[The industrial spying] made his work secret in part, often devious, slow—and hard to describe as the plans of a general, where the psychological factors become too tenuous and we end by merely adding up the successes and failures. But I have determined to give you a glimpse of him functioning, which is my excuse for what follows. It is drawn partly from a paper I wrote in college on A Producer’s Day and partly from my imagination. . . . As for me, I was head over heels in love with him then, and you can take what I say for what it’s worth.

Pinter’s screen adaptation of F. Scott Fitzgerald’s The Last Tycoon also poses special problems: it does not exist in published form. Since Elia Kazan’s direction of the film is a first-time collaboration, the degree of his fidelity to Pinter’s text seems uncertain, and the film alone is consequently untrustworthy as a reflection of Pinter’s work. For my comparison I shall work from a copy of the shooting script, made available by the American Film Institute in Los Angeles, and a text of the novel (itself an uncompleted work).

Fitzgerald died before he was able to finish the novel from which Pinter’s screenplay derives. The published text, therefore, contains writing and ideas that sometimes lack precision, conciseness, and coherence. In a foreword printed with Scribner’s edition of the unfinished novel, Edmund Wilson makes some noteworthy observations regarding the state of the text.

Scott Fitzgerald died suddenly of a heart attack (December 21, 1940) the day after he had written the first episode of Chapter 6 of his novel. The text which is given here is a draft made by the author after considerable rewriting, but it is by no means a finished version. In the margins of almost every one of the episodes, Fitzgerald had written comments . . . which expressed his dissatis-
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faction with them or indicated his ideas about revising them. His intention was to produce a novel as concentrated and as carefully constructed as *The Great Gatsby* had been, and he would unquestionably have sharpened the effect of most of these scenes as we have them by cutting and by heightening of color. He had originally planned that the novel should be about 60,000 words long, but he had written at the time of his death about 70,000 words without, as will be seen from his outline, having told much more than half his story.  

Judging by Fitzgerald’s projections for the length of the work and by the rambling diffuseness of the extant portion itself, much of this draft was due for excision. Thus, Pinter inherits from this source greater latitude and greater urgency for his work. Furthermore, rather than reach beyond the elucidated portion of the novel into second-half episodes suggested by Fitzgerald’s outline, Pinter restricts his scope to the first-half draft, refocusing the themes and material into an independent unity. Despite the unusual demands of this undertaking, Pinter’s alterations of the original work remain minimal for, like the sources of his previous screenplays, Fitzgerald’s novel plays directly into his hands.

The situation of Fitzgerald’s narrator, Cecilia Brady, resembles that of the third-party figure whom Pinter extracted from *The Servant*. Cecilia, however, enters even less into Fitzgerald’s action (as far as it goes) and possesses fewer facts and connections with respect to it. As she does in the quote that opens this chapter, Cecilia must frequently admit her penchant for fantasy in order to excuse accounts of which she could have no conceivable knowledge. Once again the necessity for fabrication in the absence of hard information comprises a chief theme in the work.

Aside from Cecilia’s plethora of narrative disclaimers, numerous anecdotes in the novel espouse this idea. In our first solid impression of Monroe Stahr, the central character of the story, he is chatting with an airplane pilot in the cockpit. Cecilia recounts the dialogue between them from gossip she accumulates years later.

> He [Stahr] was looking down at the mountains.
> “Suppose you were a railroad man,” he said. “You have to send a train through there somewhere. Well, you get your surveyors’ reports, and you find there’s three or four or half a dozen gaps, and not one is better than the other. You’ve got to decide—on what basis? You can’t test the best way—except by doing it. So you just do it.”
> The pilot thought he had missed something.
> “How do you mean?”
> “You choose some way for no reason at all—because that mountain’s pink or the blueprint is a better blue. You see?” [P. 23]

In the concluding episodes of Fitzgerald’s draft, Stahr expresses this idea more succinctly: “You have to say, ‘it’s got to be like this—no
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other way”—even if you’re not sure. A dozen times a week that happens to me. Situations where there is no real reason for anything. You pretend there is” (p. 158). Choices, decisions, recountings, must transpire without the facts because, in many cases, the facts quite simply are not accessible.

