Harold Pinter and the Performance of Power: Considerations of Affect
in Select Plays, Screenplays and Films, Poetry and Political Speeches

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Abstract

This thesis looks at selections of Harold Pinter's work across multiple media: written dramatic texts, screenplays and poetry, activity in theatrical and film production and his political activism. It has been argued that Pinter's dramatic medium is exceeded by movements, intensities and forces that operate on and circulate within the corporeal bodies of Pinter's 'audiences'. However, approaches to Pinter to date remain overly focused on representation and hermeneutics and tied to a decidedly idealist conception of being, perception and knowledge. I argue that in order to appreciate the politics of Pinter's aesthetics, readings of Pinter's work need to move in a more decidedly materialist direction. To do so, I enlist the conceptual tools of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, specifically 'affect'. In bringing affect theory to Pinter I illustrate how 'the direct, mutual involvement of language and extra-linguistic forces'[1] must be taken into account at every critical step, and that meaning need be construed as a material process, the expression of forces acting upon each other.[2] The diversity of Pinter's work is explored over six chapters with a view to its aesthetic disposition and function, how it enters into noteworthy relations with those who engage with it, and how it establishes conditions that are propitious for transitory but ultimately productive transformative encounters. Proceeding as such necessitates appraisal of ethical and political positions in relation to Pinter's expression without distinguishing politics from aesthetics – a trend common to intellectual enterprise. Rather, the three keywords in the title of this thesis – performance, power and affect – function as concepts to advance the argument for Pinter's aesthetics as a politics. In considering the aesthetics of Pinter's work in varied media, this thesis invites the reader to see the strategies by which Pinter intervenes in each area as interrelated and political.

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[1] Brian Massumi, 'Introduction: Like a Thought', *A Shock to Thought: Expression after Deleuze and Guattari*, ed. by Brian Massumi (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. xiii-xxxviii (p. xix).
[2] Simon O'Sullivan, *Art Encounters Deleuze and Guattari: Thought beyond Representation* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 20.

Table of Contents

Chapter One

Introduction

This thesis is about Harold Pinter and looks at selections of his work across multiple media: writing dramatic texts, screenplays and poetry, activity in theatrical and film production, and political activism. Pinter's negotiation of each of these discrete creative functions invites us to see the overlaps in his varied approaches and the interrelatedness of his achievements through their individual modes of expression. Accordingly, the focus throughout this thesis is geared predominantly towards an appreciation and contemplation of the author's aesthetics. In this way, Pinter's work in each medium is explored over the five chapters with a view to its aesthetic disposition and function. It will become evident that proceeding as such progressively necessitates appraisal of ethical and political positions in relation to Pinter's expression. This is not to say politics as distinguished from aesthetics, which is a trend common to intellectual enterprise, but rather an aesthetics understood as a politics. The three keywords in the title of this thesis – performance, power and affect – function as concepts to advance progressively the argument for Pinter's variegated aesthetics as a politics. While the first two terms (performance and power) have been much explored in Pinter scholarship, the latter (affect) has rarely been broached, and has yet to be introduced as an applied discourse and conceptual intervention into Pinter's body of work. In order to establish the meaning and usage of such a term and concept in relation to Pinter, some preliminary remarks on performance and power are in order. Any discussion of affect in relation to Pinter's work, and more broadly speaking to the media in which he worked, relies upon the concepts of power and performance. This thesis reinvests these concepts with new and significant meanings, and therefore potentially alters the way we think of them, particularly in the context of Pinter but also more generally.

Performance

To think performance in the context of Pinter is, perhaps in the most immediate sense, to look to the staging of his work in various live contexts. The details of specific live performances will of course enter the discussion where relevant. However, it must be stated that articulating the quiddity of an already staged event with a view to better understanding what transpired is not the primary orientation of this project. The aim at hand, rather, is to make theoretical claims about the performance potentials of each text or specific recorded moment of any performance, and do so with a view to inspiring readers of this thesis to go in search of new and different modes of engaging with future encounters with both Pinter's writing and its live

staging. It is in this way that the project is future-oriented. As a philosophical rather than an empirical and ethnographical study, this thesis draws upon textual and visual representations of Pinter's work, in order to theorize the implications of encounters with Pinter. Because the conditions for the production of affects, as we will see shortly, can be established anytime and anywhere, all subsequent analyses look to how such happenings might be said to take place. Thus the study oscillates between the notion of textual and live encounters with Pinter's work; the aim not to distinguish between text and live performance or to articulate the ontological specificity of theatre versus film, poetry and so on but to delineate different orders and moments of performance from Pinter's writing process to various stagings of the work, and even to post-event responses to it.

To approach Pinter's work from the standpoint of performance will entail exploring and analyzing the 'various voices' that perform throughout and comprise his body of work, to borrow the phrase from Pinter's aptly titled selective compendium of a career's worth of involvement in media that are nearly as various as are the voices resounding across it:[1] radio, drama and theatre, film, television, poetry and activism, not excluding Pinter's career as an actor and director for both television and the stage. Despite the many dimensions of Pinter's work, indexed by the variety and continuity of critical interventions over the years, it is arguable that voices are the dominant performative register across the oeuvre. Hence, the fact that one is hard pressed to find critical engagement with any area of Pinter's oeuvre that does not at some point lay great stress on the language. David Hare underlines the matter in his celebratory declaration that Pinter's achievement in contemporary theatre was to have 'cleaned the gutters of the English language, so that it ever afterwards flowed more easily and more cleanly'.[2] Aside from Hare's recognition that Pinter's is chiefly a 'theatre of language' and of 'dialogue', his celebratory remarks focus on the interruption Pinter performed into modern drama, the manner in which the dramatic language produced 'a flash of intensity [...] in what is most everyday',[3] the result being a differing effect which engenders the new, the alarming, the wondrous. Stated otherwise, Pinter's secure reputation as a playwright of language rests in his having turned the English language on its head – reinventing both a new dramatic dialogue and concomitant dramatic world precisely by undoing the English language from the inside. What I would suggest,

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[1] Very much a hybrid text, *Various Voices: Prose, Poetry, Politics, 1948-2008*, third edition (London: Faber and Faber, 2009) contains selections of Pinter's poetry, prose and correspondence across his career, as well as all his political poems and speeches. The most recent 2008 edition contains his 2005 Nobel lecture, *Art, Truth and Politics*, and few additional sketches and short stories/prose pieces.

[2] *Harold Pinter: A Celebration*, intro. by Richard Eyre (London: Faber and Faber, 2000), 17-21 (p. 21).

[3] Gilles Deleuze, *Two Regimes of Madness: Texts and Interviews 1975-1995*, ed. by David Lapoujade, trans. by Ames Hodges and Mike Taormina (New York and Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2007), p. 73.

however, is that the more one proceeds through Pinter's oeuvre with a mind to how he has cleaned the gutters, as Hare puts it, the process is not entirely dependent upon speech and stage dialogue. While thoughts of Pinter's contribution to drama and the arts more broadly reflexively ground his work in language, his production of difference is to a great extent dependent upon the relationship of his unique orders of language and a number of other elements that range from bodies and their performances to the theatrical and cinematic apparatuses. Thus, the analysis in what follows endeavours to account for these 'other' elements, which can be regarded as regimes or milieus,[4] and with specific attention to the relations they enter into with the dialogue for which Pinter is so famous. As such, we can speak of a discourse in every medium, a constellation of moments which ultimately comprise a world and series of effects that cannot be reduced to their parts. And while it is impossible to account for every constellation, its every aspect, and every relation between those aspects, this thesis performs a modest step in that direction.

