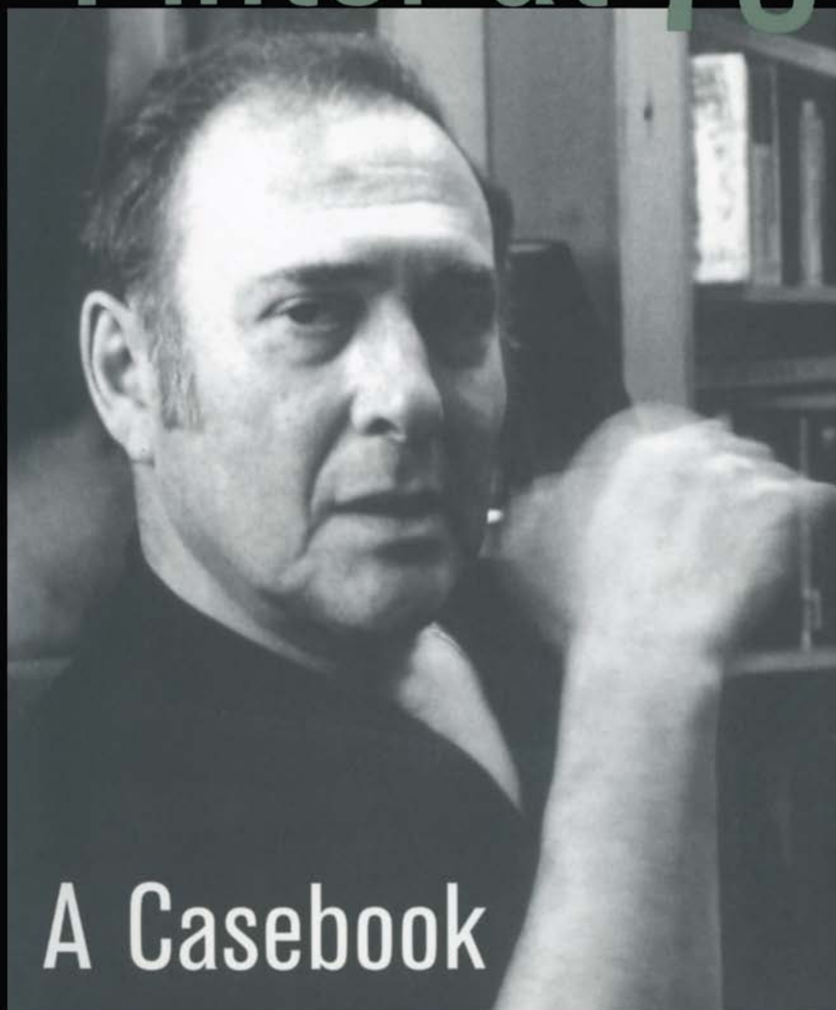
Pinter at 70



A Casebook

Edited by Lois Gordon

PINTER AT 70

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CONTENTS

General Editor's Note
Kimball King ix

Preface to the Second Edition
Lois Gordon xi

Introduction to the First Edition
Lois Gordon xxiii

Chronology
Lois Gordon xliii

Creative Process and Meaning--Some Remarks of Pinter's "Letter to Peter Wood"
Martin Esslin 3

The Economy of *Betrayal*
Ruby Cohn 13

Time for Change in *No Man's Land*
Austin E. Quigley 33

Last to Go: A Structuralist Reading
David Lodge 61

Monologue: The Play of Words
Linda Ben-Zvi 81

The Dumb Waiter, *The Collection*,
The Lover, and *The Homecoming*:
A Revisionist Approach
George E. Wellwarth 95

Displacement in Time and Space:
Harold Pinter's *Other Places*
Katherine H. Burkman 109

Film and Drama: The Opening Sequence
of the Filmed Version of Harold
Pinter's *The Caretaker* (*The Guest*)
Steven H. Gale 119

Pinter and Politics
Susan Hollis Merritt 129

"Yes! In the Sea of Life Enisled":
Harold Pinter's *Other Places*
Ewald Mengel 161

"To Lay Bare": Pinter, Shakespeare,
and *The Dwarfs*
Francis Gillen 189

Mind-Less Men: Pinter's Dumb Waiters
Robert Gordon 201

Harold Pinter in New York
Lois Gordon 215

Photos, from Pauline Flanagan 223

Harold Pinter's Achievement and Modern Drama
Kimball King 243

Acting Pinter
Mel Gussow 257

"You're Speaking to Someone and You Suddenly Become Another Person": Storytelling in Pinter's *Moonlight* and *Ashes to Ashes*
Ann C. Hall 263

Celebrating Pinter
Michael Billington 279

Selected Bibliography 291

Index 333

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GENERAL EDITOR'S NOTE

Harold Pinter may well be the most respected writer for the stage in the world today. Some consider Samuel Beckett a greater artist, but Pinter is still a relatively young man and is at the peak of his powers. Beckett read all of Pinter's scripts and made suggestions on them, and the latter considers Beckett his master. Yet Pinter, more than anyone else in this century, has changed our expectations for stage language and has made more traditional treatments of stage space, action, and language seem ridiculous and pretentious. He is an enigma to critics. Some consider him an absurdist (the Beckett influence), others an existentialist, and some the ultimate naturalist. Pinter is a genuine theater person. He has been an actor, writer, and director and is almost totally involved in the world of the stage. Perhaps it is the tension between Pinter's use of the absurdist tradition, with its baffling non sequiturs and purposeless activities, and his naturalistic use of language, dialect, and precise, believable detail that gives Pinter his unique hold on drama. His earliest play, *The Room*, was performed in 1957, but it was *The Homecoming*, ten years later, that brought Pinter worldwide recognition. The proliferation of scholarship concerning his playwriting in the past decade is unequaled. He may not be as brilliant as Stoppard, as entertaining as the Shaffers, or as startling as Bond. Yet he is the "Shakespeare" of his age, the central figure in the New Wave.

Professor Lois Gordon edited the hardback volume *Harold Pinter: A Casebook*, and she has re-edited it for this paperback version. Gordon is the perfect choice for editor because she was the first American to write a book-length study of Harold Pinter's works in 1969. In the summer of 2000 Pinter turned seventy years old. A special conference was held in London to honor this event. A high point of the conference was Pinter's reading aloud all of the voices of his new play, *Celebration* (2000). Professor Gordon has

added four new essays to the volume, including a summary of Pinter's achievement and original essays by Ann C. Hall, Mel Gussow, and Michael Billington. It is appropriate that a Pinter festival held in New York City in July 2001 should be so closely followed by this up-to-date critical volume.

Kimball King

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

> I've always been aware that my characters tend to use words not to express what they think or feel but to disguise what they think or feel, to mask their actual intentions, so that words are acting as a masquerade, a veil, a web, or used as weapons to undermine or to terrorise. . . . In the world in which we live, words are as often employed to distort or to deceive or to manipulate as they are to convey actual and direct meaning. So that a substantial body of our language is essentially corrupt. It has become a language of lies. . . . When words are used with a fearless and rigorous respect for their real meaning, the users tend to be rewarded with persecution, torture and death.
>
> --Pinter (1995)

This volume is being updated on the occasion of Harold Pinter's seventieth birthday. Widely acknowledged as one of the great dramatists of our age, Pinter is also one of our most politically active artists, and, in many ways, his life and work parallel one another. As a "citizen of the world," he has long publically protested injustices around the globe. When he engages his creative muse, a similar impulse emerges. The abuse of power, he would seem to be saying, in any of its manifestations--in personal relationships or in matters of state--is all too prevalent and all too devastating.

