

# Pinter the Adapter: *The Proust Screenplay* in Notes and Drafts

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## 1

It seems beyond doubt that Harold Pinter has a soft spot for his screenplay version of Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*; Pinter has written and spoken about the adaptation on several occasions, but by far the most striking of his comments on the film-that-was-to-be may still be the short and decisive sentence which we find in an introductory piece, written by Pinter himself in 1978, for the Methuen edition of the screenplay: "Working on *À la Recherche du Temps Perdu* [sic] was the best working year of my life" ("Introduction" viii). That Pinter has outlived his words for more than a quarter of a century is hardly an issue. For one thing, he has not as yet retracted the comment. Also, and more pertinently, there is a simple and brutal fact that the Pinter version of *À la recherche* has never had an end-product, in this case, a film: if Pinter concluded the above-mentioned introduction by informing us of the film-team's unsuccessful attempts at "get[ting] the money to make the film" (viii), the situation remains exactly the same today. Whether or not Pinter saw it as such in 1978, at least from the filmic point of view his *À la recherche* was still very much of a work-in-progress then as it is now, which, rather ironically, may partly account for Pinter's confidence in pointing to his "best working year." Put bluntly, Pinter's memory of that particular "working year," which roughly coincides with the year 1972 ("Introduction" vii), has not been spoilt by an actual film.

It would not be difficult for us to imagine the sheer complexity of the question if we were to ask a screenwriter to what extent she or he, or more precisely, a script that she or he has written, will have had a say during the shooting of a film, not to mention when a film is cut in the editing room. Michael Billington, for example, draws our attention to another of Pinter's screenplays, *The Go-Between*, whose intricate "flash-forwards were subject to a good deal of internal criticism, particularly from the movie's editor, Reginald Beck" (Billington 207). We can easily see what must have troubled Beck when, in the published version of the screenplay, we come across such finely crafted sequences as:

Exterior. River bank.

MARIAN standing holding the long coils of her hair in front of her.

LEO runs down to her.

MARIAN. [...] Has that man gone?

LEO. Yes. He went off in a hurry. His name is Ted

Burgess, he's a farmer. Do you know him?

MARIAN. I may have met him.

Exterior. Village street. Morning. PRESENT [sic]  
A car appears round the corner and draws slowly to a halt. The engine is cut off. No one emerges. The village street is silent. Over this shot, MARIAN's voice:

MARIAN. It's dripping on my dress.

Exterior. River bank. Twilight. PAST [sic]

Close-up of LEO. (Pinter, *The Go-Between* 302)

Billington's verdict on the result, that "although the final cut did modify Pinter's flash-forward sequences, they still seem to me to give the film its point and purpose" (207), in turn seems to elucidate a kind of unavoidable subtlety around the very problem of filmic "modification." Quite inadvertently on Pinter's part, and if we once again remember that his writing of a screen version of *À la recherche* was not meant to be a mere exercise, unfortunate circumstances which followed the "working year" have in fact let the writer keep the treasure, namely, his adaptation of Proust's work, precisely the way it got assembled in the first place.

How, then, did the "working year" proceed? In this essay I shall try to delineate an overall picture of what happened during the year 1972, which has proven special, in more than one sense of the term, not only for Pinter himself but inevitably also for those of us who are interested in Pinter's roughly forty-year-long screenwriting career. Materials for analysis shall mainly be Pinter's handwritten and typed drafts as well as notes which are contained in boxes 45, 46, and 47 in the Pinter Archive at the British Library, St. Pancras. The three boxes keep all publicly-accessible handwritten and typed materials for the Pinter version of *À la recherche*. As shall be seen, notes that we find in the three boxes are not exclusively attributed to Pinter; a few of the notes were made either by director Joseph Losey or, presumably, by Barbara Bray. The latter acted as an "advisor" (Pinter, "Introduction" vii) to Pinter and Losey in their ill-fated project, that is, to create a feature-length Proust film for commercial release. Judging from the materials in the boxes, things seemed to have started in so promising a manner.