Returning to and ever so slightly forcing Hare's remarks brings us to the order of performance that is of principal interest in this thesis. In moving beyond Hare's claims of what Pinter has done to the English language but instead to the effects of that act and accomplishment, we are confronted with how the force of Pinter's writing, both in textual form and in its deployment in live contexts, performs in such a way as to provoke and inspire significant reactions from and changes in readers, spectators, listeners, or whatever form of engaged witness. Shifting from a conception of performance as live representation to another conceived along the lines of the extra-semiotic and extra-linguistic dilates our perspective so as to fold together the plateau of representation – what is signified in the text and within any manner of stage or platform – and the plateau of sensation at the level of those positioned vis-à-vis Pinter's work. While any individual's experiences and responses to Pinter's work derive from representation, we can see them as being ultimately 'freed' from it.[5] The principal aim of this thesis in every chapter is therefore to speak to that immediately palpable yet intellectually puzzling ligature and space between representation and the so-called freedom from it; an extra-linguistic zone that is, as will become evident, an event that is in its own right a certain species of performance.

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[4] Following Deleuze, I am purposefully avoiding the plural spelling 'milieux' so as to preserve the notion of heterogeneity inherent to the parts which form the whole. While milieux is, grammatically speaking, the correct plural form of the noun, it can imply the collection of similar or even identical parts. My intention, conversely, is to indicate the assemblage of elements which vary, and which are even ostensibly contradictory, as should become evident as the analyses and thesis progress.

[5] John Rajchman, *The Deleuze Connections* (Cambridge and London: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 2000), p. 136.

Power

Holding all of the above in mind, then, means that addressing power, the second keyword in the title of this thesis, will not entail moving on from performance but rather folding the two terms together, playing them off one another. Power, as has been observed repeatedly and from the start of Pinter scholarship, is at the heart of everything the author has written. Firstly, power is and has been regarded foremost in terms of Pinter's dominant subject matter and theme, as what a play, poem, film or political speech is actually about. From *The Birthday Party* (1957) to Pinter's final play *Celebration* (1999), one finds a consistent yet ever-transforming dramatization of characters giving shape to and vying for control over their immediate circumstances; power struggle being arguably the best general phrase with which to describe the action in all Pinter's work. Power understood thus appears as a matter of representation, that which is illustrated, addressed, aestheticized in the texts and/or in the works' translation into live settings. While Pinter's representation of power is diverse, its dominant expression can be construed in the sense of the French word *pouvoir*, which denotes a 'negative model of power as domination or circumscription (*potestas/pouvoir*)';[6] a top down model where power is wielded and exercised upon others. It is therefore not unreasonable to refer to Pinter as a 'dramatist of power'[7] since his every play involves, if it is not predicated upon, both the exercise of power and various struggles over it, the struggle for control over another and/or a struggle against one's own subjection to oppression and control at the hands of others. Power is the substantive game in all of Pinter, regardless of the gender of the characters who struggle or, relatedly, whether the field of action hosting these struggles is a domestic or private milieu, or a seemingly more public one, such as those featured in *The Hothouse* (1958/1980) with its institutional setting or the political rooms and grounds where myriad abuses are performed, such as one discovers in *One for the Road* (1984), *Mountain Language* (1988) or even the podium in Pinter's final dramatic work *Press Conference* (2002). Pinter's *representation* of power does not, however, end here, for as is well known it extends into his production of a body of political poems and his discourse as a political activist. Both the poetry and the activism are engaged in the representation of power in so far as power typically forms the central theme and object of study.

Yet Pinter's work in these two and all other media invites us to think a kind of power that is not strictly grounded in representation, power that is more than, yet at once involved in,

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[6] Elena del Rio, *Deleuze and the Cinemas of Performance: Powers of Affection* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), p. 9.
[7] At the time of writing this seems poised to enter the literature as a formal framing of Pinter's work via Robert Gordon's forthcoming monograph, tentatively entitled *Harold Pinter's Theatre of Power*.

the dramatization, detailing and occasional indictment of the exercise and (ab)use of power and, concomitantly, the consequences thereof. As we acknowledge those who note how Pinter's writing, regardless of the medium, can readily actualize a singular, moving, haunting event, we are confronted with a remarkable kind of performance of power. Which is to say it can perform a 'disruption, violence or dislocation of thinking'[8] that forces us to stop and reappraise the situation as it is; and in doing so it typically alters the direction of things and produces new kinds of experience and thought. If we think both performance and power in this light, then we must look through power construed as *pouvoir* to power as *puissance*. As such the term invokes Renaissance philosopher '[Baruch] Spinoza's affirmative idea of power as a potential or capacity for existence (*potentia/puissance*) [and] provides a necessary supplement to the negative model of power as domination or circumscription'[9] that we began with, a model which certainly preoccupies the lion's share of scholars oriented towards the various political registers of Pinter's oeuvre. In thinking *puissance*, then, the performance of power in Pinter takes us to the edge of and even beyond representation, to a point where the author's writing for various media and its staging encounters and assembles with audiences in an event that is essentially a shared act of creation; the process giving rise to the very differing effect which invites the likes of Hare to speak of Pinter in terms of the change he effected in the context of modern drama.

This transcendence of representation entails our investments in and reactions to what we 'read' and 'see', which indeed involves the production of material changes in the body and the mind in the way of experiences and thought. Also involved, however, are the force and movement of Pinter's work which prompt not textually legible phenomena but rather an affection that happens in-between, in the event of specific assemblages of individuals and the work. Here we apprehend an 'exchange between two bodies' such that the characterization of the spectator 'as passive, vicarious or projective must be replaced with a model' whereby s/he 'participates in the production of [...] experience.'[10] Thus, looking to how individuals engage with Pinter's work in a production of experience that is in some way meaningful turns this discussion to the issue of power. And this order of power, and the various ways in which it gets performed, finds expression on the page, the stage, a cinema (or television) screen, a poetry reading, a 'Stop the War' march and indeed the Nobel platform, which forms the centrepiece of the final thesis chapter. Power thought as such is important here because the interaction of two

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[8] Claire Colebrook, 'Introduction', *The Deleuze Dictionary*, ed. by Adrian Parr (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), pp. 1-6 (p. 4).
[9] Del Rio, *Deleuze and the Cinemas*, pp. 8-9.
[10] Laura U. Marks, *The Skin of The Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2000), p. 150.

bodies – the audience as a collective of individual spectators *and* a play, screenplay, film, poem or political speech – sets in operation the creation of another entity that is irreducible to its parts and which is more akin to an incipient event than to a discrete and stable mass looking upon a discrete art object.