Perhaps predictably, as Pinter's work is increasingly performed throughout the world gathering new accolades for its author, and the "citizen" continues to remonstrate against oppression, the man is subject to the extremes of idolatry and criticism. "I have the feeling," he has said, "that lots of people have wanted to punch me in the face for a very long time." The one-time "Bollinger Bolshevik"

pickets outside 10 Downing Street or in front of the House of Commons and the next day finds himself misquoted on the front pages of the London press. His brilliant work, needless to say, continues to invite serious, laudatory commentary. On occasion, a newswriter is also inspired to a turn of wit; one began an article: "Harold Pinter, a legendary figure only slightly less glamorous than Dietrich, but with a voice as deep and rich . . ." It should come as no surprise to anyone who has followed the Pinter legend to hear that while the citizen is irrepressibly vocal in his public protests, the man is private and modest. He is known to his family and friends as a person of uncommon loyalty, generosity, and kindness.

The beautiful Antonia Fraser has said of her husband that in all the years she has known him he has never told a lie. This is an astonishing remark, but one that is entirely credible, since the power of most of Pinter's plays, as well as his political life, originates from the consequences of the spoken lie. The truth of a speaker's feelings, in the plays, always lies in the unspoken words and in what has come to be known as the "Pinter pauses"--in both the well-disguised violence that underlies and sustains the banal chatter and the paralysis of imminent victimization. Pinter's audiences feel this underlying menace and the personal disintegration it may effect. Internalizing his dialogue, they respond viscerally to his work at the same time they find it difficult to articulate exactly what the play has meant, since the threat to personal stability has been clothed in banalities and lies. Although the plays have specific settings, through his unique use of language Pinter addresses violence as a universal reality. His concern is the survival or destruction of the species.

Pinter insists that his early plays were political. He says of *The Birthday Party*, for example, written a dozen years after the Holocaust: "[It] is certainly shaped by persecution. . . . Where do these two messsengers come from? It always surprised me then, the fact that people seemed to have forgotten the Gestapo had been knocking

on people's doors not too long ago. And people have been knocking on people's doors for centuries in fact." The degree to which the early works are political, together with the development of Pinter's "style," continue to offer lively subjects for scholarly discourse.

Pinter's most recent plays--*Moonlight*, *Ashes to Ashes*, and *Celebration*--may be read in these terms, although they suggest a new direction in his writing. They are, without doubt, among his finest work. Although he returns to familiar themes within even more complex structures, *Moonlight* and *Ashes to Ashes* have an emotional intensity and substantive accessibility that is new to the Pinter canon. Once again the works illustrate the power of language to distort and control, the persistence of the past in the present, the pride and insecurity that isolate human beings from one another, and the roles as victim or victimizer that characterize most human relationships--as though this alternative were inevitable in the human experience. The wildly funny *Celebration* is a satire of contemporary manners, and its target is the sleaziness and self-indulgence of the nouveau-riche. The play is set in "the best and most expensive restaurant in the whole of Europe," with exchanges such as the following: "I want you to be rich so that you can buy me houses and panties and I'll know that you really love me." Despite its serious overtones regarding the enormous power of these insufferably arrogant and basically insecure people, the play has moments of wonderful, delectable farce: "You don't have to be English to enjoy sex. You don't have to speak English to enjoy sex. Lots of people enjoy sex without being English. I've known one or two Belgian people, for example, who love sex and they don't speak a word of English."

Moonlight and *Ashes to Ashes* mingle Pinter's uncanny verbal wit with the most serious of subjects--death and war. His puns and comic play with words remind us of the managable, at times, ridiculous side of life: he juxtaposes "masturbation," "approbation," "blasphemy," "gluttony," and "buggery" in a way that defies explanation,

as he plays with "Tooting Common" [for Tutankhamen] and sets up an amusing confusion over the names Buckminster, Bigsby, Belcher, and Bellamy. His black comedy, however, particularly in *Moonlight*, evokes the depths of despair, as a dying man, the paragon of a civil servant, expatiates on the virtues of the system, as well as his role in it: "I inspired them to put their shoulders to the wheel and their noses to the grindstone and to keep faith at all costs with the structure which after all ensured the ordered government of all our lives, which took perfect care of us, which held us to its bosom, as it were."

In *Moonlight*, Andy, in his fifties, is dying. Despite the fact that he is "coarse, crude, vacuous, puerile, obscene, and brutal to a degree," he was, as one of his sons puts it, "an innocent bystander to his own nausea." One senses that he was a decent fellow in his youth. Life, with its dominant irrationalities, has brought him to this point; Andy is no better or worse than anyone else. Andy's fear of dying is moving in the extreme: although a bully as an adult, he returns to the illusions of childhood: "Why am I dying, anyway? I've never harmed a soul. You don't die if you're good. You die if you're bad." He also says: "What would have been the point of going through all these enervating charades in the first place? There must be a loophole. The trouble is, I can't find it." On the one hand, Pinter arouses unconditional compassion toward this most terrifying, universal situation: "Am I dying? . . . I don't know. I don't know how it feels." He allows Andy to ask Hamlet's question about the "undiscovered country" in more mundane language (with a final grim, comic twist), without surrendering the power of the question: "The big question is, will I cross it ["the horizon"] as I die or after I'm dead? Or perhaps I won't cross it at all. Perhaps I'll just stay stuck in the middle. . . ." On the other hand, rejecting sentimentality, Pinter exposes the reality of Andy's life--the hostility and tenderness that, even now, connect him and his wife. Most poignantly, he reveals the complex ambivalence that exists between two sons and these parents.

The pace is rapid as the play moves from character to character, subject to subject, and mood to mood. Andy

cries: "I don't believe it's going to be pitch black for ever," and we are obliged to listen to the details of both his, and his wife's, marital infidelities. Similarly, as the couple exchange affection and insults, we witness their sons' enactment of their own guilt-ridden, retaliative acts of harsh communication.

Moonlight portrays a disconnected family, with each person in need but incapable of relating. The power of the play, however, derives from each one's interaction with a fifth character, a deceased daughter, Bridget, who embodies the play's moral core--the power of regenerative love. As she walks in and out of darkness in her own stage space and is visited by each of the characters, she is like the moonlight, a supernatural entity, and she has crossed, we are told, "fierce landscapes" of "thorns" and "barbed wire." From her vantage point--the isolated realm in which she dwells--she understands the extremes of suffering, from the crucifixion and Holocaust to the present. She has also died. Like moonlight, her actual time in this world has been brief, and she has crossed into the darkness and mysterious unknown that so frightens her father. Her intention in the play, announced in her first speech, is to watch over her parents and to give them peace. She accomplishes this at the end as she hears her father's last words and in the darkness goes home, where the moon is still bright, "the house, the glades, the lane . . . all bathed in moonlight," although the interior is dark. Child and parent are united in the peaceful interim of death.