## 2

With his adaptation of *À la recherche* Pinter has firmly placed himself in a group of "great" twentieth-century writers whose major works include comments, either brief

or substantial, on Proust and his novel. If, for example, we find in *Illuminations* that Walter Benjamin is an astute reader of Proust, to which we will come back later, Samuel Beckett on his part elaborates on the question of Proustian imagery, among other things, in an intensely long piece of prose entitled *Proust*. When it comes to Pinter's "comments" on *À la recherche*, which have totally been consumed, as it were, by the resultant screenplay adaptation, we have to consult some of his notes in the archive to get a glimpse of his "prosaic," by which I here mean non-script-like, interpretation of the Proust novel. In box 45 is a manuscript, undated and unpagged with partial deletions and/or corrections, which, rather tellingly as well as conveniently for us, begins with an incomplete sentence, "1st [sic] thoughts on Proust."<sup>1</sup> The manuscript, hereafter ms. 1, proves crucial precisely because it reveals nothing more, or, for that matter, less, than a "flow" of Pinter's procreative musings over the would-be film. We might also point out that his "thoughts" in the manuscript are far from self-contained; towards the end of ms. 1 is a sentence which, based on the above-mentioned information about the film project, we may safely assume is directly addressed to either Losey or Bray, or both: "You may also notice, however, certain 'ideas' (if they can be called such) which I think are worthy of further discussion" (ms. 1). Accordingly, the assumption is that at least one person other than Pinter read ms. 1 in its entirety, and shortly after it was constructed, so that she or he would be able to comment on it.

Pinter, in ms. 1, writes much about the colossal length of *À la recherche*, wondering how, as an adapter, he might tackle the utmost problem of turning the Proust novel into a commercially viable screenplay, in other words, a potential film of reasonable length. After making an opening comment on the novel, that "[t]here is such a vast canvas [?], such a mass and density of subject matter" (ms. 1), Pinter promptly lays out what we might call an unofficial disclaimer: "To attempt to render it all [...] would not only result in a 10 hour film but would prove to be ponderous, ungainly and in fact contrary to the spirit of the work" (ms. 1). The sentence is highly significant especially when we look at it in the context of the resultant screenplay, which, after all, is a piece made up only of 455 shots (*The Proust Screenplay* 166). If anyone willing to try her or his hand at adapting Proust's novel should be reminded that she or he more likely than not would be fighting a losing battle, we might also point to a few cases in which screenplays have successfully been completed and, just as successfully, led to film productions. Interestingly, and in fact quite understandably, the general tendency seems to lean towards a partial adaptation of the Proust novel, that is, a director and/or a screenwriter

choosing to work on a volume from the novel rather than drawing upon *À la recherche* as a whole. A Raul Ruiz film entitled *Le Temps retrouvé* (Frodon 14), which was shot in 1999, immediately springs to mind as a fine example of partial adaptation in the sense described above. Taking a chunk out of the novel was indeed a "custom" (Tadié 732) in Proust's lifetime: *À la recherche* appeared in "magazine extracts" (732), which, in the context of our discussion, we may duly regard as another kind of adaptation. Nonetheless, when Pinter in ms. 1 writes that "[t]he film has to be bold in attempting to distill essence, to reflect, to deal with impressions" [underline original], there is no reason for us to assume that the adapter has a particular volume of the Proust novel in mind. Nowhere in ms. 1 do we find any of the titles of the volumes, like *Du côté de chez Swann*, and Pinter in the manuscript does not discuss the possibility of his ever concentrating on a particular volume.

The problem of length, as far as *À la recherche* and Pinter's adaptation of it are concerned, will always and necessarily entail the question of what Pinter in ms. 1 calls "shape"; the screenwriter muses upon the "shape of the film" in a manner which, at this stage of his working on the adaptation, is still highly academic and not easy for us to decipher:

The shape of the film depends on how we treat the extra-temporal considerations in the work; the most important considerations, since they make it possible for the author to write the book. Since these are not susceptible to the destruction of time, [?] art, which springs from this intuitive understanding, is equally unsusceptible [sic]. (ms. 1)