The preeminence of the imagination and illusion, as a corollary to this condition, also forms a major theme in the novel. Fitzgerald had contrived to write about the declining reign of a Hollywood studio head (fashioned after Irving Thalberg) during the golden age of moviemaking, but he managed before his death to describe only the first harbinger of Stahr’s incipient demise: the rapid flower and decay of his romance with the mysterious Kathleen. The very backdrop of the movie business supplies a tension between fact and fiction that mirrors the self-re-crimations of the narrator. Both Cecilia’s imaginative deviations and the film industry’s generic fabrications provide metaphoric affirmation of the preponderance of fantasy.

Pinter includes Cecilia in his screenplay, but, since he strips her of her narrative function (see the first chapter and preceding screenplay discussions for his probable reasoning in this), she seems a rather superfluous appendage to the story. Two screenplay episodes, through which Pinter explores Cecilia’s character and connects it to both the themes and action of the main plot, were deleted from the film, and the surviving sequences, which serve only to develop her circumstances (for example, her discovery of her studio executive father making love to his secretary in the office), would probably confuse anyone unfamiliar with Fitzgerald’s novel. Cecilia operates in the film primarily as a reflection of Stahr’s situation: both of them desire the one thing they cannot, despite their overwhelming power, have. Stahr is obsessed with Kathleen, and Cecilia is obsessed with Stahr.

Pinter utilizes Cecilia to indicate another of the novel’s concerns, a contrasting of Hitler’s activities with those of Hollywood, in a scene between a screenwriter, Wylie, and her. This scene, which was excluded from the film, occurs in Wylie’s car, as the two cruise Sunset Boulevard. As Wylie pesters Cecilia with his unwelcome affections, she fiddles with the radio dial and improvises a scenario for her next meeting with Stahr. A broadcast chorus of “Sieg Heils” accompanies Wylie’s protestations that Cecilia’s romantic delusions are plagiarized from one of his scripts. Such confounding of fiction with real experience is epidemic in the screenplay. Here, Wylie and Cecilia simply tune out the inevitability of Hitler in order to pursue their separate dreams and to assert the authority of their wills over the phenomenal world. For them, Hitler may be manipulated as easily as a retake of a flawed scene. The supremacy of fictional whimsy over factual exigency reflects in
Wylie's comment to Cecilia, "We don't use that line this year," in response to her description of her devotion to Stahr. Cecilia will subsequently repeat Wylie's remark to Stahr as a reaction to his own feelings, echoing this application of fictional values to experiential circumstances, and another screenwriter, Boxley, will exhibit similar disorientation in a later scene when, after a drunken confrontation with Stahr, he yells, "I want copyright protection for that scene I just wrote! About the drunken writer and the producer!" (p. 76). Stahr's predicament consists precisely in this confusion of subjective and objective worlds, but Cecilia's thematic relevance to this issue is diminished by the absence of the Sunset Boulevard scene from the film.

The screenplay also includes a less successful attempt to involve Cecilia in the main action of the story by describing a scene in which she, overcome by a fit of jealous curiosity, visits Kathleen's unoccupied house. This scene, derived from one of Fitzgerald's efforts to justify Cecilia's uncanny familiarity with Kathleen's circumstances, was also eliminated from the film, probably because it fails, once divorced from its role as narrative espionage, to accomplish any plausible connection of her with the principal action. Although we can stretch for instances of foils and parallels, the inclusion of Cecilia fails overall to integrate with the primary lines of the story and constitutes the film's weakest link.

From the opening sequence of the screenplay, however, Pinter capitalizes skillfully on the movie industry metaphor, which now assumes the self-referential role vacated by Cecilia. Setting aside the first chapter of Fitzgerald's work, which chiefly chronicles the thoughts of Cecilia on a transcontinental air flight that appears to represent one half of an intended frame for the novel, Pinter begins his adaptation with two inventions of his own. The initial cinematic sequence consists in a black and white (more accurately sepia) period scene that transpires in a restaurant and depicts a gangland style attack. (This scene has been denounced, with marginal relevance, as untypical of Thalberg's "prestige" films.) After some moments an offscreen voice interrupts the scene's progress, and the camera switches instantly to color film, pulling back to reveal a screening room and the criticisms by its occupants. (In his screenplay for The French Lieutenant's Woman, Pinter will employ a similar device, reversing the sequence of artifice and "reality" in his opening segment.) As our first impression crumbles into the menial exertions of technicians and equipment, a second one emerges to provoke a whirligig; a studio tour guide has hardly completed his explanation of camera-simulated earthquakes when an "actual" earthquake occurs in the "nonfiction" action of the film. Here, as Pinter introduces
Stahr and other chief figures of the story, we mentally review the tour guide's demystifying spiel, becoming, even in our smugness, a little mystified by the abrupt vortex of realities.