Until the end, Bridget seems to be the eternal life force that is squandered or misunderstood by the living. As she comes to suggest resurrection after death--and is realized as a character on stage--she is Wordsworth's child. Andy intuits the cycle of life and rebirth, of how "the child is father of the man," when he speaks of imagined grandchildren, and Bel comforts him with: "Oh, the really little ones I think do know something about death, they know more about death than we do. We've forgotten death but they haven't. . . . [The] very young remember the moment before their life began." That Pinter wrote the play

shortly after his mother died is of interest, for the play *Moonlight,* like the natural phenomenon after which it is named, reaches to the unknowable. *Moonlight* is Pinter's exquisite poem on death and transcendence, with death a "terrible beauty"--exalting in its universal mystery, terror, and promise of peace.

One of Pinter's remarks describes *Ashes to Ashes*: "The dead are still looking at us, steadily, waiting for us to acknowledge our own part in their murder." The play begins with a woman telling her lover or husband about a former lover and the erotic appeal of his physical violence. In vintage Pinter dialogue, the woman explains her sexual arousal. Excited by his "Kiss my fist," as he gripped her neck, she would kiss the palm of his fist and hand and respond: "Put your hand round my throat," after which her "body went back, slowly but truly."

As she first speaks of this lover, she betrays no indication of the significance of her remarks. She says he was a travel agent who ran a factory and, like a Pied Piper, led people into the sea. But her tale eventually reveals, to her as well as the audience, the horror of its actualization--of warfare and genocide, of screaming mothers hiding babies in their shawls, being herded on to trains, and wailing as their children are wrenched from them. As the woman initially represses the truth of her lover's activities, Pinter sardonically targets any distortions or minimalization of the cruelties of war, particularly the reality of mass murder. She speaks, for example, of visiting her lover's "factory," and says, "But it wasn't the usual kind of factory. . . . They were all wearing [skull?] caps. . . . They would follow him over a cliff and into the sea, if he asked them, he said." Again, dispelling any revisionist notion about the culture of the concentration camps, like that of Auschwitz, where music accompanied prisoners to the gas chambers, Pinter's character says: They would "sing in a chorus, as long as he led them. They were in fact very musical." But the woman's denial disintegrates, as she proceeds to recall other details, like the lack of facilities in these factories, and she gets closer to the historical truth. In an ironically

lyrical passage, Pinter evokes the brutal reality of the Holocaust, from arrest to the ovens. She says:

> I saw a whole crowd of people walking through the woods, on their way to the sea, in the direction of the sea. They seemed to be very cold, they were wearing coats, although it was such a beautiful day. A beautiful, warm, Dorset day. They were carrying bags. There were . . . guides . . . ushering them, guiding them along. . . . And I saw all these people walk into the sea. The tide covered them slowly. Their bags bobbed about in the waves.

As the woman recalls the barbarity of war, the Second World War becomes all wars--"As the siren faded away in my ears I knew it was becoming louder and louder for somebody else"--and she shares both the vanquishers' responsibility and the victims' despair. At the end, instead of responding to "Kiss my fist," she becomes one of the mothers whose child has been wrenched from her. She--and we, Pinter seems to be saying--must bear the guilt and endure the terror of past, present, and potential violence. From this may come moral courage.

Hopefully, there will be another edition of this book, for Pinter continues with extraordinary energy as a playwright, director, screenwriter, actor, and political activist. And lest we overlook the man's sense of humor and congeniality in his daily life, an anecdote might be in order. When acting in one of his own plays, Pinter asked that a dressing room be set aside for visiting friends, including thirsty cricket buddies; he dubbed the room "Harry's Bar." Just as his friends shared his good cheer, we now, on the occasion of this milestone birthday, longtime Pinter devotees and theater-lovers of the world, also raise a cup in celebration and convey to him our best wishes.

The first of the new essays in this volume is by Kimball King, professor of English at the University of

North Carolina. He is the author of *Sam Shepard: A Casebook* and *Hollywood on Stage: Playwrights Evaluate the Culture Industry*, as well as a full-length study of Tennessee Williams's *Orpheus Descending* and a volume on the plays and films of Woody Allen. King has also published numerous essays on a wide variety of contemporary dramatists. He is not only co-editor of the *Southern Literary Journal* and on the editorial board of the *Pinter Review*, but he is also General Editor of Routledge's Casebook on Modern Dramatists series and its Studies in Modern Drama series.

King begins "Harold Pinter's Achievement and Modern Drama" with general comments on Pinter's accomplishment. "Pinter has brought a form of natural speech to the stage that has surpassed the most ambitious attempts of his predecessors," King writes, after stating that Pinter has had a "guiding role in virtually all important aspects of contemporary drama" and changed our expectations forever, with the result that "language, action, and meaning of all performance art" has come to be "inevitably measured" against his work. King focuses on Pinter's extraordinary use of natural speech and the variety of ways he manipulates it for any number of different purposes. Pinter's use of irony, to King, is his "most radical yet enduring contribution to the stage."

In turning to the patterns of Pinter scholarship, King describes how, in each decade, the critical apparatus has been different and certain works have received more attention than others. Both of these conclusions become immediately comprehensible to the reader by way of two sets of charts that conclude the essay. For example, Pinter's three most frequently discussed works first appeared thirty-five to forty years ago: *The Homecoming*, *The Caretaker*, and *The Birthday Party*; *The Lover* is among the last in receiving critical attention.

The charts are starting points for King's discussion of the relationship between the critical approaches and the sociocultural milieu of each period. For example, he speculates that psychological criticism, which peaked in the

1980s, was dramatically reduced in the 1990s, perhaps, he suggests, because this was a time of "divisions within the psychiatric profession itself over the value of insight therapy vs. biomedical solutions to personal problems." He offers comparable explanations for the rise or decline of many other types of criticism, and his survey includes Pinter's relationship to the "Theatre of the Absurd," his literary influences, the linguistic analyses of his plays via such thinkers as Wittgenstein, Jameson, Foucault, Kristeva, and Lacan; women's roles; and, of course, the most popular subject for Pinter scholars, his language and the nature of his subtexts.

King then suggests fertile areas for future investigation. He indicates, for example, specific plays that deserve more scrutiny; the need for psychological analysis in the more recent works; and additional work on women's issues, the poetry, and Pinter's influence on other writers such as Churchill, Shepard, and Mamet. King is especially concerned that future reseachers attend to the novel *The Dwarfs:* "Almost all of Pinter is there in that early novel," he writes, "but almost no one writes about it."

Mel Gussow, who has known Harold Pinter for thirty years, is the author of *Conversations with Pinter*, *Conversations with Stoppard*, *Conversations with and about Beckett*, *Theatre on the Edge: New Visions*, *New Voices* and the biography *Edward Albee: A Singular Journey.* For his work as a drama critic for *The New York Times*, he was a winner of the George Jean Nathan Award for Dramatic Criticism. He is now a cultural writer for the *Times.*

Gussow's essay, "Acting Pinter," is about Pinter--the dramatist, film-script writer, and director--as an actor. Gussow writes: "There is a close connection between Pinter's writing and acting, both in the kind of roles he has chosen to do and in his approach to performance." Gussow surveys Pinter's acting career--from his earliest experience in Anew McMaster's traveling repertory company to his more recent roles in his own plays (such as *The Hothouse*), his screenplays (including *Turtle Diary*), as well as his work in other writers' films, like Patricia Rozema's

Mansfield Park, and his readings (or, in fact, one-man performances) of his own work, when he takes on all the roles of his play. If, as a dramatist, Gussow continues, Pinter demonstrates the way words empower the speaker and can be manipulated into weapons, Pinter the actor instinctively understands how to dominate others and threaten violence.