Affect becomes important to this thesis and its attempt, as previously mentioned, to speak at the edge of and beyond linguistic and semiotic representation since it is a concept that derives from a desire to try and 'understand, and comprehend, and express all of the incredible, wondrous, tragic, painful and destructive configurations of things and bodies as temporally mediated, continuous events.'[11] The 'methodology' of this thesis, then, entails looking to Pinter's myriad performances of power as *pouvoir* – a representation of power – as a means to apprehend, appreciate and better understand how the author's writing in each medium featured in this thesis involves and is in fact predicated upon an economy of affect, the performance of power as *puissance*. Of all the ways in which the words performance and power can take on meaning, both on their own and in combination, this thesis is interested in how the performance of power in the context of Pinter involves an experiential dimension that can be called affect.

Affect

Considering that both performance and power have existences and meanings which correspond to representation and non-representation, or the asymbolic, we can begin to introduce the notion of affect, both as a philosophical concept and as a reality that derives from the operation(s) of Pinter's work. Put in most general terms, affect refers to the impact of one body upon another. To think this impact and, relatedly, the intermingling of two or more entities is not to conceive them in terms of identity, and thus representation, but in material terms as a force, or a set thereof, whose effect is to either promote or hinder the performance of said bodies, and indeed to foment material change of various kinds and at various levels. The concept appears first with Spinoza, a materialist philosopher who founded his project on the questions "'*What can a body do?*', of what affects is it capable?"[12] As a partial description of and full response to this, Gilles Deleuze offers:

> Affects are becomings: sometimes they weaken us in so far as they diminish our power to act and decompose our relationships (sadness), sometimes they make us stronger in so far as they increase our power and make us enter into a more vast or superior individual

[11] Felicity Colman, 'Affect', in *The Deleuze Dictionary*, ed. by Adrian Parr (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), pp. 11-13 (p. 11).
[12] Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues II: Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet*, trans. by Hugh Tomlinson, Barbara Habberjam and Eliot Ross Albert, second edition (London: Continuum, 2002), p. 45.

(joy). Spinoza never ceases to be amazed by the body. He is not amazed at having a body, but by what the body can do.[13]

Spinoza's question, and the vast amount of thinking on affect it spurred Deleuze and his philosophical proximates on to, becomes a useful means of engaging with Pinter, particularly given the ubiquity in Pinter scholarship of language that references the engenderment of sensation – 'comedy of menace', the 'Pinteresque' and anxiety being the most salient discourses.

Firstly, the terms sadness and joy – not to be construed in positive or negative terms but rather in terms of productivity and non-productivity, enhancement and delimitation – direct our attention to how Pinter does not represent these affects, but rather performs various aestheticizations that in turn dramatize sensation within the bodies and neural networks of readers/spectators, those which ultimately register as sadness, joy or derivatives of these basic 'emotions'. The scholarly discourse of 'comedy of menace', 'anxiety' and 'shock', for example, suggest as much. Secondly, and concomitantly, approaching Pinter from the standpoint of affect suggests that the object of study will involve both the work itself, conceived as a set of material forces, as it comes into contact with and effectively *affects* the audiences who engage with it in varying contexts; audiences conceived of as both a set of forces open to being affected in the first place and as the material necessary for Pinter's work in each medium to take on its proper meaning, which is to say its dramatic, and in many cases political, life.

Here we can see how quickly affect begins to elude definition, precisely because it has to do with experience and ontological change. Nonetheless, Felicity Colman offers productive 'grounding', which also further bridges all discussion hitherto of performance and power. She portrays affect as 'that audible, visual and tactile transformation produced in reaction to a certain situation, event or thing', and characterizes that process of reaction, moreover, as a disturbance of a body's space.[14] Moving from here, the five chapters and their overall analyses of several media argue that Pinter's work functions uniquely to establish conditions that are propitious to the production of a) sensation and movement at unconscious, semi-conscious and indeed conscious plateaus, b) the production of processes of thinking rather than specific thought which accrue force and resonate as such within and across mind and body, doing so to the effect of imbricating the two and finally c) the production of 'individuations without a subject'.[15] In order to deploy the theoretical lines necessary for thinking about Pinter in these terms, the remaining introductory remarks detail affect theory as it will be used in relation to five

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[13] ibid.
[14] 'Affect', p. 11.
[15] Deleuze and Parnet, *Dialogues II*, p. 25.

interrelated categories throughout this thesis: the body, language, images, thought and subjectivity.

Plateau-problem #1: affect and the body

While I have already suggested that scholars have not brought affect to Pinter's work in any overt or significant way, it is not as if many of them have not taken steps in this direction. But as we look further into the matter, it is important to bear in mind how all attention to sensory experience and the circulation of power within the audience ultimately sees critics reorienting themselves towards the signifier – falling back under its 'law', as Deleuze would say[16] – when faced with having to speak about experiences animated by semiotic phenomena whose quiddity very much troubles the faculties of reason and vision which are at the root of nearly every paradigm of aesthetic evaluation. Indeed we are still very much a part of an Enlightenment-'minded' epoch, while our over-attachment to humanism brings with it the consequence that Pinter's work, like any other artist, is more often than not evaluated with a view to what it is telling us about ourselves, our so-called human condition, and how it delivers truth of some variety. Nevertheless, that critics have invested in the affective dimension of Pinter is made plain by a number of moments within the scholarship that betray a language that speaks in various and often interrelated ways to how Pinter's plays and even other writing appeal to sensation and the body in a manner that is both central to understanding and speaking about Pinter and which sets him apart from other artists.

It is not unusual to discover critics speaking about what Pinter's work can make a spectator's body do; such critical moments reflecting Spinoza's, and indeed Deleuze's, interest, regardless of the lack of any explicit reference to these thinkers or to affect theory.[17] Examples of this employ words and phrases such as 'impact', the production of immediate and 'unsettling' experience,[18] 'anxiety',[19] 'emotional intensity';[20] they observe how various aesthetic devices place

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[16] Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, third edition, trans. by Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen R. Lane, preface by Michel Foucault (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), p. 147.

[17] Stephen Watt is arguably the exception here; however, his application of Deleuze to Pinter does not accommodate the audience but demonstrates, instead and in line with most applications of theory to Pinter's work, the indirect capture and expression at the level of representation of Deleuzian theory in the plays. See Watt's chapter on Pinter, 'Rereading Harold Pinter', in *Postmodern/Drama: Reading the Contemporary Stage* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), pp. 89-122.

[18] Ned Chaillet, 'Harold Pinter', *The Stage*, 29 December 2008 <http://www.thestage.co.uk/newsnewsstory.php/22947/nobel-winning-playwright-pinter-remembered> [accessed April 2010].

[19] Katherine H. Burkman: *The Dramatic World of Harold Pinter: Its Basis in Ritual* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1971), p. 7. Burkman paraphrasing Walter Kerr, *Harold Pinter* (New York and London: Columbia, 1967), pp. 7-20.