If we turn to comments made by non-screenwriters on Proust's novel and seek a fair parallel to what Pinter can possibly mean by the "shape of the film," a probable candidate may be found in Benjamin, especially when he writes about the "convolution" of Proustian time: "The eternity which Proust opens to view is convoluted time, not boundless time. [...] To observe the interaction of ageing and remembering means to penetrate to the heart of Proust's world, to the universe of convolution" (206). Then, what does Pinter imply with the "extra-temporal considerations" which "are not susceptible to the destruction of time"? I suggest that an answer, if a tentative one, should be spotted five paragraphs down the manuscript, where, to us quite abruptly, Pinter brings the word "dream" (ms. 1) into his chain of "thoughts on Proust." We might say that the screenwriter has hit upon the word which, if he uses it in his own manner rather than according to the way it is rendered in the novel, will serve as a key to the next stage of his working on the adaptation. "If dream, nevertheless a dream which is

finally shaped" (ms. 1), writes he, and a sentence follows by way of explanation: "The characters are trapped in time but above all there exists a perception into where & how time can be and is obliterated" (ms. 1). Eleven paragraphs further down, Pinter seems more confident about the kind of direction he could take in planning a screenplay; that much we may say primarily because the word "dream" is now used by the screenwriter as if it were a set term: "[the] [o]nly way to approach this film is as a dream" (ms. 1). With confidence comes the screenwriter's more screenplay-oriented, that is, more practical as well as forward-looking, description of the "dream":

The narrator reflects, remembers, receives impressions. Certain impressions & certain kinds of memory are more significant to him than others. This crucial distinction which he makes has to be made evident. The use of voice over [sic] may be necessarily [sic] but, if so, I would think most sparingly. (ms. 1)

Pinter in ms. 1 is first and foremost a reader of the Proust novel. If, as Mario T. Valdés succinctly puts it, the reader of *À la recherche* should be expected to "[reach] a more powerful position of superiority over time than even Marcel himself, for the reader's remembrance of things past is both Proust's and his or her own" (45), what we discern in ms. 1 is that Pinter the screenwriter has consciously started taking advantage of the "superior" status, which Pinter the reader has justifiably been enjoying with or without the prospect of a film adaptation.

### 3

The "next" stage, which was mentioned in the section above, begins to unfold through a trio of materials that we also find in box 45. I shall call the three notes which we discuss here a "trio" mainly because, unlike ms. 1 or any other material by Pinter in the same box, they are all clearly dated; even more crucially, we know from the dates shown that the notes in question were made in a relatively short span of seventeen days. By looking at the three notes in chronological order, we will be able to trace at least a portion of the middle ground between Pinter's musings over the would-be film and his first draft of the screenplay, which is contained in box 47. I do not intend to suggest, of course, that none of the other manuscripts or typescripts in box 45 could have been constructed within the above-mentioned time span.

The first of the three notes is a manuscript, hereafter ms. 2, with the date "Feb 29" (ms. 2) on it; partial deletions and/or corrections are indicated in the manuscript, but it has no page numbers. To those of us who are familiar with the screenplay in published form, there is an almost eerie reminiscence of the resultant screenplay in ms. 2, which

at first glance may simply look like a list of words. Of particular interest is the very beginning of the "list":

Train  
Sea  
Venice  
Dining room  
(Marcel leaving Charlus & Jupien?)  
Marcel approaching on cobbles  
(tripping)  
Upstairs to Library [deleted]  
Waiter – Spoon on plate  
M's face? (Steeple?)  
Doors open. Faces  
Sea  
Spoon on plate  
Matinee  
Napkin  
Venice  
Water in Pipes  
Marcel in library sipping [in the margin]  
Train  
Matinee  
Napkin  
Trip on Cobbles  
Dining room  
Sea  
[...] (ms. 2)

In the published screenplay, what the screenwriter himself calls the "opening sequence" (*The Proust Screenplay* 6) is made up of thirty-four shots (3-6) [or thirty-five, if, following Billington (227), we include shot 35].<sup>2</sup> The narrator-character Marcel "moves backwards from middle-age to childhood" (Regal 91) along the sequence "until we arrive at the first scene that Pinter draws from *Swann's Way*" (91). Remarkably, none of the characters in the thirty-four shots utters any audible sentences, phrases, or even words, which we assume is why the sequence has often been regarded by Pinter critics and scholars as *the* subject for discussion in their writings on the screenplay; "thirty-seven years flash past in images and sounds before the first word is spoken," quips Martin S. Regal (91). If I quote from the published version of the sequence but at the same time deliberately omit the parts which are not relevant to what I just quoted from the manuscript, shots 8-21 look like this:

8. The dining room at Balbec. [...]  
9. Exterior. [...]  
In long shot a middle-aged man (MARCEL) walks towards the PRINCE DE GUERMANTES' house. [...]  
10. Interior. Library. [...]  
A waiter inadvertently knocks a spoon against a

plate.