Gussow covers a wide range of subjects that relate to Pinter as an actor--from his absolute respect for the written word and his invariable stage fright to his preference for playing villains, which he has done since his earliest work with McMaster, taking on, for example, the role of Iago, or more recently, the character of Roote, the brutal, crazy tyrant in his own *The Hothouse.*

Gussow raises and answers such questions as, "Does Pinter the playwright or Pinter the director watch Pinter the actor?" and "Why is Pinter such a superb actor of his own work?" He also shares a number of Pinter's comments, pertinent to Pinter in any of his professional capacities, such as: "I suppose Shakespeare's dominated my life the way he's dominated many people's lives. We don't recover from Shakespeare." Gussow concludes with a discussion of Pinter's splendid performance in the film *Mansfield Park.*

Ann C. Hall, the current president of the Pinter Society, organized the June 2000 International Pinter in London Conference, which drew participants from ten countries--in honor of Pinter's seventieth birthday. In addition to numerous articles on drama, she has published *A Kind of Alaska: Women in the Plays of O'Neill, Pinter, and Shepard and edited Delights, Dilemmas, and Desires: Essays on Women and the Media.* She serves as chair of the English Division at Ohio Dominican College.

Hall approaches *Moonlight* and *Ashes to Ashes* in terms of storytelling as a means of defining reality or establishing authority in personal relationships. In *Moonlight*, the characters live within realities of their own or inherited linguistic constructs. The dying Andy, clinging to his role as an authoritarian father, faces the last moments of his life in rage and in uncertain fantasies of an afterlife and

remaining grandchildren. His sons, Hall continues, face their own despair, due to "their own impotence," with a variety of tales. They "toy with language, alter reality through fantasy, and create comic narratives to pass the time." Similarly, the daughter, Bridget, is held in thrall by the notion of family connection. At the end, a victim of her own fantasy, she is abandoned by her parents. Bel, Andy's wife, would seem to be the only figure in this "patriarchal society," who understands the power of language and identity.

If storytelling is not "entirely comforting" in *Moonlight*, in *Ashes to Ashes* it provides "the key to personal and social freedom." As Rebecca tells of her former sadomasochistic love relationship to her present lover/listener, he becomes so caught up in her tale that he becomes her present-day abuser. In this play, which Hall views as a metadrama about "patriarchal power," authority becomes synomymous with verbal control. Rebecca's present-day lover asserts power over her by identifying with the abuser/torturer/lover in her narrative (as a listener identifies with the central figure in an unravelling story). The power play between the two continues until Rebecca regains final control of the narrative, "a story of her own victimhood or victimization of millions of women throughout the centuries."

Michael Billington has been drama critic of *The Guardian* since 1971. He also broadcasts frequently on the arts, teaches London theater courses to students from the University of Pennsylvania and Boston University, and is the author of several books. They include studies of Tom Stoppard and Alan Ayckbourn, the authorized biography of Peggy Ashcroft and *The Life and Work of Harold Pinter*, which depended upon close collaboration with the subject and which gave him rare access to Pinter's friends and colleagues.

Billington discusses *Celebration*, both "the funniest play Pinter has written in years" and a quasi-political play. *Celebration* brings two groups of London's "nerdy nouveau-riche" into a restaurant that functions as a paradisal retreat, at which they can indulge their most essential appetities--of food and sex--in reality or in

recollection. One character, for example, "was once a plump young secretary who existed in a state of seemingly permanent sexual arousal. 'Sometimes,' she remembered, 'I could hardly walk from one cabinet to another I was so excited.'" However, as Billington continues, beneath their trashy conviviality, vulgar materialism, and coarse revelations lies their contemptible indifference to the pain and suffering in the outside world. As he puts it: "Materialistic individualism breeds moral vacancy and . . . there is an umbilical connection between male chauvinism and political brutality."

Billington is fascinated by Pinter's young waiter, as he eavesdrops on the diners and drifts into the past with recollections of his grandfather. This element of recollection of things past, for Billington, is the key to *Celebration*, as it is, he believes, to all of Pinter's work. In the early plays, the real or fantasied past buttressed the present; by *Old Times*, a reinvented past was created to meet the needs of the present. In *Ashes to Ashes*, a simple figure embraces "the collective memory" of the terrible persecutions of the twentieth century. In *Celebration*, memory is "largely a form of sexual twitch: a recollection of who had whom and when." In fact, as the plot unfolds, after Lambert at Table One realizes that he had sex with Suki, at Table Two, the two groups come together in conversation for the remainder of the evening and share their common vulgarity. Sex is crass and loveless before, within, and outside marriage.

For the staff, and in counterpoint to the diners, the past is "variously rose-tinted, rebarbative, fantastic, and spellboundingly real." Yet the young waiter stands apart from the owner and his maitresse d'hotel, who pamper and flatter their clients. His comic and grandiose memories of his grandfather are an implied repudiation of the lack of culture and altruism in the modern world. Later, his realistic recollections represent elements of love, natural beauty, and mystery, which "rebuke . . . the hollow rituals of the guests." At the end of the essay Billington weaves a Freudian dimension into his discussion.

INTRODUCTION TO THE FIRST EDITION

Lois Gordon

When I began soliciting essays for this casebook, I had no idea that such a distinguished group of scholars and authors would rally to the project. I was aware of the abundance of work already published on Pinter and the growing body of scholarship in preparation. I assumed that my proposed group of essayists would be too busy pursing other projects or that, in many cases, their earlier work was already excerpted for reprint. Garland, furthermore, had indicated a preference for new material. When virtually everyone to whom I wrote expressed interest in preparing a new essay--and others even contacted me to contribute--I was delighted.

The compliment implied in this, of course, goes to Mr. Pinter, both for the stimulus his work continues to provide and the homage he has earned in the world of letters. Among those who expressed enthusiasm for the project was the late Raymond Carver, who, in fact, planned to write an essay. During his last illness, Carver had the kindness to write me, and he virtually apologized for being unable to contribute. Knowing of Pinter's enormous regard for Samuel Beckett, I had also written to Beckett. He too had the kindness to reply that to his "great regret, [he was] in no condition to accept."

Pinter, who has only recently called himself a "citizen of the world," has, I think, always had a vital concern for people and their survival in any variety of social, professional, or political situation. Although this was not the overt subject matter of his earliest plays, it permeates their deepest levels of meaning and is perhaps at

least partially responsible for the kind of admiration he receives. I don't pretend to know the man, apart from some brief correspondence and few meetings over the years, but I have always been struck by his lack of pretension and obvious interest in the welfare of others.

I wrote one of the early Pinter monographs, and on a subsequent visit to London in 1970, I met Pinter. Then, as now, he was down to earth, open, charitable, and modest. He was deeply concerned about the Vietnam War and American opinion regarding the war. He asked numerous questions about American education--what our students were reading and writing about. He was also very willing to discuss his current interests and projects. He had just been filming *The Go-Between*, and he discussed his pleasure in working with the gifted Joseph Losey. He spoke with great empathy about the rigors to which a difficult location had subjected their talented actors. He told me that he had begun L. P. Hartley's novel late one night when he was at home alone and was unable to put it down; it had moved him deeply. Although he was not disposed to discuss the "meaning" of his plays--he spoke instead of how they dictated themselves to him--he was very kind about my work. We talked at some length of my career and family. I mention these details, only because the "menace" and emotional remove often associated with Pinter's characters have at times been projected onto the man.

