thing, well, now he’s going to do it, now he’s going to write it.” In the circularity of the film, in the reference to and containment of the end by the beginning, Pinter has managed to suggest through structure Marcel’s final words. The last sequence repeats the first at the Guermantes’s; we have at last come around to the beginning. Between the two the past forms a chaotic bridge, spanning identical moments of time: existing only in simultaneity with the present, leading always back to the start.

Although the past has no reality apart from coexistence with the present, Pinter suggests that experience of the two temporal worlds necessitates mutual exclusion. The screenplay makes the nature and cost of Marcel’s options clear; he may remember, or he may live, but he must choose between the two. The silent or unsynchronized sound track that accompanies each of Marcel’s adventures from the present into the remembered implies this withdrawal. The sounds of the present never penetrate the visions of the past, which themselves remain soundless until they obtain full maturity and dimension in memory. Returning to the point in the opening sequence at which the garden gate bell renews its ringing, we find this exemplary direction.

24. INT. THE DRAWING ROOM. THE PRINCE DE GUERMANTES’S HOUSE. 1921

No sound track.
Old people chattering soundlessly.
MARCEL stands detached from them.
The sound of a garden gate bell heard, becoming gently insistent. [P. 5]
Ten images from the past follow this shot in rapid succession, attended by the note, "The tempo of the next sequence quickens, and the bell continues over it, irregularly," and culminating in the image of the shaking, silent bell. The fact of this choice, to partake or to recollect, derives from numerous references to this condition in Proust's work. In the first paragraph of Swann's Way, Marcel allows that his half-awake thoughts "lay like scales upon my eyes and prevented them from registering the fact that the candle was no longer burning" (p. 3). Then, as he regains consciousness, the autobiography that he was dreaming becomes remote.

Then it would begin to seem unintelligible, as the thoughts of a former existence must be to a reincarnate spirit; the subject of my book would separate itself from me, leaving me free to choose whether I would form part of it or no; and at the same time my sight would return and I would be astonished to find myself in a state of darkness, pleasant and restful enough for the eyes, and even more, perhaps, for my mind, to which it appeared incomprehensible, without a cause, a matter dark indeed. [P. 3]

Marcel, then, suggests a preference for the world of fiction, of memory, due to a muteness in the world of the present, to its "darkness and incomprehensibility." He doubts, however, the validity of his escape world, because he recognizes it as an attempt to freeze the motion of life.

Perhaps the immobility of things that surround us is forced upon them by our conviction that they are themselves, and not anything else, and by the immobility of our conceptions of them. For it always happened that when I awoke like this, and my mind struggled in an unsuccessful attempt to discover where I was, everything would be moving round me through the darkness: things, places, years. [P. 5]

Vice that it may be, Marcel returns over and over to his flight from the present, noting often, as in his attempt to travel backwards in time through the provocative combination of madeleines and tea, the necessary accompanying cessation of immediate experience. "I compel my mind to make one further effort, to follow and recapture once again the fleeting sensation. And that nothing may interrupt it in its course I shut out every obstacle, every extraneous idea, I stop my ears and inhibit all attention to the sounds which come from the next room" (p. 35).

His efforts to retreat from the motion of the present, to insulate himself in order to pursue the message of the sensation, resemble in Marcel's description the structural insinuation of Pinter's screenplay, accentuating its aptness. "The tea has called up in me, but does not itself understand, and can only repeat indefinitely with a gradual loss of strength, the same testimony; which I, too, cannot interpret, though I
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hope at least to call upon the tea for it again and to find it there presently, intact and at my disposal, for my final enlightenment” (p. 34). The insulating effect of the mechanism of recollection will figure richly in the final moments of the film, but its presence is consistent throughout and rooted firmly in Proust. The indulgence of memory, or art, is tantamount to denial of life: “Remembrance of a particular form is but regret for a particular moment.” The regrets proliferate, the moments evaporate as Marcel spends less and less time in contact with the experience of living, more and more in the playground of imagination: “His memory of the experience is more real, more acute than the experience itself.”

The madeleine episode, a Proustian cliche that Pinter deliberately excludes from the screenplay, introduces another quality of memory in keeping with Pinter’s customary vision; the past remains malleable, and excursions into it may or may not re-create its original nature.