MARCEL, large in foreground, looks up.

11. Interior. Drawing room. [...]

The drawing room doors open. [...]

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

12. The sea from the window. [...]

13. Spoon hitting plate.

14. Continue MARCEL's progress into the drawing room. Voices. Faces. [...]

15. In the library, MARCEL, a glass by his side, wipes his lips with a stiff napkin, which crackles.

16. Venice. [...]

17. In the drawing room, a group of very old women, talking.

18. Water pipes in the library.

The shrill noise of water running through the pipes.

19. Silent countryside from the railway carriage.

20. Exterior. [...]

A car swerves to avoid MARCEL.

He steps back, trips on the cobbles. [...]

21. The dining room at Balbec. [...] (*The Proust Screenplay* 3-4)

Once we remember that Pinter the playwright has been well known for working from inspiration, sometimes being perfectly capable of starting a play and finishing a "rough first draft" (Billington 211) of it "within three days" (211),<sup>3</sup> it is quite easy for us to see how strikingly different an approach Pinter the screenwriter took in working on an adaptation of *À la recherche*: while he prepared ms. 2 at the end of February, and more notes were to follow soon afterwards, Pinter did not start writing his first draft of the screenplay until mid May,<sup>4</sup> to which we will come back later. Nonetheless, ms. 2 clearly tells us more: the sheer amount of time and energy which Pinter poured into the adaptation of Proust's novel does not disguise the fact that the screenwriter was working from the "right" kind of inspiration, so to speak, as early as the month of February. The long process that followed ms. 2 would hardly have been described as being turbulent with full of trials and errors; we might assert instead that it was more likely of a steady, constructive, and astonishingly consistent nature.

One conspicuous exception to the kind of consistency mentioned above has to do with the total lack of reference to the colour "yellow" in ms. 2 and a critical position given to that particular colour in the published screenplay.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, the colour "yellow" is explained in the resultant version in such a manner that it cannot *randomly* refer to any of the pigments in the "yellow" family; whenever a shot calls for a "yellow screen," the reader of the published text is supposed to see, with her or his mind's eye, the

colour of the "patch of yellow wall" (*The Proust Screenplay* 5) in one of Vermeer's paintings, *View of Delft* (5). If we take the connection for granted, thinking that Pinter's explication of the colour is true to what Proust wrote in the novel, we obviously have to think again. A group of three words which appears more than once in ms. 2, "Vinteuil—White screen" (ms. 2), points to the kind of idea that was cherished by Pinter as of the end of February. Pinter clearly had a different colour in mind at the time; also, it was definitely not with Vermeer's painting but apparently with Vinteuil's music that the screenwriter was planning to associate the colour of his choice, which brings us to the second of the above-mentioned three notes in box 45.

The second piece in the "trio" is a five-page-long typescript, hereafter ts. 1; dated "March 6" (ts. 1), it has a title on the first page: "Notes, Images, Observations. (In no particular order)" (ts. 1) [underline original]. Evidently, Pinter in ts. 1 is preoccupied with the complex question of how, in adapting *À la recherche*, he could possibly render the ghostly character of Vinteuil, the music he composed, his daughter, and the enormous effect the music has on Marcel and some of the other characters; while on page 2 of the typescript we find the phrase "[t]he crucial importance in the film of Vinteuil and his music" (ts. 1), on the fifth and final page is a pair of paragraphs written in the style of a slightly distorted question-and-answer:

Is it legitimate to refer to Vinteuil menage [sic] in Combray garden, as delicately as possible? (ts. 1)

Desirable, in Verdurin musical evening (Vinteuil septet) to remark that The Friend had salvaged [sic] this work. Also desirable to show some of Marcel's reactions to the music, what he draws from it. (ts. 1)

It is certainly not the case that "Vinteuil and his music" is relegated to a position of minor importance in the resultant version of Pinter's adaptation; on the contrary, with a meticulous as well as rich elaboration of the question regarding Vinteuil and his music, the published Pinter version fully backs up what the screenwriter considered "desirable," if we borrow his expression, at the time he prepared ts. 1. Crudely put, the Vinteuil music and the Vermeer painting are of equal importance in the resultant screenplay, whereas we cannot even be certain if, as of ts. 1, Pinter was thinking of "using" Vermeer's painting in a serious manner. To this and the question of the colour "white" we shall come back in the next section of the essay.