[20] Michael Billington, *Harold Pinter*, second edition (London: Faber and Faber, 2007), p. 383.

the audience in the position of the characters,[21] exempt them from 'the properties of time' to the effect of manifesting a state of suspension;[22] and suggest that truth in Pinter is predicated upon a 'theatrical exploration of immediate experience'.[23] Pinter himself, despite claiming that when writing he is 'not very much' aware of the audience, has noted that he wants the audience to remain 'glued to what happens', and moreover that he embraces the fact that the 'clear' presentation of 'things' in his plays is apt to 'sometimes make [...] an audience very uncomfortable'.[24] Between the author's own partial investment in sensation and movement at the level of audience and several critics' more decided attention to this field of action, we have good reason to argue for affect as one of the more salient dramatic registers of Pinter's work, and thus to make further enquiries into what this means and how it functions in Pinter in various contexts and media.

While critical appraisals such as I have adduced can and will be pushed further over the course of this thesis, it is important to linger on a few points. Critical discourse that implies or overtly characterizes the sensory and affective economy within the work at once affirms that Pinter's is not just a theatre of language and of power but is, more precisely, a theatre of the body. To locate anxiety, emotion, the experience of suspension and so on at the heart of theatre spectatorship is to suggest, I contend, how Pinter's work provides the opportunity for a 'resonance and interference between thought, sensation, and perception'.[25] As such, the audience occupy positions or move through coordinates of spectatorship that collapse the impression of a pure field of vision, for this very faculty – dominating theatre studies discourse and taken to be axiomatic as the principal point of contact between spectators and plays – 'is always fed into other senses and feeds out to them,[26] experience therefore being in actual fact thoroughly intermodal.[27] It is precisely in the provision of these modes of spectatorship that Pinter's work

[21] Bernard F. Dukore, *Where Laughter Stops: Pinter's Tragicomedy* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1976), p. 11; also, Thomas F. Van Laan, 'The Dumb Waiter: Pinter's Play with the Audience', in *Harold Pinter: Modern Critical Views*, ed. and intro. by Harold Bloom (New York and Philadelphia: Chelsea House, 1987), pp. 117-25 (p. 125).

[22] Joanne Klein, *Making Pictures: The Pinter Screenplays* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1985), p. 191.

[23] John Russell Brown, *Theatre Language: A Study of Arden, Osborne, Pinter and Wesker* (London: AllenLane/ Penguin, 1972), p. 116.

[24] 'Harold Pinter, The Art of Theater No.3', interview by Lawrence M. Bensky, *The Paris Review*, 39.3 (1966), 1-27 (p. 23).

[25] Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2002), p. 140.

[26] ibid., p. 154.

[27] ibid., p. 157.

contests the widely and 'resolutely occularcentric' modern society in which we have lived since the Renaissance and the scientific revolution in the West.[28]

Plateau-problem #2: affect and language

Whether the critics' language of affect refers to specific forms of experience manifested within spectators – anxiety, emotion, suspension etc. – or, relatedly, to spectators' journey from the stalls into the world on stage, each discourse makes plain that what is fundamental to Pinter's dramatic economy is a phenomenon that is cognitively 'imageless'; which is to say affect does not objectively appear because it functions '*energetically*: as an unspecified (if not undifferentiated) *intensity* of total experience.'[29] Pinter certainly resonates in this characterization of affect, particularly given the author's proposition that 'the more intense the experience the less articulate its [verbal/narrative] expression'[30] and that claim's obvious influence on his writing throughout the entire oeuvre. Thus we are confronted with the problem of speaking about and indeed defining Pinter's work and affect; extant discourse in Pinter scholarship hard-pressed to speak to experience other than with the language of menace, anxiety, humour, inculpation and similar descriptives. Yet, although affect is an imageless phenomenon, and as such it 'constitutes a challenge to thought',[31] and therefore to verbal articulation, it is not as if grappling with the problem of experience takes us away from language. For as is the case with every discourse invested in the experience of Pinter's work, it is the writing and its performance – and here we can include all the mechanisms of the theatrical apparatus, the cinematic realizations of the screenplays, the contexts in which the political poetry and political discourse are circulated and/or enacted – themselves which are wholly responsible for phenomena that function energetically and circulate as the intensity of total experience.

Whether the object under scrutiny is a play, screenplay, film, poem or a political speech, it is precisely *through the use of* language (language taken here in the broadest sense) within the realm of signification and representation that readers and audiences become affected. In fact, if it were not for the affective experience that precedes and ultimately exists outside of language and representation, there would be no language and indeed no art object: because without the animation of force within the material registers of our bodies we would never be moved to speak, think or write in the first place. Nor would we continue to do so if it were not for the

[28] Martin Jay, 'Scopic Regimes of Modernity', in *Vision and Visuality*, ed. by Hal Foster (New York: The New Press, 1999), pp. 3-23 (p. 3).
[29] ibid., p.168.
[30] 'Introduction: Writing for the Theatre', *Harold Pinter: Plays 1*, second edition (London: Faber and Faber, 1996), pp. vii-xiv (p. ix).
[31] André Green, *On Private Madness* (London: Karnac, 1986). p. 174.

repotentialization of that force that occurs when we find ourselves engaged in significant performances of these sorts of acts and projects. To speak therefore of affect is to attempt to consider simultaneously two imbricated and mutually informing regimes: that which is presented in representation *and* the palpable experience resulting from our negotiation of that – an experience not so easily captured and articulated in language but nonetheless actualized by the performance(s) of ostensibly representational signs and media. Looking, therefore, to the 'text' and other semiotic plateaus of Pinter's work in each medium can indicate how the conditions for affective experience are rendered propitious through discursive (linguistic and visual) expedients; those which are all too often considered strictly in terms of representation due primarily to an 'absence' of a functional, let alone incisive, language with which to speak of affect, and therefore to intermodal and embodied experience. So to get to the matter of affect and the body in Pinter, we must begin with the text.

Language and Pinter

Despite *Encore* critic Irving Wardle's early claim regarding *The Birthday Party* that 'it is impossible to detach what is said from the way in which it is said',[32] much early Pinter scholarship sought to disambiguate the plays, bringing time-honoured models of dramatic interpretation to the writing and its performance. Still prevalent enough in the literature, the will to disambiguation typically attributes an informational character to both language and signs, the underlying assumption being that particular languages can be assimilated to a code.[33] On this line, one often discovers a sweeping preoccupation with the apparent circumstance that Pinter's characters do not seem able or willing to communicate[34] and with the problem, moreover, of verifying the truth value of claims made by characters who have clearly left their biographies and

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[32] 'Comedy of Menace', *Encore*, (September-October 1958), 28-33 (p. 30). Martin Esslin was one of the earliest to promote this position as he states: 'the repetition of the statement is more relevant than the statement and the explicit, "discursive" content of the statement, itself'. *The Peopled Wound: The Plays of Harold Pinter* (London: Methuen & Co., 1970), p. 197.

[33] Deleuze, *Two Regimes of Madness*, p. 71.