In the aftermath of the quake, the contrasting domains of "reality" and illusion acquire striking dimensions. Pinter and Kazan meticulously transform the scene, which Fitzgerald describes as follows: "Under the moon the back lot was thirty acres of fairyland—not because the locations really looked like African jungles and French chateaux and schooners at anchor and Broadway by night, but because they looked like the torn picture books of childhood, like fragments of stories dancing in an open fire" (p. 32). As Stahr surveys the quake, fire, and flood damage, "reality's" toll on the back lot illusions, the outsized head of the Goddess Siva appears adrift in the flood, some distance away. The workers remark on the Indian idol with pragmatic banality ("'De Mille needs that head next week'"), while the thing "earnestly waddles and bumps its way down the current of an impromptu river," and Stahr fixes intently on two women who are trapped aboard the head. One of the women, we later learn, bears an uncanny resemblance to Stahr's dead wife, Minna Davis. While Cecilia provides this background and insight in the novel, Pinter includes the tragic Minna Davis myth and image as a part of the tour's itinerary, and in both versions Stahr articulates the likeness during later episodes.

This initial vision of Kathleen, as the workers rescue her from the ravages of nature and the sanctuary of artifice, has significance on several planes. Stahr's impression of her occurs in a dizzying muddle of illusion and reality. Pinter's manifestation of Stahr's attraction to Kathleen repeats a technique familiar from The Proust Screenplay; two silent shots of Stahr and one of Kathleen from his point of view interrupt the pandemonium of the rescue operations, suggesting a transcendent negation of reality by the imagination. Beyond the circumstances of bewildering milieu, he confuses her identity with that of his dead wife, so that his obsession with her grounds in delusion at two levels of perception. Kathleen, in fact, persists in her mysteriousness throughout their relationship, becoming almost a figment of his mental circuits. Her motives and past never yield to his curiosity; whatever information she provides about herself seems contradicted by her actions, and, even during the most intimate episodes, she exhibits a peculiar distance from him.

Stahr, however, in his appetite for and habituation with the cinematic world of the ideal, worships her elusiveness. In the novel he betrays his thinking by remarks he makes to his writers, disparaging their characterization of a film's heroine. "In the first place he wanted to tell them
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what kind of girl she was—what kind of girl he approved of here. She was a perfect girl with a few small faults. . . . She stood for health, vitality, ambition and love. . . . That was the kind of story this was—thin, clean and shining. No doubts” (p. 53). Pinter retains the substance of this speech, but alters its circumstances to combine it with a stroll through the studio back lots, during which we glimpse Busby Berkeley girls, flood reparations, western towns, and Polynesian villages. Against this background of incongruities and facades, Stahr upbraids Wylie over the writer’s maligning of the girl.

STAHR. You’ve given her a secret life. She doesn’t have a secret life. You’ve made her a melancholic. She is not a melancholic. . . . The girl stands for health, vitality, love.

WYLIE. So how do you want the girl?

STAHR. Perfect. [P. 32-33]

The film will repeat Stahr’s demand for a perfect girl as a voice-over during the closing sequence.

Kathleen is a harbinger of Stahr’s demise. As Fitzgerald describes him and as Pinter depicts him, Stahr’s featured attribute lies in his ability to remove himself from the debris of living; he observes situations through the eye of the camera. Cecilia notes this in the first chapter of the novel.

He had flown up very high to see. . . . Beating his wings tenaciously—finally frantically—and keeping on beating them, he had stayed up there longer than most of us, and then, remembering all he had seen from his great height of how things were, he had settled gradually to earth. . . . You could say that this was where an accidental wind blew him, but I don’t think so. I would rather think that in a “long shot” he saw a new way of measuring our jerky hopes and graceful rogueries and awkward sorrows. [P. 24]

Like Teddy, the impassive philosopher who loses his wife in The Homecoming, Stahr operates “on things and not in things.” His chief peril in this practice consists in any slip-up that might expose the flimsy basis for his decision-making. Stahr’s power depends on his ability to sustain remoteness and the appearance of conviction and correctness in his orders. His affair with Kathleen renders him fallible in all of these respects: he participates, he equivocates, and he miscalculates. He blunders even in his initial attempt to locate the mysterious girl after the flood, insisting to the bloodhounds on his staff that the girl wore a silver belt. This clue leads him to the wrong girl and reveals the flaw, the slight misapprehension of fact, the misstep of his mind, that will bring his ruin. The tricks of the past, memory, and perception will spell his tragedy. At this point Stahr attempts to forsake the search, but the mistaken girl maneuvers him into the presence of Kathleen, and he
loses his capacity for objectivity: he becomes irrationally obsessed with Kathleen.