It is for [the mind] to discover the truth. But how? What an abyss of uncertainty whenever the mind feels that some part of it has strayed beyond its own borders; when it, the seeker, is at once the dark region through which it must go seeking, where all its equipment will avail it nothing. Seek? More than that; create. It is face to face with something that does not so far exist, to which it alone can give reality and substance, which it alone can bring into the light of day. [P. 35]

The problem of uncertainty, which Marcel assigns to probes of the past here, dominates the present throughout the work of Pinter and Proust, and dictates the condition that challenges memory and perception. From early in both novel and screenplay, Marcel exerts himself without satisfaction against the unyielding obscurity of others, and he observes others in the same predicament. Marcel’s doubts and curiosities compound due to his frustrations as an eavesdropper; he experiences life through an enforced alienation and a chronic lack of context. Remoteness, confusion, and impenetrability mark the condition of his experience and remembrance. In this regard Brater’s allegation that Pinter obliterates “the security Proust was still able to find in his temple of art” through the screenplay’s depiction of a “past that has now become fractured, unstable, and ultimately hazy,” bereft of Marcel’s “definitive narrative authority,” seems ill-conceived.

Marcel’s quasi-invisibility, his machinations as an eavesdropper who sees and hears without detection by others, posed worries for Pinter. The presence of Marcel on film would require concrete dimensions of human corporality, and, without Proust’s literary endowment of ethereal presence, Marcel’s serendipitous position may appear contrived. Pinter considered and declined utilizing a “subjective camera.” as we
have noted in the first chapter, to establish Marcel's habit, because this technique, too, smacked of contrivance. Ultimately, Pinter deleted the omnipresent condition of eavesdropping from his adaptation, relying instead on sporadic suggestions of it and on his own skill at creating opaque situations that possess intrinsically the qualities of something overheard or glimpsed surreptitiously.

Marcel's frustrated efforts to discover the extent of the lesbian network that dominates the action of the screenplay provoke numerous scenes of this inscrutable nature. The early portion of the script, for example, develops Marcel's rising obsession with female homosexuality through his established overhearing of guarded innuendos by others, who refer in nebulous but sinister remarks to the activities of Odette, Mlle. Vinteuil, and others. These scenes transpire in barely decipherable order, interrupted at frequent intervals by "future" scenes that materialize mysterious images, later related to the lesbian theme, according to the associative patterning of memory. The suppressed subject of this early sequence finally erupts in a confrontation between Swann and Odette, which proceeds without Marcel's conspicuous surveillance, and which demonstrates Pinter's characteristic aptitude for obfuscation.

SWANN. Since you have known me have you . . . known any other men?
ODETTE. I knew it was that kind of question from your face. No, I have not. Why would I want other men, you silly? I have you.

Pause.

SWANN. What about women?
ODETTE. Women?

SWANN. You remember once Madame Verdurin said to you: "I know how to melt you, all right. You're not made of marble."

ODETTE. You asked me about that ages ago.

SWANN. I know—

ODETTE. I told you it was a joke. A joke, that's all.

SWANN. Have you ever, with her?

ODETTE. I've told you, no! You know quite well. Anyway, she's not like that.

SWANN. Don't say "You know quite well." Say "I have never done anything of that sort with Madame Verdurin or with any other woman."

ODETTE (automatically). I have never done anything of that sort with Madame Verdurin or any other woman.

Silence.

SWANN. Can you swear to me on the medal round your neck?

ODETTE. Oh, you make me sick! What's the matter with you today?

SWANN. Tell me, on your medal, yes or no, whether you have ever done those things?
ODETTE. How do I know? I don't even know what you mean. What things? Perhaps I have, years ago, when I didn't know what I was doing. Perhaps two or three times, I don't know.

Pause.

SWANN. How many times exactly?

ODETTE. For God's sake! (Slight pause.) Anyway it's all so long ago. I've never given it a thought. Anyone would think you're trying to put ideas into my head—just to get me to do it again.

SWANN. It's quite a simple question. And you must remember. You must remember with whom . . . my love. The last time, for instance.

ODETTE relaxes, speaks lightly.

ODETTE. Oh, I don't know. I think in the Bois . . . on the island . . . one evening . . . you were dining with those Guermantes. At the next table was a woman I hadn't seen for ages. She said to me, "Come round behind the rock there and look at the moonlight on the water." At first I just yawned and said, "No, I'm too tired." But she swore there'd never been any moonlight to touch it. "I've heard that tale before," I said to her. I knew quite well what she was after. [Pp. 24-26]

Except for three lines of initiating banter, I have quoted this scene in its entirety. Clearly, from its rhythms of deceit, its reliance on cliche, and its origins in extortion, we can put little stock in Odette's confession. The savvy ring of her story, however, and her general evasiveness suggest the truth of her complicity with other women. The two impressions coincide without reconciliation, as they do in later scenes between Marcel and Albertine and between Marcel and Andree. Pinter, furthermore, implies Marcel's surveillance of the preceding scene between Odette and Swann later in the script, by rebroadcasting the words, "I knew quite well what she was after," over a later image of Swann, clearly viewed through the eyes of Marcel.