[34] Both Pinter and Martin Esslin respectively took formative steps to clarify that miscommunication was in fact not the problem of any of Pinter's characters. Pinter once claimed: 'We have heard many times that tired, grimy phrase: "Failure of communication"... and this phrase has been fixed to my work quite consistently.' 'Introduction: Writing for the Theatre', p. xiii. Esslin asserted in 1970: 'Pinter is far from wanting to say that language is incapable of establishing true communication between human beings; he merely draws our attention to the fact that in life human beings rarely make use of language for that purpose, at least as far as spoken, as distinct from written, language is concerned.' *The Peopled Wound*, p. 198. Even still, one finds as late as the 1980s an embrace of the failure of communication thesis. On this matter see, for example, Raymond Williams who asserts that '[t]he structure of feeling' in *The Birthday Party* 'is familiar: the precarious hold on reality, the failure of communication...'. '*The Birthday Party*: Harold Pinter', in Harold Bloom, *Modern Critical Views*, ed. and intro. by Harold Bloom (New York and Philadelphia: Chelsea House, 1987), pp. 19-22 (p. 19). In the same collection see also Barbara Kreps, who remarks '[Pinter] exposes the frustrations and the failure of communication'. 'Time and Harold Pinter's Possible Realities: Art as Life, and Vice Versa', pp. 75-88 (p. 77).

résumés off stage. However, late in the 1970s a salient and presently well-known shift in the scholarship occurs that gives rise to a style of criticism invested in linguistics and speech act theory, the 'performative hypothesis' forming the ballast of such scholarly forays. The first to make serious inroads into this interpretative quarter was of course Austin E. Quigley, proceeding by way of his comprehensive and watershed monograph *The Pinter Problem* and his argument for the 'functional plurality' of language.[35] Quigley's critical approach to Pinter foregoes the surface level of meaning of statements and propositions in favour of deeper linguistic levels which promote and constrain the behaviour, actions and identities of one's interlocutors. On this matter Jean-Jacques Lecercle is perhaps more helpful than even Quigley in his general observation that the performative hypothesis

> first proposed by the American linguist, J.R. Ross [...] draws the linguistic consequences of [J.L] Austin's evolution from the contrast between performatives and constatives to the recognition that every utterance, and this includes assertions, has illocutionary force. If this is the case, every declarative sentence must contain, in its deep structure, a performative verb indicating its illocutionary force. In common and garden declarative sentences, this performative is erased from the surface sentence. Thus, 'it is raining' has a deep structure of the type: 'I state that it is raining.'[36]

As such, language is conceived in terms of power relations, and thinking along these lines has enabled Pinter scholars to get beyond more traditional investments in disambiguation and notions of (dramatic) and communicative meaning. Take as an example Alice N. Benston's claim that '[t]hroughout his work, Pinter has used pauses to make the point that the command of language is a question of power',[37] or Ann C. Hall's compendious observation: '[t]hat Pinter believes in the power of language is clearly demonstrated in his works from *The Birthday Party* to *Mountain Language*. Language is powerful, both politically and personally.'[38]

However, taking this one step further returns us to the audience body and the collapse of the space between spectators and stage in that the strategic use of language, concomitant to the visible effects it has on the bodies of the characters on stage, performs an intensive function, and therefore immediately registers material effects within the spectatorial body. Considering Pinter's writing and its performance from the standpoint of its purely intensive usage[39] shifts all

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[35] *The Pinter Problem* (Princeton and London: Princeton University Press, 1975), p. 275.
[36] *The Violence of Language* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 45.
[37] 'Chekhov, Beckett, Pinter: The St(r)ain upon the Silence', in *Pinter at Sixty*, ed. by Katherine H. Burkman and John L. Kundert-Gibbs (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993), pp. 111-24 (p. 123).
[38] 'Storytelling in Pinter', in *Pinter at Seventy: A Casebook*, second edition, ed. by Lois Gordon (New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 263-78 (p. 275).
[39] Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. by Dana Polan, foreword by Réda Bensmaïa (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. 19.

emphasis on the proper and figurative sense of words, phrases, slogans, monologues – and here we can include Pinter's infamous pauses and silences – to language's effectuation of 'a distribution of states that is part of the range of the word.'[40] This takes us a step further than critics informed by the performative hypothesis by accommodating the violence language performs at the audience level, particularly as that subtends, in the form of an extralinguistic excess, the dramatization of power relations and struggles ostensibly transpiring within the plateau of representation. Every instance whereby a character on stage uses language to give shape to the relationship between him/herself and another character, the dramatic discourse – not excluding body language, *mise en scène* or any element or constellation thereof of the theatrical apparatus – can be regarded for how it also performs an actualization (of something) within the spectator's body.[41] Because the 'exigency' occasioned by Pinter's language in various media 'results in an exceeding which thwarts any recuperation in or as mimesis',[42] analyzing its variegated and heterogeneous structures, performances and functions raises the problem of its field of action, its action and its materiality: Pinter's language as engendering movement, sensation and affect. Thus, in addition our dealing here with the fact that Pinter has '[s]tylistically [...] expanded the entire concept of language and its function in drama, clearly demonstrating that it *is* the action',[43] we are dealing with the principal action of the language construed as the production of force and harnessing of affective experience by dramatic and peformative means, means which take on numerous and varied expressions throughout Pinter's oeuvre.

Plateau-problem #3: affect and images

When one surveys the literature, it becomes apparent that speaking about Pinter's language more often than not entails speaking about images, for it is vivid and compelling images – and not narrative or action – which constitute the grammar of both his process of composition and the 'complete' work. Critics for example have repeatedly attended to how narrative in Pinter's dramas is subsumed into an economy of images,[44] typically such that the

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[40] ibid., p. 22.
[41] Dorothea Olkowski, *Gilles Deleuze and the Ruin of Representation* (Berkeley and Los Angles: University of California Press, 1999), p. 229.
[42] Garin Dowd, *Abstract Machines: Samuel Beckett and Philosophy after Deleuze and Guattari* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2007), p. 14.
[43] Rodney Simard, *Postmodern Drama: Contemporary Playwrights in America and Britain* (London and Maryland: University Press of America, 1984), p. 34.
[44] Among many others, see Esslin, *The Peopled Wound*, p. 43, 45; Simon Trussler, *The Plays of Harold Pinter: An Assessment* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1973), p. 14; Joanne Klein, *Making Pictures*, p. 196; John Russell Brown, *Theatre Language*, p. 73; and Elizabeth Sakellaridou, 'The Rhetoric of Evasion as Political Discourse: Some Preliminaries on Pinter's Political Language', *The Pinter Review: Annual Essays 1989*, ed. by Francis Gillen and Steven H. Gale (Tampa: University of Tampa Press, 1989), 43-47 (p. 44).

works 'never aspire to be arguments, explanations or even coherent stories';[45] while in the context of writing screenplays the author has been observed to possess a particular 'skill' for 'converting language into image'.[46] Meanwhile, Pinter himself has many times underlined the importance of images, almost always referring to his writing process for drama, film and poetry. Speaking to Mel Gussow in 1989, he professed that his only concern 'at the moment' of composition is 'with accurate and precise images of what is the case'.[47] However, if these claims have not yet been levelled in the context of Pinter's political poetry, and indeed his political speeches, it is only due, I would suggest, to a paucity of critical engagement with Pinter's work in these media. The passage of time will likely change this fact, and this thesis is indeed a formative offering in this regard. That Pinter's political poems make images their basic grammar is unsurprising given that poetry is universally understood to function by means of potent and economic images and feeling-tones, those which circumvent the detours one typically finds in prose and even much drama. As for Pinter's discourse in the role of what he calls 'a citizen of the world',[48] a role that is arguably tantamount to a public intellectual, close scrutiny of this order of language reveals that it is precisely affective images which eclipse or even replace argumentation. As such, images of different orders are foregrounded and made to inter-resonate within a network that should be understood as comprised of multi-modal texts and multiple discourses.