Without the footing of fact and comprehensibility, Stahr pushes farther and farther into the climes of make-believe, invoking criteria from the fictive world of the movies. His effort to affix the lifeless forms of fiction to the chaotic conditions of living meets the same fate that such efforts have met in all of Pinter’s previous screenplays. Like Tony, Jo, Quiller, Leo, and Marcel, Stahr becomes a victim of his own perspective, as his interpretations and hence his expectations fail to account for a recondite, but vindictive, reality.

The dynamics of Stahr’s struggle ramify in various emblems and situations that develop in the novel and in the film. Perhaps the central symbol of the completed portion of the novel, and one that makes a perfect Pinter fit, consists in Stahr’s half-constructed new house. The old house, to which Stahr returns each night to repeat the lonely rituals of the past, comes to represent, particularly in Pinter’s treatment, attenuated forms. The new house, to which Stahr absconds with Kathleen, signifies the unready, impossible future. It stands roofless by the ocean, a protectionless skeleton, whose only articulated feature (a projection booth) suggests a replication of the past and an escape from the future into illusion. Ping pong tables, some props, and freshly purchased “real” grass have been furnished by the studio for a recent party on the premises. Here, in this half-formed retreat, imperiled by nature and fortified by the trappings of Hollywood, Stahr enacts his ill-fated, storybook romance with the incarnation of his dead wife: Kathleen.

The friction between reality and illusion dominates Stahr’s professional experiences as well as his personal ones. Beyond the panoramic instances of double-vision images, such as the one of “Abraham Lincoln” in the studio cafeteria with his fast-food snack, in both the novel and the screenplay, the technical machinations of film production provide some uncanny juxtapositions and self-referential perspectives. Actors’ personalities repeatedly clash with those of their roles, special effects give way to the incongruity of their manufacture, and Stahr contributes some notable demystifications of screenwriting. In the last respect, Pinter lifts from the novel some dialogue between Stahr and the screenwriter, Boxley, which seems to describe precisely his own writing technique. Here Stahr spells out for the stumped Boxley an approach to creating a film script.

STAHR. Suppose you’re in your office.
You’ve been fighting duels all day.
You’re exhausted.

He sits.
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This is you.

He stands.

A girl comes in.

He goes to the door, opens it, comes back in, shuts it.

She doesn't see you. She takes off her gloves, opens her purse and dumps it out on the table.

He mimes these actions.

You watch her.

He sits.

This is you.

He stands.

She has two dimes, a nickel and a matchbox. She leaves the nickel on the table, puts the two dimes back in her purse, takes her gloves to the stove, opens it and puts them inside.

He mimes all this while talking.

She lights a match. Suddenly the telephone rings. She picks it up.

He mimes this.

She listens. She says, 'I've never owned a pair of black gloves in my life.' She hangs up, kneels by the stove, lights another match.

He kneels, mimes lighting another match, then quickly jumps up and goes to the door.

Suddenly you notice there's another man in the room, watching every move the girl makes.

Pause.

BOXLEY (intrigued). What happens?

STAHR. I don't know. I was just making pictures. [Pp. 49-51]

Pinter's craft, from what we have seen in the screenplays and from what he himself claims, reduces perfectly to the activity of "making pictures," of cauterizing opaque images that speak all that can be told. He retains this anecdote from Fitzgerald, providing it a bit of trimming and two twists. Fitzgerald ends the encounter with the following dialogue:

"What was the nickel for?" asked Boxley evasively.

"I don't know," said Stahr. Suddenly he laughed. "Oh yes—the nickel was for the movies."

"What in the hell do you pay me for?" Boxley demanded. "I don't understand the damn stuff."