Most likely drawing on ms. 2, Pinter in the last of the above-mentioned three notes lays out a slightly better-focused plan for shots, sequences, and scenes in the would-be film. The fourteen-page-long typescript, hereafter ts. 2, has the date "16/3/72" (ts. 2) on it, and corrections are added by hand. On pages 13 and 14, for example, the

adapter's plan for the final sequence reads:

The bell.

The Duc de Guermantes, extremely old.

Mlle St. Loup. The bell.

The boots.

The trees.

The steeples.

Possibly over last section Marcel's voice over [sic] for first and only time.

Swann goes out of the garden gate and closes it behind him.

The Vivonne.

The streets at Combray.

The Garden at Combray. (ts. 2)<sup>6</sup>

If we find ts. 2 rather eclectic in terms of style as well as content, and by that we mean the "word-list" format of ms. 2 is retained in ts. 2 but not without some fairly descriptive phrases and/or sentences being added to or inserted between some of the words on the "list," the typescript justifiably betrays the manner in which the screenwriter proceeds from one "list" to another "list" and so on until he is ready to start working on his very first draft of the screenplay. We must remember that something of the "word-list" quality is detectable even in the published version of the adaptation. Not surprisingly, then, we will see in the next section that Pinter's notes shall have "evolved," as it were, quite smoothly into his first draft.

I suggest that one of Pinter's undated and unpaginated manuscripts in box 46 should be traced back to a period between mid March and mid May, the reason being, unlike in any of the "trio," the characters in the manuscript, hereafter ms. 3, are given distinct lines to utter. This is another way of saying that some of the words, phrases, and sentences in the "lists" turned, or developed, into fragments of dialogues and/or monologues during those two months. One could also argue, on the other hand, that the adapter constantly experimented with characters' lines while he was planning an overall structure of the screenplay, in which case at least part of ms. 3 may possibly be traced back to sometime before mid March. If we look at the scene which features Swann confronting Odette:

O [Odette]—I have never done anything of that sort with Mme V [Verdurin] or with any woman.

Silence

S [Swann]—Can you swear to me on the medal round your neck?

O—Oh you make me sick! [...]

S—Tell me, upon your medal, yes or no, whether you have ever done those things.

O—How do I know? I don't [sic] know what you mean. What things? Perhaps I have, years ago, when I didn't

know what I was doing, perhaps 2 or 3 times. I don't [sic] know.

P [Pause]

S—You say ... it was a long time ago. Was it with anyone I know? (ms. 3)

Granted that the dialogues and monologues in ms. 3 are heavily as well as necessarily dependent on what the characters in Proust's novel say to one another or to themselves, we might point to the quintessentially Pinteresque directions "silence" and "pause" in some of the dialogues in ms. 3, the exchange between Swann and Odette quoted above being a fine example.

#### 4

At first glance, there is no doubt as to which of the materials in boxes 45, 46, and 47 in the Pinter Archive we should identify as the adapter's first draft of the screenplay. In box 47 we find a 197-page-long typescript, which is bluntly entitled "First Draft." Nonetheless, the question regarding the first draft proves to be much more complicated than it seems, that is, with a photocopy of the entire typescript<sup>7</sup> in the same box. Clearly, we cannot dismiss the photocopy as a mere duplicate of the "original" typescript: partial deletions and/or corrections are made by hand in both versions, and *slightly differently* for each version; what is more, the photocopied version shows that the "original" typescript was partially deleted and/or corrected for the first time before it was photocopied. In short, each version contains deletions and corrections which the screenwriter made on two separate occasions. We shall only refer to the photocopied version in our discussion, the reason for which comes from the fact that, unlike in the "original" typescript version, the date of the second partial deletions and/or corrections is indicated in the photocopied version, hereafter ts. 3.