However, when considering the centrality of images in Pinter's writing it is not enough to emphasize, as the author and critics respectively do, that Pinter works mostly in terms of images but crucial, I would suggest, to push further towards an enquiry into *how* his images themselves function. At one level, thinking about images in the context of Pinter dictates that we consider how the visual is itself "'languaged," just as language itself has a visual dimension."[49] As such, Pinter's various images – both those which present themselves to the ocular faculty (and other perceptual faculties) and the images which derive from speech and take shape in spectators' imaginations in the form of cognitive imagery. At one level, the two regimes consisting of what is literally seen and what is suggested in the language, and thereby mentally imaged, open up 'an arena in which cultural meanings get constituted' through the images' provocation of and receptiveness to 'an entire range of analyses and interpretations of the audio,

[45] Esslin, *The Peopled Wound*, p. 43.
[46] Klein, *Making Pictures*, p. 196.
[47] Gussow, *Conversations with Pinter* (New York: Grove, 1994), p. 92.
[48] ibid., p. 85.
[49] Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, 'Narrativizing Visual Culture', in *The Visual Culture Reader*, second edition, ed. by Nicholas Mirzoeff (New York: Routledge, 1998), pp. 37-59 (p. 55).

the spatial, and of the psychic dynamics of spectatorship.'[50] And as such the intermingling and resonance of these regimes of images open up 'an entire world of intertexuality in which images, sounds and spatial delineations are read on to and through one another, lending ever-accruing layers of meanings and subjective responses to each encounter we might have with' Pinter's discourses.[51]

But the moment we invoke theories of affect, we are indeed confronted with another level which demands that we endeavour to conceive a space both prior and immanent to the reflexive and variously conscious site described above. This is not to posit or attempt to return to something primordial, nor to deny the reality of subjective responses, but on the contrary to consider how the application of what we already know, what we think we know, and feel is subject to reconfiguration and dispersal in the event of confrontation with the affective force of Pinter's aestheticization of images. If we extend to the image the materialist conception of language I have delineated above, and therefore regard images as literally inserting themselves into the body, then it becomes possible to consider visual and verbal imagery in Pinter in terms other than the standard notion of 'a signifier'.[52] Just as every live body and constellation of bodies in Pinter's theatre signify, they also simultaneously constitute an image and a movement at the level of the audience, signifiers and signs thereby having an other material side, one whose force beyond the coordinates of representation performs an actualization (of something) within the spectator's body. By no means are these two milieus mutually exclusive. If we can think images in Pinter as no different than the dialogue in that they insert themselves into the bodies of spectators and foment movement, sensation and affect, then it is true that we find ourselves returned to the character of affect (qua images) as energetic and indeed imageless.

Given that Pinter's aestheticization of images has been widely discussed by critics working squarely within the parameters of representation, a discourse of affect enables us to bring another dimension to extant readings. Where certain critics address both the (non)representation of violence and its repeated deferral in Pinter on the basis of conceptual meaning, affect permits us to add to what has been said by identifying and exploring 'that part of the image' in Pinter's writing and its staging 'that exceeds and spills over from the frame and the narrative', and has to do with paradox, 'irreducible excess', 'gratuitous amplification', disjuncture, the unqualified, the unexpected and the inexplicable.[53] Indeed we can engage with Pinter's

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[50] Irit Rogoff, 'Studying Visual Culture', in *The Visual Culture Reader*, pp. 24-36 (p. 24).
[51] ibid.
[52] Joanne Klein asserts that that Pinter 'has, in fact, credited his photographic disposition, *his fascination with image as signifier*, as a source of inspiration for his writing'. *Making Pictures*, p. 3, my emphasis.
[53] Denise Varney, 'Grotesque images and sardonic humour: pain and affect in German drama'. *Double*

engineering of images in several media in order to comprehend the myriad ways in which images circulate and harness power and thereby perform a certain species of violence upon the audience, specifically by engendering a non-narrativizable excess which slips out of representation and into a realm that is immanent to the spectator's body and mind. While the temptation and indeed the trend is to invoke the language of shock, it would seem that more can be said about both the conditions of Pinter's production of shock and the ontological character of such an experience, in the event that 'images become monstrous, even sublime' such that 'something is happening that cannot be reduced to organic representation'.[54]

Once again Pinter's remarks about images in his work are quite suggestive of a theatre of the body. When asked if his 1988 play *Mountain Language* was 'written to shock?' he replies: 'I don't write in those terms. I have no aim in writing other than exploring the images that come into my mind. I find some of those images really quite shocking, so they shock me into life and into the act of writing. The image is there and you attempt to express it.'[55] Notice how as Pinter's language of shock and expression speaks of that which can be seen it also invokes a distinctly non-representational register. His remarks betray how images that manifest in the imagination/mind effectively prompt the body to act in productive ways, doing so by means of an energetic force that is itself without image but nonetheless derives from the presence and altering effects of that which can be mentally imaged. Here in Pinter's reflection on the writing process and the effect of images deep within him we find a trace of Henri Bergson, specifically the philosopher's understanding that 'an image is not visual but multisensory, comprising all the information that one's senses perceive about an object.'[56] If images are in fact the grammar, and thus form the substantive building blocks of Pinter's writing and the resulting work, and if that grammar and writing process are, as Pinter implies, fundamentally 'made of motor agitation and inertia',[57] then it is possible to grasp how the affective experience that is germane to the process of aesthetic creation is well capable of translating into spectators' experience of the 'final' product; that product construed as the set of forces and blocs of sensation that constitute the significance of a Pinter play, screenplay, film, poem and indeed political intervention. Most of all, Pinter's own remarks invite and permit us to think his images, and by implication the dialogue and all other aspects of the writing and its staging and performance, beyond strict representation

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Dialogues, Anatomy and Poetics, 6 (Winter 2005), qting. Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual* (p. 27) <http://www.doubledialogues.com/archive/issue_six/varney.html> [accessed January 2010].
[54] Olkowski, *Gilles Deleuze and the Ruin*, p. 70.
[55] Mark Batty, *About Pinter: the Playwright and the Work* (London: Faber and Faber, 2005), p. 146. Batty qting. Pinter interview with Anna Ford, 'Radical Departures', the *Listener*, 27 October 1988, pp. 5-6.
[56] Marks, *The Skin of the Film*, p. 146.
[57] Deleuze and Parnet, *Dialogues II*, p. 56.

– and thus as material phenomena which insert themselves into the material bodies of spectators.