"You will," said Stahr grinning. "or you wouldn't have asked about the nickel." [P. 43]

Pinter reproduces this exchange intact, with one significant modification: his Stahr refers the question of the nickel's destination to an attending secretary, who offers the movie hypothesis. In this Pinter seems to insist that anyone's guess is as good as his, authorizing a range of
responses to his own writing, and recalling Stahr’s earlier comments on the nature of interpretation and choice. The second twist occurs near the end of the film, where Pinter demonstrates his fondness for this piece of dialogue in an unusual and stunning screen direction. Alone in his office, Stahr abruptly faces the camera and repeats the same scenario directly to the audience. The omnipresence of impenetrability becomes his final epiphany.

In the symbol of the unfinished house, we have already observed how Fitzgerald’s work, even in its choices of detail, suits Pinter’s sensibility. Another of the novel’s motifs sympathetic with Pinter’s concerns consists in its depiction of communication. The novel contains a dozen references to “thundering silences” or similar lapses in speech, and the meetings between Stahr and Kathleen constitute tributes to the inarticulate. Their conversations never transcend the banal (which Pinter captures masterfully), and the wordlessness of their emotions and experiences is a frequent alibi in Cecilia’s laborious narration (which Pinter discards as unnecessary).

The conditions of speechlessness in Stahr and Kathleen render their motives and actions still less comprehensible, as her decision to make love to him and his to risk losing her materialize abruptly and inexplicably. Fitzgerald elucidates Stahr’s dilemma, the internal crisis that prevents him from acting to cement the relationship, and again we note the abrasive juxtaposition of the world of illusion with the world of reality.

He knew he could have said it then . . . for he knew it was, he knew he could not let her go now; but something else said to sleep on it as an adult, no romantic. And not to tell her till tomorrow. . . .

He was very busy the next morning, Saturday. At two o’clock, when he came from luncheon, there was a stack of telegrams—a company ship was lost in the arctic; a star was in disgrace; a writer was suing for one million dollars. Jews were dead miserably beyond the sea. The last telegram stared up at him:

I was married at noon today. Goodbye: and on a sticker attached, Send your answer by Western Union Telegram. [Pp. 149-50]

All that survives in the film from this is our advance knowledge that Kathleen has previous plans for marriage, Stahr’s failure to request interruption of these, and the telegram. To Stahr’s incessant and non-committal declarations, “I don’t want to lose you,” Kathleen stubbornly repeats her demand, “I want a quiet life” (p. 71). She expresses no interest in the movie industry or its product, and is immune to, even put off by, Stahr’s impressive stature in the eyes of the world.
STAHR. Do you ever go to the movies?
KATHLEEN. Oh . . . not much.
STAHR. Why not?
KATHLEEN. Should I?
STAHR. Millions of people do.
KATHLEEN. Why?
STAHR. Because movies are necessary to them. I give them what they need.
KATHLEEN. What you need.
They stand still.
STAHR. It's my life. [Pp. 64-65]

Her awareness of Stahr's need for authorial power and her disinterest in his fame and fortune make Kathleen even less accessible and more attractive to Stahr. Despite her apparent implacability, she reveals a certain vulnerability to Stahr's personal charm, and several times signals her willingness to commit herself to him. Stahr, however, misses his chances either through misinterpretation of her invitation or through an obstinate belief in his own ability to dictate eventualities.

KATHLEEN. We're getting married.
STAHR. Are you in love with him?
KATHLEEN. Oh yes. It's all arranged. He saved my life.
Pause.
KATHLEEN. I just wanted to see you once more.
Pause.
KATHLEEN. It's all arranged. [P. 88]

Although Kathleen's hesitant, elliptical speech here plainly offers Stahr an opportunity to assert his feelings for her, he remains silent. Shortly afterwards, during the moment which Fitzgerald describes preceding Stahr's receipt of the telegram, Stahr attempts and fails to proclaim his intentions. The film dialogue for this critical exchange, Stahr's missed proposal that results in his loss of Kathleen, proceeds as follows:

STAHR. Are you leaving California?
KATHLEEN. We might . . . I might . . . I don't know.
Pause.
KATHLEEN. Are you going away . . . for a holiday?
STAHR. No.
He stops the car, suddenly.
STAHR. Listen—
KATHLEEN. What?
Pause.
STAHR. Nothing. [P. 90]
Here, in the subtextual labyrinth of communication, Pinter conveys the concealed thoughts and dimensions of his characters, constructing his dialogue from detectable interior truths rather than from primarily narrative criteria. Thus, Stahr’s hopes and flaws emerge with equal clarity in his fateful omission.