The last time I spoke with Pinter, in November 1988, both before and after his reading/performance of *One for the Road* at Fairleigh Dickinson University, he was again eager to discuss his political activities and current film and stage projects. He described how it felt to act Goldberg again (in the 1987 BBC production of *The Birthday Party*) and was very proud of his recent collection of 100 poems by 100 poets; he mentioned some that I "should have a look at." Once more, he seemed interested in my new projects and asked about our American students; we also talked in the most general of terms about the 1980s social and cultural scene. His deepest concern, without a

doubt, was for the people living under brutal dictatorial regimes and the efforts necessary to acknowledge and hopefully ameliorate their circumstances. Later, at dinner with Lady Antonia, her daughter Natasha, and my colleague Gene Barnett, the conversation was relaxed as we spoke for several hours on any number of subjects, ranging from the economic "mess" in England to healthy eating habits and the Pinters' different work habits. As this goes to press, I am deeply touched by a note Pinter wrote me in response to one I sent him following Beckett's death.

Indeed, Pinter's relationship to Beckett has been the subject of considerable discussion--particularly in the light of Pinter's habit of sending Beckett most of his new work for commentary. Despite the different circumstances under which Beckett knew James Joyce, Pinter may indeed have revered Beckett in the same way Beckett revered Joyce. Matters of personal, political, and literary styles aside, Beckett and Pinter clearly share one trait: an absolute commitment to the purity of the word. With their common starting point "I speak, therefore I am," dramatic "action" becomes a function of the most subtle modifications of sound, gesture, silence, and intonation--in addition to word choice, rhythmical patterns, and the most minute details of stage setting, all of which contribute to the complexity of mood and perspective. Traditional action, motivation, climax, and denouement--and time and space--have been replaced by the open-ended richness of meaning inherent in the play of words, the infinite textures and colorations that develop within complex linguistic designs. This is theater that touches the boundaries of music and dance.

But the word--and most recently the political power of language--has always been Pinter's subject. As he himself defined language many years ago, it is the "stratagem" that "cover[s] nakedness"; his plays have always been "stratagems" that "uncover nakedness." Towards this end, for Pinter (as for Beckett), minute attention to details of presentation also becomes vital. Pinter's visit to Fairleigh Dickinson illustrates this.

Unlike the many other important writers who had appeared for our Literary Society, Pinter was specifically concerned about our auditorium--so much so that he arranged to arrive two hours early to examine the "stage," the design of the seating, the acoustics and the lighting. In fact, our auditorium must be one of the least likely "theaters" in the country--an enormous and bright white lecture hall in our dental school. Pinter initially peeked in, stood on the stage, and then climbed the stairs to the top of the room, walked to the end of each of the uppermost rows, returned to the stage, tested the equipment for echoes, made sure that his few stage props were correct, measured the height of the chair on stage in relationship to the table (at which he would be sitting)--this was all done at record speed--may have noted my mounting anxiety, smiled reassuringly, and said that everything was fine. His performance, two hours later, mesmerized the audience and transformed the barren hall (chemical smells and all) into the landscape of his imagination. Like his predecessors in the great dramatic tradition, Pinter integrates the multiple perspectives of director, actor, and author.

Whether, or how, Pinter's work thus far is divisible thematically and stylistically is a subject of current critical interest. For a time, it was common parlance to speak of (1) the signature "Pinteresque" (the room, a menacing intruder, and the subsequent disintegration of character, as in *The Room* or *The Homecoming*), (2) the more lyrical reflections on time and memory (*Silence*, *Landscape*), and (3) the recent, overtly political works (*One for the Road*, *Mountain Language*). When I first wrote on Pinter, I questioned the term "absurd" and rejected philosophical commentary or symbolic interpretation of "menace" as the key to the plays. Instead, I spoke of the Pinter pattern as one in which the routine banalities of everyday life (in carefully assigned word games) were disrupted by the appearance of an often benign intruder. This figure, I thought, acted as a screen onto which Pinter's emotionally precarious figures projected their "true nakedness" of

self--their inner menace, so to speak--and this was reflected in the disintegration of their word games.

Pinter criticism has come very far since then. Although subsequent work continued to focus on the nature of the intruders, the more substantial scholarship has demonstrated how plot and characterization occur at the level of language. A great deal of the present research follows these lines of linguistic and semiotic investigation, with the ideas of Wittgenstein, Jakobson, Barthes, and Lacan, among many others, the starting point for analysis. Important thematic studies on subjects like gender, class, sexuality, love, loneliness, identity, and time, also continue, along with work on genre. A growing body of scholarship, however, is reevaluating the early plays in terms of Pinter's more recent political activities, just as other investigations are reevaluating issues of language, time, space, and specific themes, as these have "evolved" throughout his career. Pinter's life as an actor, screenwriter, and poet--and his transformations of fiction or drama into film--have also been of growing critical interest.

Most of these concerns are represented in the essays which follow, and all but two were written for this volume. As the new decade gets under way, with Pinter's sixtieth birthday on October 10, 1990, there will be film and play revivals, along with birthday celebrations, throughout the world. Numerous other books will undoubtedly also be timed to mark the occasion. I am enormously grateful to Garland Publishing and particularly to Kimball King for inviting me to edit this casebook. It brings together a collection of essays by a group of highly thoughtful writers--all of whom were asked if they would care to write their most recent thoughts regarding Pinter's work. As it turns out, their essays celebrate one of the most distinguished writers of this century.

Martin Esslin, who teachers Drama at Stanford University, is one of the most revered of contemporary drama critics. Author of *Pinter, the Playwright*, *Brecht--A Choice of Evils*, *Artaud*, and *The Field of Drama*, and head of the BBC Radio Drama from 1963-1977, his *The Theatre*

of the Absurd (1961) virtually defined the midcentury avant-garde and introduced Harold Pinter to a generation of students, scholars, and theatergoers. Focusing on the "poetic" stage image, Esslin also introduced many of the new stylists in terms of their polyphonic and poetic constructs, which, as he put it, originated from "a free flow of the imagination and the release of . . . subconscious fantasies" which then assumed "a prophetic content."

It is understandable that Pinter's 1958 letter to Peter Wood (which Pinter shared with Esslin in 1980) describing the unconscious "engendering image" should be of great interest to Esslin. Written to Wood when he was directing the first *The Birthday Party*, the letter clarifies Pinter's creative process. It also helps account for the seemingly "infinite," open-ended interpretations of his work. Indeed, although Esslin makes absolutely no claim to this, Pinter's remarks verify Esslin's earliest speculations some thirty years ago about the "poetic image."

Wood had asked Pinter if he would expand Stanley's lines to better enable the audience to understand his predicament--i.e., why he was staying at Meg's sleazy house and why two sinister figures were after him. As Esslin writes, the key to the letter, and to Pinter's method of writing, lay in Pinter's acknowledged *incapability* of further defining Stanley's character *because of Stanley's incapability of understanding his situation.* As Pinter had put it: "Stanley *cannot* perceive his only valid justification--which is he is what he is--therefore he certainly can never be articulate about it."