Plateau-problem #4: affect and thought

This last point brings us to the relationship between affect and thought, an assemblage which arguably most aligns Pinter and Deleuze. Both the 'determinative schema'[58] myriad critics bring to Pinter's work with a view to discovering its meanings and the coherent ideologies and architectures of thought under the shadow of which Pinter repeatedly claims not to compose – those which no doubt guide some of Pinter's contemporaries in the act of composition – can be regarded, following Deleuze, as templates which do not, in the final analysis, constitute thinking. Rather, they are apparatuses that do the thinking for us; which is to say, more pointedly, that they prevent real thought, the kind of thought which changes us by producing difference and the new. It is 'not only that we think according to a given method,' Deleuze claims, 'but also that there is a more or less implicit, tacit or presupposed image of thought which determines our goals when we try to think.'[59] Along with most Pinter scholarship, we can see that a great deal of the more decidedly ideological work of Pinter's contemporaries hastens the passage of thought into higher order cognitive registers and thereby squelches the affect responsible for the engenderment of difference. Consider here committed playwrights such as Arnold Wesker, John Arden and subsequently David Hare, Howard Brenton and David Edgar; all of whom are guided in their respective ways by the twin logic of a defined political philosophy and a dialectical (dramatic) methodology.[60]

Even if we were to argue that the work of these playwrights cannot actually provide an argument or 'rational demonstrations of perspectives' – precisely because they are principally dramas and not arguments, functioning by means of indirect speech and gesture – a number of their plays do engage in 'illustrative demonstrations' ultimately intended to put 'audiences in a

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[58] Olkowski, *Gilles Deleuze and the Ruin*, p. 213.

[59] *Difference and Repetition*, fourth edition, trans. by Paul Patton (London and New York: Continuum, 2004), p. xv.

[60] I recognize how slim this list of playwrights – all male and indeed institutional – is, and also recognize the perils of the binary I have established. By way of acknowledgment, then, I adduce Hare's claim that his 'usual' writing process begins with him being 'haunted [...] by an opening image.' 'Introduction', *David Hare: Plays 2*, pp. vii-xvii (p. xv). The parallels with Pinter are indeed clear, if only at the level of the author-function. Looking to Hare's plays, however, and considering as well the author's dedication to research and the collation of facts – which he often articulates in textual notes – suggests strongly that his process is guided by extant architectures of thought, the outcome of which is in effect determined in advance, and that he understands that theatre's chief function is to strive to represent reality in the outside world. Another example relevant to my distinction of Pinter's process is indeed Tom Stoppard, who claims that 'nobody quite believes the playwright's line about characters taking over a story. I never quite believe it myself [...] I constantly remember that because my instinct, even now, is to want to know more about the unwritten play than is knowable, or good to know.' 'Preface', *Tom Stoppard: Plays 1*, second edition (London: Faber and Faber, 1996), pp. vii-viii (p. vii).

position to recognise the rightness of a perspective'.[61] To establish the conditions for spectators to perceive the rightness of an idea, perspective, ideology and so on is to attempt to give the impression that the intellectual faculty is free standing and can in fact shake the sensorium that is so often understood in our predominantly idealist ((neo)Kantian) Western culture to impede the integrity of thinking and understanding. As a playwright, to proceed as such is to compose under the sign of Cartesian dualism, effectively, but not necessarily consciously, introducing the audience into subject positions which give the impression of 'intellectual exclusivity'.[62] This is to say that, following Descartes's proclamation, 'I think therefore I am', all sensory evidence for personal existence is rendered secondary, if not muted, in favour of an apparently decided reliance on intellectual judgment.[63] But without the body, thought which recognizes itself as a pure act of cognition remains nothing more than a repetition or application to varying extents of received ideas and clichés.[64]

Affect is central here, for it is precisely and only from the body's production of intensities which then facilitate movement and sensation that a legitimate and productive act of thinking and thought can transpire, one that obviates cliché and opinion. The implications of this are such that to think in the grip of affect is to disrupt extant thought in the form of opinion and cliché. Thus any legitimate thought will break free of clichés, received ideas and habitual behaviour because creation necessarily involves the new, 'in other words, difference'.[65] Rather than merely suggesting that the thoughts Pinter's work produces in us are themselves phenomenologically intense, I would argue more specifically that the work exploits the affective intensities within and across the body that 'direct the flow of the actualisation of Ideas', and

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[61] James O. Young, *Art and Knowledge* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 68-69.

[62] Constance Classen, *Worlds of Sense: Exploring the Senses in History and Across Cultures* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 8.

[63] ibid., p. 4.

[64] In keeping with my litany of more or less institutional British male playwrights, it is worth briefly remarking on how Howard Barker and Edward Bond have affinities with Pinter, despite their respective relationships to Marxist and socialist ideology and their rigorous philosophical reflections on the theatre and to varying extents the process of composing plays. Both are important to mention for they are decidedly invested in the audience body in as much as they strive to return thought to the body, to provoke spectators' imaginations in ways that retain thought's force and movement, even in extensity: Barker being invested as he is in reformulating tragedy and the production of indigestible affective experience for audiences; and Bond having made the first and subsequently most sophisticated steps in the aestheticization of violence and shock in post-World War II British theatre. While a discussion of affect in relation to either playwright would fill the space of two more theses, let me simply observe how much of their respective work breaks with the notion of Cartesian dualism and begins to potentialize modes of spectatorship which are not far from Pinter's writing in so far as they collapse the enculturated mind-body division by means of aesthetic provocations which send the entire spectrum of faculties into discord, doing so to various effects. Nonetheless, a comparison of their work and Pinter's would surely bear out differences in both the affects engendered and the style by which this occurs.

[65] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 172.

therefore makes plain that '[a] whole flow of exchange occurs between intensity and ideas'.[66] If affect, and movement as its definitive 'trait', have to do with 'the process whereby ideas are actualised',[67] then thought is not a point of stability or conviction at which one arrives but rather a process where ideas are incipient and have not yet come to lose the force which gives rise to them and endows them with the kind of movement that functions as the site of difference production. According to Deleuze, when thinking becomes a processual event it constitutes the highest form of creation, the performance of a differing effect being the fruit of that creative gesture. So if we regard Pinter in terms of affect, then the extent to which his writing 'stubbornly resist[s] domestication',[68] blocks attempts 'to inscribe the controls of fiction on the mysteries of experience',[69] and makes 'it difficult to describe or narrate the suggestive power of [the works'] images in non-dramatic or non-theatrical terms'[70] no longer appears to be some kind of avant-garde rejection of meaning and instead an actualization of the conditions for audiences to create and to think autonomously.