Pinter’s characteristic concern with dominance and subservience, particularly evident in his playwriting and in his screenplay for *The Servant*, likewise obtains secure roots in Fitzgerald’s novel. Although Stahr’s weakening status becomes a focused issue only in the last pages of the draft portion, Fitzgerald’s outlines and notes indicate that the problem of power was to become central to the work. The carefully guarded motives and maneuvers of film industry potentates receive frequent attention in Cecilia’s narrative, and she observes in a metaphorical vein that her father’s office building resembles a “perpetual tightrope” (p. 28). Stahr has apparently discovered the potency of obfuscated motive in real as well as fictional worlds; his dramaturgical method profits him in both spheres of activity. He delegates no authority; as a “paternalistic employer,” he knows all the ropes, calls all the shots, and keeps all the secrets to himself. “There was nothing to question or argue. Stahr must be right always, not most of the time, but always—or the system would melt down like gradual butter” (p. 75). He dwells in an exile of solitude and disguise, and everything hinges on his first false step.

The contours of threat materialize gradually around Stahr; early references in the novel to the possibility of socialist revolution transform into union uprisings that challenge his paternalistic hierarchy. “She has never heard the word labor troubles,” Stahr sighs as he describes the perfect girl for his writers (p. 53). This threat, however, remains a thin motif until after Stahr’s receipt of the telegram announcing Kathleen’s marriage. Now the “labor troubles” begin to solidify as Stahr turns on them as a scapegoat for his frustration: “I want you to arrange something, Cecilia—I want to meet a Communist Party member” (p. 153). Brimmer, the Communist, thus assumes for Stahr the dimensions of The Intruder. The weakening executive’s sublimated hostility—his deliberate solicitation of a target for his frustrations and his confusion of Brimmer’s identity with that of “the American” whom Kathleen has married—clarifies long before he engages the Communist in a fist fight, and mistakes the man outright in the fog of regaining consciousness. Cecilia persuades Brimmer to leave, and then she turns to the outstretched Stahr.

After a moment he came awake with a terrific convulsion and bounced up on his feet.
"Where is he?" he shouted.
"Who?" I asked innocently.
"That American. Why in the hell did you have to marry him, you damn fool." [Pp. 165-66]

Stahr's mental exhaustion, exacerbated by unaccustomed drunkenness, has become so acute that he mistakes not only Brimmer for "the American," but Cecilia for Kathleen. Stahr, like Pinter's threesome in Old Times, has invested too heavily in the comfortable clarity of fantasy and has plunged headlong through its barriers, into its perils. Where in Old Times fraudulent allegations acquire the ominous power to transform reality, in Stahr's case they clash openly with empirical fact; his stab at the darker blue of the blueprint has revealed itself.

In yet another example of the novel's consonance with Pinter's devices, Stahr's fall from power finds expression in the inevitable party game, here ping pong. He challenges Brimmer to a match shortly before the fist fight, but eventually retires from the game, after flouting its rules by "batting a whole box of new balls across to Brimmer" (p. 164), to drink and watch the others play. Again the game captures perfectly in a metaphor the dynamics of Stahr's demise, and Pinter reproduces it faithfully in his script.

Fitzgerald's draft terminates at this point, as Stahr recovers from his decking by Brimmer and suggests that he and Cecilia spend the night at Doug Fairbanks's ranch. In order to unify and conclude the story at this point with dispatch, Pinter aborts the journey to Doug Fairbanks's ranch and manipulates the confrontation with Brimmer into greater significance.

Early on, Pinter focuses the tensions between Stahr and the members of the company board of directors over unwarranted expenditure. Stahr's insistence on retakes for perfection and his support for the making of money-losing "quality films" provoke visible, but carefully masked, opposition from the board. Pinter also insinuates disquiet among the rank and file (an idea that receives more attention in the screenplay than in the film); when Brimmer appears, he intrudes apparently at the request of the writers, not by Stahr's invitation. Cecilia hosts their meeting, and Stahr arrives fresh from the news of Kathleen's telegram. Pinter rapidly delineates the difference between the two men, inventing several exchanges between them to accomplish this task. The initial small talk between Stahr and Brimmer in the film establishes that Brimmer is a Tennessee Baptist and Stahr is a New York Jew: a singular contrasting of identities. Having already reassigned Brimmer to the role of a genuine intruder, Pinter writes deliberately against a typified Communist image in his characterization of him, moving the figure toward a
more generalized symbol of usurpation. We learn, for example, that Brimmer possesses a better education than Stahr.