If we try to trace the history of "First Draft" according to ts. 3, it looks fairly straightforward: Pinter started writing his first draft on "May 11. [19]72" (ts. 3), which is the date we find on page 1; the screenwriter finished the draft on "20 September 1972" (ts. 3), which is the first of the two dates that appear on the final page; Pinter then proceeded to make what he on the final page calls the "correction" (ts. 3), and it was finished on "10 October" (ts. 3), which is the second of the two dates on the final page. Since the word "correction" and the second date are both entered by hand on the photocopied sheet, we assume that the "correction" refers to what we in the paragraph above called the screenwriter's second partial deletions and/or corrections. The chronology nevertheless has another dimension. In box 45 among manuscripts and typescripts by Pinter are Losey's six-page-long note, which is dated "3RD JULY 1972" (Losey 1), and a ten-page-long note,

presumably prepared by Bray, with the date "9.9.72" ([Bray?] 1) on it.<sup>8</sup> Even a most cursory comparison between ts. 3 and those notes would be enough for us to realise that Pinter's "First Draft" reveals much about the screenwriter at this stage of his working on the adaptation, namely, how willingly as well as carefully he listened to both Losey's and Bray's comments and suggestions. In what follows, I shall focus on a few of the corrections which, upon his collaborators' advice, the screenwriter made in the first draft.

Film critics and theorists tend to discuss Losey and Pinter, together or separately, in such a manner that more often than not the work of the director, with or without Pinter's participation, and the work of the screenwriter, with or without Losey's participation, end up looking nearly as good as inseparable from each other anyway. When, for example, James Palmer and Michael Riley write, "Losey's films neither insist on nor ignore causality; instead his characters are more often compelled by motives that are ambiguous or uncertain rather than simple or straightforward" (11), we may wonder if they are not talking about Pinter as well at the same time. Also worth mentioning is the way Gilles Deleuze sums up Losey, Pinter, and Proust in a note to a chapter in his book *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*; to the reader, it almost seems as if the names of the director, the screenwriter, and the novelist melt into one another, or become interchangeable, as Deleuze describes how the three are different from a director like Luchino Visconti:

[...] [Bruno Villien] credits Losey-Pinter with an awareness of time which would be lacking in Visconti, who would give an almost naturalistic version of Proust. The opposite would rather be the case: Visconti is in a profound sense a film-maker of time, while the "naturalism" specific to Losey leads him to subordinate time to ordinary [sic] worlds and their drives [...]. It is a point of view which is also present in Proust. (296-97)

The note which was prepared by Losey in July exclusively concerns what he calls Pinter's "first draft" (Losey 1) of the screenplay; to be more precise, the copy which Losey had in his hand at the time was that of Pinter's draft-in-progress. Judging from what he writes in the note, long before the director got hold of the draft-in-progress he had already made a number of comments and suggestions on the adapter's ideas and plans for the would-be film. If indeed we are entitled to put the names Pinter and Losey together for discussion, we might be able to say that, by the time the draft-in-progress was sent to the director, he and the screenwriter had been talking to each other more or less on the same wavelength not merely in general terms of two "ambiguity"-drawn people agreeing

on their tastes but in much more specific terms as well. The assumption should partly explain the fact that Losey's comments and suggestions in the above-mentioned note tend to be rather technical, almost to a sobering effect. For example, while explaining to the screenwriter that some selected scenes in the film "would be shot in colour stock and printed in black and white" (Losey 1) [underlines original], the director also draws the screenwriter's attention to a few of the swearwords in the characters' lines: "[...] I believe that certain phrases, which are peculiarly English, should be avoided, such as 'bloody' ... 'blasted' ... et al" (Losey 3). As briefly mentioned above, we know that those comments and suggestions were meticulously followed by Pinter when he made corrections in his first draft.

Of particular interest to us is the fact that, upon the director's advice, Pinter at this point dropped the idea of using a "white screen" in the would-be film; on page 1 of ts. 3, for example, is a penned-in correction which reads: "White screen → Yellow" [underline original]. Contrary to what we might think, it turns out that Losey in his note was not actually against the colour "white" per se but was simply being practical over the whole idea: "I have already expressed to you my technical worries about getting a pure white screen, because of dirt, scratches and vibrations from the projector. We may have to think in terms of a single or pastel colours" (Losey 1). What exactly led Pinter to decide on the colour "yellow" from the Vermeer painting is not made clear in any of the materials prepared by the screenwriter, but he certainly describes in two of the manuscripts in box 45, which are dated October 2nd and 3rd respectively, how Vermeer's "yellow" should be introduced into the would-be film.