Swann's inability to verify his suspicions of Odette's misbehavior receives articulation in an earlier scene, as well. After Odette rebuffs Swann, who appears at her door unexpectedly, Swann returns later to ascertain the truth of her excuse. In his anxiety over her suspected deceptions, he confuses her house with another and assaults two old men whose voices he presumes are those of Odette's secret consorts. Humiliated and unenlightened Swann notes the inscrutable darkness of Odette's actual residence, and returns home. This image of Swann's dismay recurs later in the screenplay, when Marcel encounters signs of Albertine's deceptiveness. It follows a bitter confrontation between them, during which Marcel accuses her of lying to him and all but confirms his dread of her mendacity. The conclusion of this incident in the image of Swann's retreat from Odette's dark, silent house indicates Marcel's association of his predicament with that of Swann, suggesting
Marcel’s doubts over his perception, and that even the obvious might issue from paranoid delusion.

Homosexuality obscures the motives of both sexes in the screenplay. Mlle. Vinteuil’s piano lessons, Charlus’s interest in Marcel, the activities of Albertine and Andree, and, indeed, a predominance of Marcel’s experience form pretexts for the exploitative maneuverings of homosexual interest. Characteristically, Pinter capitalizes on the concealed motives and frustrated inquests surrounding this motif, amplifying it into a metaphor for typical human experience. Marcel’s uncertainty acquires the proportions of a nightmare, as whatever tentative decisions he affords himself are inevitably contradicted by some development of “fact.”

The dynamics of his affair with Albertine, in its interminable circle of truths and falsehoods, form the chief example of his whiplash between uncertainty and contradiction. Already filled with anxieties over the omnipresence of homosexuality, Marcel agonizes from the outset of the affair over Albertine’s conspicuous female affiliations. Between his initial meeting of her at Balbec, where she gambols with the band of mysterious girls, and his reunion with her in Paris, where he is confined to his sickbed, Marcel experiences and witnesses the ubiquitous infestation of homosexuality in both sexes. He undergoes a lengthy infatuation and disillusionment with Charlus, and he observes the tragedy of Saint-Loup’s lover’s defection to the network of sexual aberration. However, when Albertine visits the bedridden Marcel in Paris, she favors him sexually for the first time, and he consequently embarks on a thick, if uneasy, involvement with her.

Plagued by suspicions and images of her deviance, Marcel interrogates Albertine relentlessly over her activities, but he can turn up nothing conclusive. She eludes all his accusations and questions in a fashion that only exacerbates his certainty of their truth. An excellent example of Pinter’s structural compression of Marcel’s entrapment by contradiction occurs when Marcel returns to Balbec, three years after his first visit. Marcel encounters his grandmother’s physician, Dr. Cottard, and the two retire to the Casino for a chat.

246. INT. CASINO. BALBEC. BALLROOM.

There are no men in the room.

A few girls sit at tables, drinking. A girl is playing a waltz on a piano.

About half a dozen girls are dancing together.

ALBERTINE and ANDREE dance together.

MARCEL and COTTARD stand watching at the door.

MARCEL. They dance well together, don’t they? Girls?

COTTARD. Parents are very rash to allow their daughters to form such habits.

I’d never let mine come here. (Indicating ALBERTINE and ANDREE.)
Look at those two. It's not sufficiently known that women derive most excitement from their breasts. Theirs are completely touching. Look at them.

ALBERTINE and ANDREE dancing close together.
ANDREE whispers to ALBERTINE. ALBERTINE laughs.
They ease the contact. [P. 99]

In the succeeding shot, Andree and Marcel are sitting together at a table in the ballroom, having the following dialogue:

MARCEL. What are you looking at?
ANDREE. Those women.
MARCEL. Which?
ANDREE. Over there. Do you know who they are?
MARCEL. No.
ANDREE. Lea, the actress. And her friend. They live together quite openly. It's a scandal.
MARCEL. Oh. . . . You've no sympathy with that kind of thing, then?
ANDREE. Me? I loathe that kind of thing. I'm like Albertine in that. We both loathe that kind of thing. [P. 100]

Marcel nonetheless attacks Albertine with his suspicions in the next scene, announcing that he loves Andree, rather than her, and explaining:

MARCEL. I have a profound disgust for women . . . tainted with that vice.

Pause.

MARCEL. You see, I have heard that your . . . accomplice . . . is Andree, and since Andree is the woman I love, you can understand my grief.