CECILIA (to STAHR). You have done well by water. (to BRIMMER) And you by land.

STAHR. Sorry?

CECILIA. Anthony and Cleopatra. Did you recognize it?

STAHR. Shakespeare? No. I didn't get much Shakespeare at school.

How about you, Mr. Brimmer?

BRIMMER. Oh, a little. [P. 100]

For Pinter, Brimmer assumes representation of the ascending tide; he is educated, homogenized, and empty. Stahr, in some dialogue derived from the novel, accuses Brimmer of lacking belief even in Communism.

STAHR. I don't get to meet Reds very often. Are you a real Red?

BRIMMER. A real one.

STAHR. I guess some of you believe in it.

BRIMMER. Quite a few.

STAHR. Not you.

BRIMMER frowns.

BRIMMER. Oh yes.

STAHR. Oh no.

BRIMMER laughs.

BRIMMER. Oh yes. [P. 102]

Pinter's Stahr associates Brimmer's presence with a grab for power ("It looks to me like a try for power. I'll give them money but I won't give them power..."), and, although Brimmer speaks only on behalf of the writers, Stahr imagines a much greater constituency for him. Bowing out of the ping pong match, he addresses Cecilia: "I'm going to beat up Brimmer... This fellow has an influence over you. Over all you young people. You don't know what you're doing" (p. 107). As Fitzgerald denotes, Stahr then attempts a physical attack on Brimmer, who easily knocks him unconscious.

After Stahr regains consciousness, Pinter is on his own. Stahr, according to the film, stays the night, ill, at Cecilia's house. We observe the silhouette of Cecilia's high-ranking board member father, Mr. Brady, observing from the window as Stahr staggers into the house. In the morning Stahr receives a message that the board will convene immediately in an emergency session. Stahr, arriving late and in dark glasses to conceal his bruised eye, has clearly become the odd man out from the moment of his entrance into the tensely silent conference room. Brady addresses him thickly:
BRADY. They've [the New York office] asked me to be the spokesman of this board in all further discussions. (He sips his coffee and smiles.) They don't consider that trying to beat up the writers' representative is in the best interests of the company. I just want to tell you that this board endorses these views. We also recommend that you go away for a long rest. Take a break. Go to Tahiti or somewhere.

STAHR stares at BRADY.

STAHR. This studio will fall without me.

BRADY (sympathetically). Take a break, Monroe.

STAHR. This is a waste of time. I'll be talking to New York.

BRADY. They'll be glad to speak to you. Any time. Oh, they said to be sure to go see a doctor about your eye. [Pp. 112-13]

Except for the parting conciliation of another board member ("Mr. Stahr . . . we'll see the studio doesn't fall"), this speech comprises the last unrepeated dialogue of the film. As Stahr walks toward his office and closes himself inside, the screenplay prescribes a montage of fragments from previous scenes intercut with highly contrived clips from movie sequences.

144. INT. CORRIDOR.

STAHR walks down the corridor, passing the photographs of stars on the walls.

He swallows a pill.

A watchman is testing locks.

STAHR passes him, gets to his office, goes in.

145. INT. STAHN'S OFFICE.

STAHR standing in the middle of his office.

Sudden cuts of:

146. A COWBOY RIDING INTO A WESTERN TOWN.

147. A CARTOON.

148. DIDI.

DIDI. Nobody likes me or something.

149. TWO MEN FIGHTING IN A STORM.

150. BRIMMER, LAUGHING.

BRIMMER. Oh yes.

151. HUNDREDS OF NEGROES PLAYING WHITE PIANOS.

152. CECILIA.

CECILIA. We don't use that line this year.

153. GARBO IN 'CAMILLE'.

154. DOCTOR.

DOCTOR. Any pain?