The note which we assume was written by Bray in early September has a title on its first page, and it tells us that the author of the note, hereafter Bray, had by that time been given a copy of Pinter's first draft "up to p. 134" ([Bray?] 1). Apart from pointing to the words, phrases, and sentences which "S. M." ([Bray?] 1), presumably C. K. Scott Moncrieff, had translated from the French in what she in the note calls a "misleading" (1) manner, Bray makes suggestions, as she has done since Pinter was working on his preliminary ideas for the would-be film, that have much to do with the overall structure of the screenwriter's adaptation.<sup>9</sup> For example, on page 7 of ts. 3 is a line which, without the corrections, goes:

Camera observes Marcel peering down, half hidden, at his window.

After the corrections, it reads:

Swann observes Marcel peering down, half hidden, at his window. Th [sic] eyes meet/[...]

Here, the screenwriter replaces the eye of the "camera"

with the character "Swann," while he adds a description about Swann's and Marcel's "eyes" to the original sentence; if we look at Bray's note, it is evident that the changes made by Pinter correspond with one of the suggestions which, with the general structure of the screenplay in mind, Bray succinctly puts forward: "Marcel, 'peering down,' might exchange a look with Swann that could be used later to help us see why Marcel's various perplexities about love at Combray are associated with the Odette-Swann story" (2).

\*

In her study of Beckett's play manuscripts, Rosemary Pountney aptly points out that, whenever we delve into notes and drafts left by a writer like Beckett, there is a clear danger of our destroying "the richness of possibility inherent in the published text" (xv). Pinter, we might assume, comes close to Beckett in that respect as he does in many other respects. After all, without the "richness of possibility," none of Pinter's plays, screenplays, or pieces of prose would have much to do with the stylistic as well as semantic quality which has long been known as the Pinteresque. Curiously enough, in examining Pinter's notes and drafts we come to realise that the so-called Pinteresque is hardly a product of the author severely and drastically trimming what he has written. While each sheet of paper in boxes 45, 46, and 47 *does* contribute to our gradual but steady undermining of the "richness of possibility" which the screenplay in its published form unfailingly emanates, we also find that some elements of the Pinteresque are already quite active in the earliest of the adapter's notes for the would-be screenplay. Nothing, as it turns out, shall be *explained away* through Pinter's notes and drafts since they are, albeit in varying degrees, all sufficiently Pinteresque. Even if we choose to regard each instance of the Pinteresque as a "sign," we might remember at the same time that, according to J. Hillis Miller, "[a]ny sign is to some degree meaningless or possessed of a unique non-repeatable or untranslatable meaning" (95). This seems to imply that a less complicated approach to the materials in the Pinter Archive will make more sense; I have, in other words, tried to show in this essay that Pinter's notes and drafts can be analysed as verbal/visual *moments* of what Elisabeth Weber, after Jacques Derrida, calls "written improvisation" (2).

### Notes

This piece is an expanded version of a paper which I read at a meeting of ASH Colloquia, Clare Hall, Cambridge, on 20 June 2006.

<sup>1</sup> Throughout the section, quotations from ms. 1 do not include words, phrases, or sentences which have been deleted by the screenwriter. While the quotations *do* include

the screenwriter's corrections, they are shown only in the corrected versions.

<sup>2</sup> I discussed the "opening sequence" from a different point of view in a previous essay; see Naoko Yagi, "From Proust to Pinter: Colour, Sound, Movement, and Montage," *English Literature* 84 (2002): 126-42.

<sup>3</sup> Billington here refers to *Old Times* (211).

<sup>4</sup> As mentioned in the previous sections, Pinter had Bray and Losey give comments on his ideas, which at least partly explains the amount of time he needed before he actually started writing the first draft of the screenplay. For example, on page 5 of the second of his dated notes in box 45 [for more, see the section], Pinter summarises some of Bray's suggestions on the general structure of the would-be film.

<sup>5</sup> The colour "yellow" was also discussed from a different point of view in the essay referred to in note 2.

<sup>6</sup> The quotation does not include corrections added to the typescript, since their date(s) cannot be determined.

<sup>7</sup> Some pages in the photocopy are replaced by carbon copies of the appropriate pages in the typescript.

<sup>8</sup> There are altogether three notes which we assume were prepared by Bray in box 45, with one having the date "7.3.1972" ([Bray?]) on it.

<sup>9</sup> See note 4.

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