Esslin then reminds us that Pinter's methodology has always been inspirational ("The thing germinated and bred itself," wrote Pinter); his responsibility has been to the *consistency* of the dramatic image ("I followed the clues. . . . I interfered with them only on the technical level"). Pinter's skill in subsequently fleshing out the characters, Esslin continues, developed from his repertory acting experience in the realistic, well-made drawing room and mystery plays of the 1950s. It was his sensitivity to the techniques of these plays, along with the intuitions he

derived from Joyce, Beckett and Kafka, that contributed to his unique signature.

Pinter's letter to Wood, concludes Esslin, is "brilliant" and "remarkable," for in saying he could not analyze his dramatic image (i.e., Stanley), Pinter produced an analytical commentary on his own creative process.

Ruby Cohn, the preeminent Samuel Beckett scholar, is professor of Comparative Drama at the University of California, Davis. Her many books include *Samuel Beckett: The Comic Gamut*, *Just Play*, *Back to Beckett*, and *From Desire to Godot*, as well as *Modern Shakespeare Offshoots*, *Dialogue in American Drama*, *Currents in Contemporary Drama*, and *New American Dramatists 1960-1990*. She has also been publishing on Pinter since the early 1960s. In "The Economy of *Betrayal*," she brings to her subject, once again, a remarkable ear for the nuances of language. Typically, she writes, Pinter "caresses and teases the language; he rides roughshod over it or rolls single words on a sensuous tongue. From menace to mannerism, from brand name to braggart warrior, this pacifist writer commands a linguistic arsenal for his Lorenzian stage skirmishes."

As she surveys repeated lexical and rhythmic techniques in Pinter's early "polyvalenced" work, she adds a new dimension to the so-called "Pinteresque," traditionally associated only with "the unverifiable and the disjunctive." She will later discuss Pinter's "economizing" of these linguistic elements in *Betrayal*.

Until *Betrayal*, as she illustrates, Pinter's work was marked by specific kinds of puns, verbal duels, and the intrusion of technical, sexual, geographical, class (or even Latinate) jargon or clichés--all of which functioned for their speakers as weapons of gaining control. Pinter also used subtle rhyme, alliteration, repetition of words or phrases, noticeably lengthened monologues or dialogues--and even units of silence (indicated through periods, commas, three dots, silences, or pauses)--as instruments of power play.

Although Cohn agrees that *Betrayal* departs from the earlier "Pinteresque" (the past is "verified" and indeed illustrated in its nine scenes; the "intruder" is no longer menacing), of special interest to her is Pinter's new shaping of lexical and rhythmic patterns. Cohn asserts that Pinter actually dramatizes his complex subject of "betrayal" (in emotional and institutional terms) by "economizing" on his usual linguistic instruments--using fewer dialogues and briefer monologues and less frequent sound play, alliteration, rhyme, jargon, and cliché. Although the pauses remain, an "economics of emotional expression" works even through his more measured use of three dots and silences. Ultimately, Pinter creates a comedy of manners which, through its economy of language, also "indicts such manners as a betrayal of a richer, more instinctual life." In a sense, *Betrayal* is Pinter's betrayal of his earlier technique in the service of a new subject.

Austin Quigley is chairman of the English Department at the University of Virginia and the author of *The Pinter Problem*, *The Modern Stage and Other Worlds*, and a variety of articles on modern drama and literary theory. In "Time for Change in *No Man's Land*," he responds to those critics who find *No Man's Land* puzzling and abstract, who argue that it lacks a coherent theme and dramatic resolution because of its continuous disruption of character and plot evolution and odd treatment of time. Quigley, in an extremely subtle examination of image, anecdote, dialogue, and character interaction, proposes a structure beneath the play's careful manipulations of discontinuity and fragmentation: "There is an insistence upon emerging but suspended narrative lines, upon fragmentary episodes that suggest more than they can ever confirm, upon moments of shared significance whose potential value remains potential but nevertheless remains."

As Quigley suggests, Pinter's interruption of dialogue and character interaction--like his "invoked" rather than "displayed" imagery and continually "arrested" actions--reinforces a larger view regarding the two central aged characters. By also establishing both local and global

time, the play, both structurally and thematically, suggests the simultaneity of human possibility and limitation, the latent and limited potential for change and fixedness in all of human experience. Quigley cites, as one of many examples, the well-described but never produced photo album, and how the sequence epitomizes, in a sense, the variety of time zones Hirst (and Spooner) inhabit. A collection of seemingly frozen images, the photos, as Hirst can only imagine them, display the many possibilities of what was or seemed to have been in his youth, together with an entire separate body of associations evoked through adult recollection, rationalization, and anticipation. Like old age, the photos are an aggregate of "intriguing but discontinuous moments."

Quigley rejects the play as a nihilistic vision of old age. Pinter's suspended resolutions--in dialogue, anecdote, image, character interaction, and plotting--with everything occurring in a context (and often counterpoint) of local and global indefiniteness--reinforces Hirst's and Spooner's identities as examples of thwarted potential. Nevertheless, their repeated return to past events with a nostalgia that "continuity might eventually conquer discontinuity" gives the play a unique poignancy and power. As Quigley observes, even in their final, complex and ambiguous remarks, when they again put the past on trial, they reveal a redeeming awareness that life forever consists of potential hope, engagement, recovery, *and* doubt, distance, and failure.

David Lodge is both a celebrated novelist (his most recent fiction is *Nice Work*) and the author of numerous critical works, including *The Language of Fiction*, *The Modes of Modern Writing*, and *Working with Structuralism.* Professor of English at the University of Birmingham, he has long been concerned with what makes a text a work of art--his focus in "*Last to Go:* A Structuralist Reading."

Lodge takes Pinter's 55-line review sketch, first performed in 1959, as a microcosm of his dramatic universe. He illustrates how the poetic techniques within the well-defined dramatic structure convey, in condensed

form, the central themes of Pinter's work: life versus death (or presence versus absence), as manifest in speech versus silence (and pause).

Lodge begins with concepts from Malinowski and Jakobson, as well as Deirdre Burton's applied linguistic approach to the play, and then applies his own structural poetics. First, he discusses the initial mutually and simultaneously phatic conversations of the two lonely old men at their coffee stall. Instead of facing their own solitariness, they "desperately keep a conversation going," although they really have little to communicate. Lodge illustrates their recycling of trivial information, primarily about the sale of the last evening newspaper, and how this functions to maintain a kind of human contact.

He then proceeds to show how within Pinter's artful "narrative . . . process," banal repetitions take on a variety of poetic techniques, and poetic discourse operates in an "aesthetic [dramatic] frame,"--noting, for example, the symmetries and echoes in *"about ten/about then; sold my last/sold your last; "'Evening News' it was"/"'Evening News' was it?"* In addition, when a new phrase or topic (like the man named "George") enters the conversation, the tacit rules that have operated thus far disintegrate, and questions and answers become "genuinely referential." In fact, it is at such moments that elements of confrontation and challenge provide dramatic tension, and the conversation of the two men risks termination. As the play returns to rhythms and questions of the earlier dialogue, each utterance takes on multi-levels of accrued meaning, "for the meanings [the play] generates for its own sake--that is, for meanings it generates independent of any real context." Ultimately, even the title transforms--referring first to a conversation about the last newspaper sold or even the last man to go home, and finally suggesting the ontological issues of time, place, and being. Which man will be the last to occupy the coffee bar, the last to speak, the last to remain alive?