ALBERTINE looks at him steadily.
ALBERTINE. Who told you this rubbish?
MARCEL. I can't tell.
ALBERTINE. Andree and I both detest that sort of thing. We find it revolting.
MARCEL. You're saying it's not true?
ALBERTINE. If it were true I would tell you. I would be quite honest with you. Why not? But I'm telling you it's absolutely untrue.
MARCEL. Do you swear it?
ALBERTINE. I swear it. [P. 102]

Albertine subsequently seduces him, weakening her already too glib denial with further protestations against his accusation as she goes. Marcel's suspicions and grounds for them mount throughout the long course of their relationship, until finally he asks her to move out of his house. Albertine, however, coaxes him out of his resolve and wins a several-week reprieve. The next morning, the servant Francoise announces to Marcel that Albertine has packed and left, apparently satisfied with emerging victorious from the stormy affair.
Marcel's anxiety does not subside with her departure. After he receives the telegram proclaiming Albertine's death, articulated in the screenplay by a second image of the horse galloping riderless, here pulling back to reveal the crumpled body of a girl, Marcel turns to Andree for resolution of his nagging doubts. In a sequence of six brief scenes, which alternate between day and night to log the passage of time, Andree confirms Marcel's suspicions by night, but denies them by day, finally accusing him of Albertine's betrayal, and leaving him to despair worse than ever. The following series of quotes provides a sampling of her equivocation, culminating in her ultimate accusation.

I never did anything with Albertine. (DAY)
She was so passionate. Remember that day you lost your key, when you brought home syringa? You nearly caught us. It was so dangerous, we knew you would be home any minute, but she needed it, she had to have it. I pretended she hated the scent of syringa, do you remember? She was behind the door. She said the same thing, to keep you away from her, so that you wouldn't smell me on her. (NIGHT)

You want me to say it, don't you? But I won't say things which aren't true. Albertine detested that sort of thing. I can swear it. I can swear that I never did that sort of thing with Albertine. (DAY)

She and Morel understood each other at once. He procured girls for her. He would seduce the girl first, and then, when the girl was absolutely under his control, he'd hand her over to Albertine, and they'd both enjoy her.

. . . Lea had her many times at the baths at Balbec. I remember once being with her and some laundresses—oh quite young—by the banks of the river by Balbec. I remember one girl—very sweet she was too—and she cried out: "Oh how heavenly." "Oh how heavenly" . . . quivering, naked, on the grass. (NIGHT)

The people who have told you these stories about Albertine were lying to you . . . can't you understand that? (DAY)

She hoped that you would rescue her, that you would marry her. She loved you. She felt in her heart her obsession was a sort of criminal lunacy. I think she might possibly have killed herself, out of despair. (NIGHT) [Pp. 154-56]

The pattern of Marcel's uncertainties and contradicted certainties repeats in his relationship with Charlus, whose dignity and irresistible eccentricity parry every stand against his decadence and deviance that Marcel can make. Marcel's final and most shocking reversal occurs during the war, when he discovers a *Croix de Guerre* in an extraordinary Parisian brothel, run for Charlus by his lover, Jupien. We discover in the following scene that the *Croix de Guerre* belonged to Saint-Loup, whose friendship Marcel had struck up at Balbec, whose charm and innocence have prevailed in the screenplay, who has married Marcel's childhood passion, Gilberte, and whose death Marcel now mourns.
GILBERTE. Two days after Robert was killed I received a package, sent anonymously. It contained his Croix de Guerre. There was no note of explanation, nothing. The package was posted in Paris.

Pause.

GILBERTE. Isn’t that strange?
MARCEL. Yes.
GILBERTE. He never mentioned, in any letter, that it had been lost, or stolen.

With this final development, Marcel’s nightmares of panoramic decadence and perversion are nearly confirmed. The “nearly,” however, represents the crucial hinge of this situation; Marcel has no irrefutable fact on which to base any conclusion. All of his evidence, considerable as it may be, lies open to interpretation; and all matters of interpretation invoke the problem of perception.

We have previously noted that Marcel entertains doubts about the validity of his perceptions in his discursions from the novel on the natural mobility of things that the mind immobilizes and on the nonexistence of things that the mind creates. This theme receives repeated attention by Proust, and several of its dimensions possess centrality to Pinter’s cinematic adaptation. Marcel, for example, dwells over and over again on the image of the three church steeples seen from a moving carriage during his childhood, and on the lifelong impact this image has had on him. Pinter captures this incident and its persistent repercussions by repeating the image of the steeples at several points in the film script, and by describing its main occurrence as follows:

MARCEL’S P.O.V. FROM MOVING CARRIAGE

The twin steeples of Martinville church and, in the distance, a third steeple from another village.