155. THE SAN FRANCISCO EARTHQUAKE.

156. STAHN IN HIS OFFICE. HE IS STANDING.

This set-up is exactly the same as that in scene 66 with BOXLEY, except that STAHN is talking directly into the camera. [Pp. 113-14]
The film substituted voice-over references to the "perfect girl," Stahr's failing health, and Kathleen's wish for "a quiet life" for this montage, but both screenplay and film terminate their sequences in Stahr's abrupt confrontation of the camera and repetition of the screenwriting anecdote. During Stahr's reiteration of his monologue, Pinter intersperses shots of Kathleen performing some of the activities that Stahr describes: she burns Stahr's letter while secretly observed by a man, presumably her fiancé. Her inaccessibility and ambiguity become exactly the filmic reality that Stahr has declared, except that she is not susceptible to his authority. The world now reflects his divination of its impregnability, but it does not yield to his efforts to penetrate and control it. He ends by repeating his earlier answer to the bewildered screenwriter.

BOXLEY (V.O.). What happens?

STAHR. I don't know. I was just making pictures. [P. 117]

In these final moments of the film, Stahr dictates what now becomes his prevailing statement of the condition of existence: exhaustion, opacity, and surveillance.

As the board members drive away in their limousines, Stahr leaves his office and walks through the film lots in silence. He finally disappears into the vaulted cavern of a sound stage, which echoes his final words in a stunning effect which, due possibly to technical inabilities, does not occur in the film.

EXT. SOUND STAGE. OVER STAHR.

The door to the sound stage is open. Black inside. STAHR walks into the blackness.

He disappears. The sound of his steps.

Over this, the echo of 'I don't want to lose you.' [P. 117]

The temple of fantasy reverberates with and mirrors Stahr's futile sentiment, establishing at once his passage through the looking glass into the unyielding world of his own fabrication: his absorption by a cave of fiction that can only repeat to him his own bleak commandments while ironically converting them into an ambiguous lamentation of his fall from command. Stahr's exile into the spheres of fiction is simultaneously complete, unavailing, and impotent. The studio pragmatists have seized the power.

The themes of Stahr's predicament are conspicuous in the two major Pinter plays that precede his work on The Last Tycoon (1975): Old Times (1970) and No Man's Land (1974). In both of these plays, the characters strive to define and manipulate each other through the contrivance of stories and conceits. Although Deeley, Kate, Anna, Hirst, and
Spooner tend to disguise their fabrications as memories, their quest for authority and their strategy for attaining it are similar to those of Stahr. If Stahr, however, is preempted by a reality that escapes his control, the characters in the stage plays become victims of their own over-empowered games. Here Pinter seems to suggest that, even when the empirical world recedes, all essays into artifice will be contested at least by contradictory allegations, and that such impositions will prove ultimately unsatisfactory as techniques for surviving in milieux of fact or fancy.

Although he narrates technically neither novel nor film, Stahr represents a form of narrator, who invents plot-lines for his own life and for the lives of others. His position of power in the film industry makes an ideal and irresistible vehicle for this practice; it stimulates in him an appetite for fiction, and it confers on him the leverage to exercise his inclination. As a producer of films, he dictates a world of unilateral dimensions, controlling the composition and outcome of all the stories, whether they belong to the fictions of cinema or to the realities of his subordinates. Stahr legislates all the variables in his professional dominion. Inevitably, however, the world beyond Stahr's jurisdiction tempts him with its promises of risks and stakes capable of rendering deeper satisfaction; but his effort to maneuver in these autonomous provinces is doomed because he cannot escape the habits and appetites of a movie tycoon. The perimeters of fiction and fact disintegrate in Stahr's mind; he finally becomes trapped in a story of his own initiation, and it manipulates him according to its own unfathomable teleology.

Like Barrett in The Servant, Stahr wages his living in games; but Barrett's knowledge of the phenomenological subjective perspective proves accurate in his situation, and he succeeds in controlling reality through game-like strategies. Stahr, however, overbids and miscalculates his hand, and he becomes the victim of unreckoned forces. If Barrett's success at manipulating Tony depended on Tony's susceptibility to definition and on Barrett's evasion of intractable roles, then Stahr's misfortune is assured in both respects. The servant successfully insinuates his scheme, and the tycoon tragically ordains his myths: each according to the perspectives indigenous to his status. Pinter's discovery of the self-referential value of movie-making as a metaphor for the dynamics of this interplay between chosen and unchosen phenomena will figure prominently in his subsequent adaptation of The French Lieutenant's Woman.