President of the Samuel Beckett Society, Linda Ben-Zvi is the author of *Samuel Beckett* and numerous

essays on Beckett, Pinter, James Joyce, and language and literature. Professor of English at Colorado State University, she has also edited *Women in Beckett: Performance and Critical Perspectives* and is completing a biography of. the American playwright Susan Glaspell. Here, in "*Monologue*: The Play of Words," she examines Pinter's subtle manipulations of language and grammar.

Monologue, a television play with little critical attention thus far, portrays a man alone on stage, as he speaks to an imagined friend about their friendship and the woman they both desired. Like a minimalist painting or sculpture, Ben-Zvi begins, *Monologue* is the pure embodiment of Pinter's dramatic interests: "a catalogue, pared to its essentials of the major preoccupations in all Pinter's plays: the loss of love, the isolation experienced in maturity, the desire for male bonding, and the slippages caused by the vagaries of memory and the imprecision of language." Anticipating *Betrayal* by six years, it also reveals how the significant connections that may exist between men are necessarily threatened by the presence of a woman.

Ben-Zvi takes the reader step-by-step through the play, illustrating, for example, how the use of stative, rather than modal, verbs reinforces *Monologue*'s image of the paralyzed self in an equally deadened contemporary world. She carefully points out how transformations to conditional or present verb tenses indicate potential change and self-knowledge. She does the same with juxtapositions of contemporary and older vernacular or clichéd expressions and demonstrates how these reinforce the play's central images of alienation and paralysis--all measured against a past time of potential vitality. She is, throughout, sensitive to the meanings conveyed through grammatical inversions and slippages in meaning, and as she measures these from section to section, she suggests that at the conclusion, the tentativeness of human connection drawn thus far turns at last to potential self-revelation. In the absence of cliché, modals or conditional verbs, Pinter finally evokes in his

speaker a poignant sense of "the intimacy and love between men [which] shapes so many of [his] plays."

George E. Wellwarth, professor of Theatre and Comparative Literature at the State University of New York at Binghamton, is the author of *The Theatre of Protest and Paradox*, *Spanish Underground Drama*, and *Modern Drama and the Death of God*, as well as co-founder and co-editor of *Modern International Drama*. He begins his lively essay with the provocative "One of the few advantages of growing older is that one becomes wiser; and one of the few disadvantages of becoming wiser is that one is forced to look back in embarrassment and regret on the intellectual indiscretions of one's past. Especially if one has published them." As such, the author of *The Theatre of Protest and Paradox* writes "a revisionist approach" to *The Dumb Waiter*, *The Collection*, *The Lover*, and *The Homecoming*--although he begins with a few swipes at Pinter's "romanticizing critics."

"The time has come," he writes, "to recognize the fact that Pinter is the only critic who has made any sense of Pinter." And he looks at the same letter (1958) to Peter Wood that Martin Esslin discusses in his essay in order to underscore Pinter's (and his) contention that "The play is itself." Wellwarth takes this to mean that Pinter's plays are "situation pieces that encapsulate an atmosphere or mood," not plays of ideas or philosophical works; in fact, he continues, they are obscured by symbolic and philosophical interpretation. Instead, Wellwarth insists, they should be approached as works of "amorphous meanings and atmosphere," as dramatic provocations of a "mood, often vague in its specifics but emotionally pervasive." He discusses *The Dumb Waiter*, *The Collection*, and *The Homecoming* in these terms.

The Lover, which he considers to be Pinter's "masterpiece," is unusual in its "straightforward psychological observation" and "celebration of life." In its lovers'/spouses' role-playing with each another, it portrays a richness of identity in personal and existential terms. "To live as many lives as possible," Wellwarth writes, "no

matter how temporarily, how spuriously, how self-deludingly, is to enrich the basic life we live." Richard and Sarah live "their real life, but they play variations on it and give these variations equal stature with their real, outward life while they are living them." In addition, "these variations are their own creations so that in their fantasies they are--momentarily--the gods of their own destiny."

Katherine H. Burkman has been largely responsible for the International Pinter Festival at Ohio State University in honor of Pinter's sixtieth birthday. A professor of English at Ohio State, Burkman has published several books and numerous articles that focus on ritual in modern drama, including *The Dramatic World of Harold Pinter: Its Basis in Ritual*, *The Arrival of Godot: Ritual Patterns in Modern Drama*, and the collection of essays which she edited, *Myth and Ritual in the Plays of Samuel Beckett.* In her essay for this volume, Burkman discusses the displacement of "realistic" time and space in *Family Voices*, *A Kind of Alaska*, and *Victoria Station*--the "trio" of plays collected in *Other Places.* Her thesis is that Pinter has created in these plays landscapes of "frankly interior spaces." *Other Places*, she writes, is actually "a kind of three act exploration of the quest for self in the modern world." In each play, Pinter handles "the falseness of attempts at realistic orientation" through a series of ironies: in each, as well, the true location of self in interior space is hampered by issues of "domination."

Treating each play as an integral part of a tripart pattern, Burkman begins by noting how in most productions of *Family Voices*, the parents' and son's voices are presented as though they were virtually disembodied--as though defining themselves psychologically, rather than physically. In focusing on a young man who has left home and who is now writing his mother, she suggests, Pinter actually creates a protagonist suspended in space. His unmailed letters function as projections of old family fears, so that at least on one level, time is circular and his distance from home only physical. But additional complications with a potentially new family lead him to

other menacing situations. Ultimately, the boy "remains unaware of his lost condition," and like the other voices in the play, remains suspended in a void. His "sense of absence from home" remains his "sense of absence from self."

For Deborah, the twenty-nine-year victim of sleeping sickness in *A Kind of Alaska*, the return to health initially signals a profound disorientation both spatially and temporally. But Deborah's ultimate "relocation" involves retaining the self she nurtured in her "retreat," her illness. Burkman suggests that Deborah experiences the fragmentation of the modern condition, as she also accepts herself as a woman in a patriarchal society; she is able, unlike the boy in *Family Voices*, to undergo a reorientation--a "rebirth"--into self. In *Victoria Station*, the "protagonist is doubled," as Pinter initially establishes the "immobilization" of both a cabbie and his dispatcher. Although the taxi "Driver" must deal with his "Controller," who would presumably help him "relocate" himself, both figures drop the markers of traditional time and begin a reorientation toward inner time and space. As Burkman writes, *Victoria Station* provides "a kind of third act in *Other Places*" that "leads the audience" to a "more hopeful stance."