At first the distance between the Martinville steeples and the other is clear, definite. But as the road winds and in the sun’s reflection they seem to change position. The third, although rising from higher ground in the distance, suddenly appears to be standing by their side, to be one of them.

Further views of them, as the carriage progresses:
Only the Martinville steeples seen: the third not in sight.
The third very dim, quivering.
The Martinville steeples almost blotted out: the third startlingly clear, luminous.
The three steeples apparently side by side, dancing together in the last rays of the sun.

94. C.U. MARCEL’S FACE, ALIVE. [P. 29]

At the heart of this vision lies an optical illusion, a perceptual trick. Wholeness, it suggests, remains a function of point of view, and even
then, like all other impressions of any phenomenon, it is bogus, freakish, and ephemeral. The disposition and condition of the beholder control perception; "A thing is not necessarily either true or false; it can be both true and false." Marcel's perceptions and conclusions regarding the sexual practices of his acquaintances enjoy no exemption, even in his consciousness, from this principle. The steeple montage, in fact, caps the protracted and accelerating sequence of episodes regarding lesbian intrigues. Pinter's matrixing of these events, substantially reordered from the original text, highlights the crisis of indiscernable sexuality and refers the entire issue to the caprice of perception, to the dance of the steeples.

If the significance of the reiterated steeple image contains so much subtlety as to elude some viewers, Pinter reinforces its statement with the similar episode of the three trees. Here, the impression of the trees following the carriage as it moves away from them alternates with shots of "MARCEL'S FACE, ALIVE" and the steeples at Martinville. Beyond these two incidents, both repeated throughout the film, Pinter employs the previously noted contextual tricks, several shots of watchers watching watchers, and numerous views through mirrors, windows, and reflections, each of which suggests the primacy and peril of perception.

The second of these techniques, which the following excerpt exemplifies, often materializes through a diffused sequence of shots, each altering context by adding or subtracting a witness, and anticipating the climactic sequence of an onlooker in Stahr's "making pictures" monologue from The Last Tycoon. The montage cited here, unlike many of the others, occurs in tight consecutive sequence.

98. EXT. CHAMPS-ELYSEES GARDENS. PARIS. 1897.
   GILBERTE (17) whispering with girlfriends in the bushes. A girl's voice laughing, "Oh, Gilberte!"

99. MARCEL WATCHING GILBERTE.

100. SWANN IN FOREGROUND STANDING BY A TREE, WATCHING MARCEL WATCH GILBERTE.

MARCEL is unaware of SWANN'S presence. [P. 30]

Shot #106 duplicates shot #100, except that Swann is absent from this otherwise identical moment. Pinter's intended effect here seems to depend on actual screen representation for full clarity, but this much is clear from the screenplay: the layered contexts of observers and observed that recur frequently in the film invoke the refractive nature of observation as a major subject in the script. And the numerous instances of views captured through screening substances, framing obstacles, and
reflecting surfaces contribute to the presence and to the statement of this theme.

Flaws inhabit not only the original experience of phenomena, but also its mental recreation, here. In the final sequence of the screenplay, which, as we have noted, repeats the opening sequence (albeit with more explication), Marcel, newly released from the sanatorium and now forty-one years old, attends an afternoon gathering at the home of the Prince and Princesse de Guermantes. We begin to recover images from the opening sequence as he walks towards the house, in the following series of shots:

395. EXT. PRINCE DE GUERMANTES’S HOUSE. AVENUE DU BOIS.
   MARCEL walking towards it.
   Carriages, cars, crowds of chauffeurs.
   A car is driving towards the house. MARCEL steps in front of it. The chauffeur shouts. MARCEL steps back, trips over uneven paving stones.
   He sways, recovers balance, puts his foot back on the lower paving stone.

396. Very dim quick flash of Venice.

397. MARCEL’S face.

398. EXT. PRINCE DE GUERMANTES’S HOUSE.
   MARCEL stands still.
   He sways back again and forward.
   In background chauffeurs regarding him curiously, with amusement.
   MARCEL sways back.

399. Blue glow.

400. Chauffeurs.

401. Blue mosaics in Saint Mark’s Church.

402. MARCEL’S face. [Pp. 165-66]

Proust makes Marcel’s endeavor in this and similar repeated bits of action clear; the sensation has provoked some vague ghost of memory in Marcel, and he strives to indulge its formulation by repeating the action that summoned it.