Currently Endowed Professor of Humanities at Kentucky State University, Steven H. Gale has published several books on Pinter, including *Butter's Going Up: A Critical Analysis of Harold Pinter's Work*, *Harold Pinter: An Annotated Bibliography*, *Harold Pinter: Critical Approaches*, and *Harold Pinter: Critical Essays.* His other books include studies of S. J. Perelman and the *Encyclopedia of American Humorists.* Gale is also co-editor of *The Pinter Review* and president of the *Harold Pinter Society.*

Pinter had said that *The Guest*, his film version of *The Caretaker*, "hit the relationship of the brothers more clearly than . . . the play." Although Gale is clearly interested in this relationship, his essay is even more comprehensive, as it indicates how Pinter's skillful

understanding of the film medium permitted him to successfully translate one highly effective art form into another. Gale lists the potential dangers of transforming drama into film. Stage dialogue, for example, often becomes wooden or choppy, because the normal preponderance of words on stage appear static or disjointed in film. Too, since dramas occur within confined stage space, which allows for the development of "intellectual and psychological themes," the same space limitations on film often seem confining. An entirely different medium, film instead relies on varied visual images for emotional effects.

Gale examines the first thirty-four seconds of *The Guest* in order to illustrate how Mick's "somewhat menacing" behavior in his parked car establishes the tone and themes of the subsequent narrative. He also discusses how this opening sequence actually parallels the thematic cluster of the original 1960 production of *The Caretaker.* He then goes on to question whether the film "further elucidates the meaning gleaned from the drama," and, furthermore, if "the information gathered from this extraneous source (the film)" is "valid in interpreting the play." Or, he asks, are the play and film separate entities "that perforce must stand on their own?" These questions, as one of his endnotes explains, raise issues that will be examined in his forthcoming book on Pinter's films.

Susan Hollis Merritt is presently a visiting scholar in the Departments of English and Theater Arts at Cornell University. The author of the forthcoming *Pinter in Play: Critical Strategies and Plays of Harold Pinter* (Duke University Press), she has written numerous essays and reviews about modern drama and its critics and is the bibliography editor of *The Pinter Review.* In "Pinter and Politics," Merritt sets out to examine the question of Pinter's commitment to political drama from his earliest work through the recent *One for the Road*, *Precisely*, and *Mountain Language.* Her focus is essentially twofold. On the one hand, she reviews what Pinter has himself said about his active interest in politics since *the Hothouse* and

the clearcut political implications of early plays like *The Birthday Party.* That is to say, although his work during the first twenty years of his career was only "metaphoric," in terms of power and domination, its (latent) political content was undeniable. Merritt then reviews the complexities of categorization within the vast and varied body of scholarship on this subject, reminding us that "judgments are contingent on the perspectives of the critics, on their particular politics or ideologies."

Analyzing the critic--that is, analyzing his or her perspective in terms of his or her background and ultimate bias--is Merritt's specialty, for she has written an extensive survey of Pinter criticism in which she evaluates a broad spectrum of scholarly approaches in terms of each critic's personal history: her book is about the (Pinter) critic as writer as much as it is about Pinter as dramatist. In the essay included here, a section from her *Pinter in Play*, she examines the problems of virtually any discussion of Pinter as a "political" writer (either in current, retroactive, or metaphoric terms), of placing him, for example, within the conventional Left/Right spectrum, of classifying him as a "political," as opposed to "social," dramatist, of calling him the author of "political drama," rather than "political theatre," or of labeling him a "bourgeois dramatist." Finally, her essay includes a brief discussion of Pinter's political activities and his more recent screen adaptations of "sociopolitically" relevant subjects.

Ewald Mengel is associate professor of English Literature at the Otto-Friedrich University of Bamberg, West Germany. He has published books on Pinter (*Harold Pinters Dramen in Spiegel der soziologischen Rollentheorie*), the English historical novel, and Charles Dickens, as well as several articles in English and German on Pinter, Arden, Mortimer, the English historical novel, Dickens, Tennyson, and Sterne. Since 1988, he has held the prestigious Heisenberg grant.

Although Mengel focuses on *Other Places* here, his essay in many ways surveys Pinter's stylistic development, at least in his treatment of "lyrical themes in dramatic

form." Mengel considers the trilogy of *Other Places* as a variation of major themes in works like *Landscape* and *Silence*--the isolation of the individual in modern mass society.

Mengel interprets each of the three plays in great detail. He discusses *A Kind of Alaska* in relationship to Oliver Sacks' *Awakenings* and illustrates how Pinter takes Sacks' three stages of clinical awakening and condenses the pathology that would occur over weeks and months into a few minutes of dramatic action. Deviation from clinical findings, he argues, contribute to the play's "mythic" quality. The final complexity of Deborah's "rebirth" suggests a basic conflict between the authenticity of self available either in the subjective, psychological world or in the objective, empirical one.

Mengel's focus in *Victoria Station* is the unverifiability of the conversation between the controller and driver and the indefiniteness and ambivalence of their reality. He discusses the "chiastic dramatic structure," the reversal of roles of mother and son, in *Family Voices*. Mengel argues that *Family Voices* goes even further than the first two plays, which transpose dramatic process to audience response, and actually creates a new form of dramatic monologue. It is "a drama of mind" that elucidates "mental processes" which the audience, rather than the characters, understand. Among Pinter's most recent tendencies of the past ten years, he concludes, are his rejection of the techniques of mystification for a surplus of information within reversed chronology (*Betrayal, A Kind of Alaska, Family Voices*) and a shift "of focus from the mimetic towards the receptional pole of . . . dramaturgy."

Frances Gillen is Dana Foundation Professor of English and Director of the Honors Program at the University of Tampa. He is also founder and co-editor of *The Pinter Review* and the author of numerous articles on dramatists such as Pinter, Anthony Shaffer, Williams, Miller, and Stoppard, and modern novelists such as Woolf, Forster, McCarthy, James, and Heller.

In "'To Lay Bare': Pinter, Shakespeare, and *The Dwarfs*," Gillen demonstrates how discussions of *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Othello*, and *Hamlet* in Pinter's early novel, *The Dwarfs*, prefigure terms and concepts applicable to Pinter's later stage figures. Pinter's characters, he asserts, like Shakespeare's, all deal with ambiguous, nonverifiable signs, "the interpretation of which leads them to act outside their territorial limits upon an essentially private vision which cannot be justified by a more objective, social reality of which they nevertheless remain a part." In *The Birthday Party*, *The Caretaker*, and *The Homecoming*, among others, Pinter's characters act out of a certain degree of *hubris* which "pushes them blindly" beyond their safe territorial limits until they "collide with a greater force which their blindness had momentarily led them to deny."

Gillen's reading, while not ignoring the menace or external force often associated with early Pinter, emphasizes the power of the characters' interior worlds and suggests that to some extent, like Shakespeare's tragic heroes, they are responsible for their fate. In addition, the fact that they remain a part "of an objective machine," despite their illusions, "helps define the limits of theatricality and language in creating and negotiating reality." Some of Pinter's most telling moments, Gillen concludes, occur "when language collides with what it can no longer shape nor negotiate."

The book concludes with three informal essays, one a student's initial response to *The Dumb Waiter*; the second, an account of Pinter's appearance in New York in October 1989, when he recited *One for the Road* and was "interviewed" by Mel Gussow; and the third, a selection of photos borrowed from the actress Pauline Flanagan, who joined Anew McMaster's repertory company in Ireland at about the same time as Pinter.

"Mind-Less Men: Pinter's Dumb Waiters" is an essay that Robert Gordon, a sophomore at Harvard College, wrote for a modern drama course during his senior year in high school. Gordon ponders the selfhood of conventional dramatic protagonists--in Cartesian terms, as well as in