Every time that I merely repeated this physical movement, I achieved nothing; but if I succeeded, forgetting the Guermantes party, in recapturing what I had felt when I first placed my feet on the ground in this way, again the dazzling and indistinct vision fluttered near me, as if to say: “Seize me as I pass if you can, and try to solve the riddle of happiness which I set you.” And almost at once I recognized the vision: it was Venice, of which my efforts to describe it and the supposed snapshots taken by my memory had never told me anything, but which the sensation which I had once experienced as I stood upon two uneven stones in the baptistery of St. Mark’s had, recurring a moment ago, restored to me complete with all the other sensations linked on
that day to that particular sensation, all of which had been waiting in their place—from which with imperious suddenness a chance happening had caused them to emerge—in the series of forgotten days.\footnote{8}

Pinter, who cites moments such as this one and the triggering effect of the garden gate bell as his favorites in Proust's work, establishes the connection between the paving stones and St. Mark's Church by the subtlest of means. He takes Marcel's earlier comments on the dangers of recollection and the need for sensory withdrawal as the key to the paving stone moment.

373. INT. SAINT MARK'S CHURCH.

Sounds of two pairs of feet walking over the cobbles.

They stop.

The camera pans up to the blue mosaics of the church. [P. 157]

In the Village Voice interview, Pinter explains his intention for the scene.

You see? He sways backward and forward. . . . Then he's still. Nothing happens. He sways back again, desperately trying to get the damn thing, to recapture the damn thing. And you notice that he simply sways back the last time and remains still, concentrating. And then, what I think is good, the chauffeurs. The world of the chauffeurs. In the direction of the film you'd have him aware of them earlier, but then all of the sudden he's oblivious to them. Blue glow.

The nature of Marcel's effort is twice removed at two levels; he repeats the moment that recalls the image that reconstructs the original image. The dissimilarity between the two movements, one genuine and one replicated, implies the flaws inherent in recollection; the second is fabricated, forced, manipulated, and without substance. Pinter's cherished chauffeurs accentuate Marcel's habit of withdrawal from the immediate, the operation of point of view (in their laughter), and the ascent of a usurping world. Marcel has chosen; he has denied his life in order to withdraw into the world of fiction, order, and creation; in order to recapture the past and fix it in art.

As Marcel awaits admittance to the drawing room in the library, the cuing incidents and their consequent images from the opening acquire a lucidity that they lacked previously. The clarity of their mechanism and significance derives partly from our accumulated familiarity with and sensitivity to them, and partly from a more conspicuous relationship between cue and recollection; both ourselves and Marcel have grown more adept at this pattern of invocation. The recollections themselves become more articulated, so that the waiter's inadvertent striking of a spoon against a plate summons again the view of countryside from
a railway carriage, but also the sound of a hammer tapping one of the train wheels, linking the image to its cue. The starched napkin with which Marcel wipes his mouth prompts the same frame of sea and sky from a high window, but here we observe a starched towel being replaced on the towel rack in the foreground. The shrill noise of water running through the pipes in the library evokes the image of the dining room at Balbec, with a steamer sounding in the distance. The silent sound track of the opening, with its occasional concessions to the hubbub of the “present,” has at last yielded its secret, and Marcel has perfected his communion with the absent past.

This final theme of Marcel’s escape into the cherished illusion of memory is accompanied by the characteristic rise, as suggested by the chauffeurs, of a usurping group. The casting off of the old and its replacement by the new, a theme familiar from *The Pumpkin Eater*, *Accident*, and *The Go-Between*, becomes the subject of the remaining portion of Pinter’s script. The last volume of Proust expresses this process most eloquently in the letter that the aging Marcel receives from Gilberte.

As for the short cut up the hill which you were so fond of and which we used to call the hawthorn path, where you claim that as a small child you fell in love with me (whereas I assure you in all truthfulness it was I who was in love with you), I cannot tell you how important it has become. The huge field of corn upon which it emerges is the famous Hill 307, which you must have seen mentioned again and again in the bulletins. [P. 46]

Pinter goes beyond the utilization of color stock for black and white filming of this crucial sequence at the Guermantes’s to force the issues of decrepitude and usurpation. He describes Marcel’s entrance into the drawing room in the following direction:

419. INT. DRAWING ROOM. PRINCE DE GUERMANTES’S HOUSE. 1921.

*The drawing room doors open.*

*Camera enters with MARCEL, who hesitates.*

*Hundreds of faces, some of which turn towards him, grotesquely made up, grotesquely old.*

*He walks into the room. Voices. Faces. The wigs and makeup, combined with the extreme age of those who with difficulty stand, sit, gesture, laugh, give the impression of grotesque fancy dress.* [P. 168]

The once youthful eccentricities and banter of the group appear likewise macabre in this setting and condition. All of the living figures of Marcel’s past are there, like the ludicrous corpses of an attenuated world, ravaged by disease, drugs, and decay. Even the network of sin and deviance has lost its potency in this milieu, and new evidence of its
reach (to Gilberte) passes without comment or impact. Then, in the midst of all this death and chatter, Pinter initiates his closing sequence, discovering for the first time a youthful presence in the room.

443. MARCEL STANDING ALONE.

GILBERTE approaches MARCEL with a YOUNG GIRL of sixteen. She is very lovely.

GILBERTE. This is my daughter.

MLLE. DE SAINT-LOUP smiles and inclines her head. MARCEL gazes at her.

Suddenly all of the sounds in the room die. MLLE. DE SAINT-LOUP speaks silently, smiling.

Over this shot we hear the garden gate bell at Combray, "resilient, ferruginous, interminable, fresh and shrill."
The bell continues over the following shots.

444. The vast room. The multitude of people talking. No sound.
445. MLLE. DE SAINT-LOUP smiling.
446. The trees at Hudimesnil.
447. The steeples at Martinville.
448. Flash of yellow screen.
449. The river Vivonne at Combray.
450. The roofs of Combray.
451. The garden at Combray in the evening.
452. The bell at the garden gate.
453. SWANN opening the garden gate and departing.
454. MARCEL as a child looking out of his bedroom window. The bell ceases. [Pp. 175-76]

The emergence of Mlle. de Saint-Loup to instigate and preside over Marcel's descent into the world of the past, this triumph of the innocent over the impotence of the disillusioned, remains typical of and necessary for Pinter's conclusion. The retirement of the disenchanted into their orderly webs of artifice forms a consistent feature of conclusion in all of Pinter's screenplays. Here it deviates only in lacking the pessimistic vacuousness that has characterized all previous ascending representatives. If Pinter has brightened the nature of the usurping corps, however, he remains relentless in his assault on the overthrown, depicting Marcel's final epiphany (despite his admitted sympathy for its sentiment) as precisely what it represents: a preference for the accessible immobility of fiction over the incomprehensible chaos of life.

Pinter's intended plan for the screenplay, the simultaneous development of two patterns, "one, a movement, chiefly narrative, toward disillusion, and the other, more intermittent, toward revelation, rising to where time that was lost is found, and fixed forever in art," emerges powerfully from his schematic presentation of the material from Pro-
ust’s work. As Brater has suggested, “Revelation and disillusion have been rendered visually through cinematic time rather than verbally through fiction.”

Pinter’s utilization of the yellow screen operates toward fulfillment of both dynamics. In the former, the movement toward disillusion, the close-up view is linked to two disturbing moments in the screenplay, involving repellent magnifications of the faces of Odette and Albertine. Both instances occur as the women draw closer for a kiss, occasioning identical descriptions from the viewpoints variously of Swann and Marcel: “Her cheeks, smooth and flushed, come closer to his eye and show a coarser grain” (p. 22 and p. 87).

The suggestion here that close proximity results in a contamination of the formerly distant finds an emphatic parallel in Pinter’s rendition of Marcel’s infatuation with the Guermantes. Marcel’s worship of this noble family evolves, after he finally penetrates into their graces, into his disgust for their triviality. Two incidents, involving first his grandmother and then Swann, clarify this revulsion. The first transpires following his grandmother’s retreat, during a walk with Marcel in the park, into a public lavatory, where she apparently conceals an attack of stroke. When she emerges from the building, dazed and disheveled, she remarks with great difficulty to Marcel on the insensitive conversation between two park attendants, who had been chatting outside the lavatory: “I heard what she was saying. Could anything be more like the Guermantes, the Verdurins? Exactly the same” (p. 47). Marcel’s encounter with Swann at the Guermantes’s house, during which Swann’s attempts to communicate the imminence of his death pass unnoticed in the Guermantes’s frenzy over a dinner engagement, provides the second accentuation of Marcel’s disenchantment with the Guermantes. This scene concludes as the Duc delays their departure for dinner by sending the Duchesse upstairs to change her shoes: a delay he refused to tolerate when it was motivated by her concern for Swann’s health.

The yellow screen functions to identify the movement toward revelation through its association with Marcel’s epiphanic visions of the steeple, the trees, and his past, and with his ecstatic appreciation of Vinteuil’s music. These moments are linked together through both montage and sound track, suggesting Marcel’s transcendence of his mounting disillusionment by means of withdrawal into art. His escape into Vinteuil’s music, immediately subsequent to his appraisal of Albertine’s probable deceitfulness, exemplifies this theme and its technique. After noting that, “In all shots of the audience at this stage, the sound of the music is dominated by those of fans, feet shifting, yawns, coughs,” Pinter indicates the following sequence of shots:
318. MARCEL, LISTENING.
(NOTE: The septet continues over the following shots, which are now all silent, the music quite pure, no extraneous sounds. During the course of this sequence the music will cross-fade to the climax of the third movement of the septet.)

319. MARCEL.
320. THE MUSICIANS.
321. THE AUDIENCE.
322. MARCEL.
323. YELLOW SCREEN.
324. THE MUSICIANS.
325. THE AUDIENCE.
326. MARCEL.
327. YELLOW SCREEN.
   In this shot of the yellow screen the music reaches its sustained climax.
328. MARCEL.
   Applause around him.
   He sits still, joyful.
329. FLASH OF THE STEEPLES AT MARTINVILLE.
   SILENT.
330. M. VINTEUIL WALKING TOWARD CAMERA.
   SILENT.
   In background MLLE. VINTEUIL and FRIEND playing the piano. [Pp. 138-39]

The accumulation of these images, which climax in the yellow screen and culminate in the vision of Vinteuil and his scandalous daughter, formulates a statement of the triumph by art over mundane, inscrutable reality. In this sense Pinter establishes the dual nature of Marcel's retreat from life as a simultaneous secession from and transcendence over intolerable, incomprehensible experience, "rising to where time that was lost is found, and fixed forever in art." The patch of yellow wall, Pinter's emblem of inscrutability, estrangement, discrepancy, insignificance, and disillusionment, becomes also his invocation of revelation. Thus, he describes the final shot of the screenplay:

455. Vermeer's View of Delft.
   Camera moves in swiftly to the patch of yellow wall in the painting.
   Yellow screen.
   MARCEL'S VOICE OVER. It was time to begin. [P. 177]

From all points of view—theme, action, and image—the circle is complete.

Pinter's growing fascination by the subjects of past, time, and memory obtains similar modes of expression in his screenplays for Accident
and *The Go-Between*, in which the themes of an obdurate past also conclude in a reprise of their inciting mechanisms. This fondness for circularity as a structural manifestation of our efforts at characterizing the past is evident also in Pinter’s original plays of this time period. In *Old Times*, which he wrote immediately preceding his work on Proust, three characters struggle to control each other by alleging opportunistic and irreconcilable versions of the past. The role of memory, especially as a manipulative fabrication, figures centrally in the action, and the action itself conjures temporal dislocation through the initial mysterious presence of an ostensibly absent character. Suggestions of circularity occur also in the initiation of opening dialogue (an answer to an unposed question), in the descriptions of the two settings (mirror images of each other), and in the final action of the play (an enactment of a story told earlier in the play). Together with the screenplays for *Accident, The Go-Between*, and the Proust, *Old Times* implies that the search for the past is not only problematic, but also endlessly circuitous.

During an interview with Mel Gussow before *Old Times* opened in New York, Pinter commented, “The whole question of time and all its reverberations and possible meanings really does seem to absorb me more and more.” The question of time recurs conspicuously in Pinter’s two major plays following *The Proust Screenplay* (1972): *No Man’s Land* (1974) and *Betrayal* (1978). In the former the past resumes its “artistic” nature, existing only as the characters constitute and reconstitute it according to their immediate objectives. According to Peter Hall, who directed *No Man’s Land* for London’s National Theatre, Pinter stubbornly defended a line in the script that characterized the present as “unscrupulous.” Hall, who questioned the meaning of this usage, describes Pinter’s clarification as follows: “He chose the word unscrupulous because it shows the ruthlessness of the present, and its ability to lead as it were a life of its own. His sense is simply ‘the present will not be changed.’” Consequently, efforts at shaping or escaping from the immutable present occur through recitations of the variable past. Time, although structurally intact, suffers thematic fractures and generally concedes to a milieu in which the imagination prevails, or at least attempts to prevail, over linear reality. In this respect the major characters in *No Man’s Land*, both poets, strive for an ordination of subjectivity similar to the one sought by Marcel and to the one that will be sought in *The Last Tycoon* by Monroe Stahr. With *Betrayal*, however, the past becomes concrete; the play’s structure works backward in time, revealing the fallibility of memory and a maze of deceit as it regresses. Enoch Brater has attributed Pinter’s use of this strategy to
his work on the film adaptations, identifying the play as cinematic in its
temporal pattern and in its manipulation of images. Despite Pinter's
objective revelation of the past through this conceit in Betrayal (which
he subsequently adapted for film), its concerns remain, even more
plainly, with the deceptions that are formulated in the "present." Such
verification is a clearly intended artifice; in real time the past is conve-
niently erased, revised, and rewritten. However much "the past is not
past," its empirical disposition is palimpsest.