Pinter's claim in his Nobel lecture, *Art, Truth and Politics*, that 'our beginnings never know our ends'[71] points us in this direction in so far as it tables the importance of process and processual experience. These remarks, made in 2005, are informed by previous comments, one of which is Pinter's insistence to Mel Gussow that 'I can't write a play in which I know the end result. I've never done that. There's no play there if that's the case',[72] as well as his response to Gussow on another occasion when asked if he writes to 'find out' what he thinks:

> I don't set out with such intention, but I find at the end of the journey, which of course is never ending, that I have found things out. I don't make any great claims for all that. I don't go away and say, 'I have illuminated myself. You see before you a changed person.' [He smiles.] It's a more surreptitious sense of discovery that happens to the writer himself.[73]

Positing something of an 'anorganized plan' for creation,[74] what Pinter describes replaces an Enlightenment discourse of illumination with one that is decidedly materialist-empiricist; the 'surreptitious sense of discovery' Pinter values and by which he operates suggesting his philosophical tendencies. His attention to process and to his own openness to being subjected to

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[66] ibid., p. 305.
[67] ibid., p. 306.
[68] Varun Begley, *Harold Pinter and the Twilight of Modernism* (Toronto, Buffalo and London: University of Toronto Press, 2005), p. 4.
[69] Klein, *Making Pictures*, p. 195.
[70] Drew Milne, 'Pinter's Sexual Politics', in *The Cambridge Companion to Harold Pinter*, ed. by Peter Raby (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 195-211 (p. 195).
[71] *Various Voices*, pp. 285-300 (p. 286).
[72] *Conversations with Pinter*, p. 152.
[73] ibid., p.123.
[74] Rajchman, *The Deleuze Connections*, p. 138.

the flow of experience as that presents the potential for finding things out takes Pinter away from 'the idealizing piety of art as Kantian "disinterest" (even when recast as Heideggerian *Gelassenheit*), or as Freudian "sublimation"'.[75] To speak of thought as processual and thus resistant to capture and subsumption into pre-existing intellectual architectures is to suggest that higher order thinking – what Deleuze calls 'extensity' – 'remains implicated in the enveloping order of differences' that gave rise to thought in the first place.[76] As such, thought is always folding back into the body which in the first instance rendered it salient enough to become a thought worth following, even enjoying, always folding back into the body that it deserves, so to say.

Pinter's reflections on writing are helpful in making ontological claims about the kinds of thought the author is involved in and that his work engenders, against the activity of some of his contemporaries. Speaking to his biographer Michael Billington about writing the screenplay for *The Servant*, Pinter suggests that he was somehow able to work in advance of *structures* – either 'political, social or critical', as he puts it.[77] A compelling and contentious statement indeed, Pinter's re-echoes French film director Jean-Luc Godard's claims that having an idea is not about ideology but is, rather, a practical matter. Godard makes this distinction by means of the compelling nuance between *a just image* – in other words an image that demands judgement – and *just an image* – an image whose freedom from overt ideological inflection prompts thinking with a view to difference production. Reflecting on Godard's slogan, Deleuze could just as easily be speaking of Pinter as he relates that 'just ideas are always those that conform to accepted meanings or established precepts, they're always ideas that confirm something [...] While "just ideas" is a becoming-present, a stammering of ideas, and can only be expressed in the form of questions that tend to confound any answers.'[78] The provision of a 'just idea', an answer to a problem in the form of a solution or a truth, instantiates the notion of completion and solicits the performance of habitual behaviour which takes its lead from established methodologies. By contrast, 'just ideas' cue practices the continual reinvention of which in the moment is predicated upon a sustained discernment, tabling and serialization of problems; the rigorous response to which is indeed a practice to be negotiated in the moment by means of intuitions and inventions.

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[75] ibid., pp. 138-39.
[76] *Difference and Repetition*, p. 304.
[77] *Various Voices*, p. 80.
[78] *Negotiations, 1972-1990*, trans. by Martin Joughin (New York and Chichester: Columbia University Press, 1995), pp. 38-39.

Hence the relevance of the manner in which Pinter's work consistently raises problems, not the sort that package and deliver solutions to audiences, as Charles Grimes poignantly observes,[79] but instead problems which defy comprehensive and comfortable answers. Foregrounding the body and turning to affect enables us to push this further. In contrast to problems understood in terms of representation, Claire Colebrook clarifies that '[f]or Deleuze a "problem" is not a simple question that needs to find an answer' but is, rather, 'something that disrupts life and thinking, producing movements and responses [...] The challenge is to see life as a problem, as a constant proliferation of questions producing ever more complex series of further problems.'[80]

To sum up so far, we can see 'the Pinter problem' (to deliberately reinvest Quigley's eponymous thesis and strictly textual approach) as a sustained project that interrogates dominant modes of orientation to, investment in and thinking 'about' myriad social and political realities; those which range from language use as putative communication, to gender relations, to democracy and the exercise of Western foreign policy, to name but a few of the issues Pinter's work forces us to confront and think 'about'. In this way, I would suggest that we can link the function of Pinter's writing and work to Deleuze and his desire to 'open up life to diverse modes of thinking'. Literature being an apt example in that it often is not 'based on representing or expressing some common world-view or shared experience' but instead 'should shock, shatter and provoke experience.'[81] But as Colebrook adds – and as this thesis on Pinter endeavours to address and articulate over its chapters, 'there are different ways in which thought can be disrupted',[82] and indeed different media through which this (Deleuzian) disruption can be performed.

Accepting via Deleuze that the subversion of cliché, principles and ideology are sufficient and necessary to establishing the conditions for thought, this thesis explores over five chapters the means by which Pinter consistently complicates and complexifies the process of spectatorship, prompting specific investments and ultimately problematizing them through the animation of the faculties of perception. Thus over five chapters the function of Pinter's writing is explored in terms of how it stands to endow thought with force and movement. I argue that when successfully doing so, it introduces the thinking self into a fluid process where opinions

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[79] 'It is a familiar idea that political theater need only ask the right questions; it does not have to answer or solve them. Pinter's unique, even paradoxical style of political drama separates as far as possible the act of questioning from the existence of solutions. Pinter ends his political theater in silence because he has no answers to afford us'. *Harold Pinter's Politics: A Silence beyond Echo* (Madison and Teaneck: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2005), p. 220.

[80] *Understanding Deleuze* (Crows Nest, AUS: Allen & Unwin, 2002), pp. xxxiv-xxxv.

[81] Claire Colebrook, *Gilles Deleuze* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 11.

[82] ibid.

and ideology do not hamper the experimentation necessary to achieve difference. This is to enquire into how the writing performs effects other than those which produce in spectators the repetition of what has already been thought and the impression of knowledge acquisition, of enlightenment and of recognition of a correct perspective.

Plateau-problem #5: affect and subjectivity

As we drag the body, language and images along to our characterization of thought in the context of Pinter as processual and embodied, as neither ideologically freighted nor predetermined, and as potentially disruptive of habit and productive of new experience, it becomes necessary to address the issue of subjectivity. As this thesis engages with and pushes further extant investments in the audience body and discourses of affect in relation to Pinter's work, its most salient departure from all that has to date been said involves how the subject is conceived. Even though critics observe in Pinter a unique and salient production of anxiety, emotional intensity, immediacy etc. and, relatedly, how the work introduces audiences into the dramatic world and landscape, their widespread and consistent abstention from interrogating the very notion of human subjectivity vis-à-vis Pinter suggests an ultimate appeal to the notion of an egologically stable and thus idealist spectator. As such, the works' affecting of readers and spectators neither binds nor unbinds selfhood but merely remains a phenomenon both grounded and represented in experience. I would suggest, then, that to celebrate Pinter's plays as machines that problematize meaning and interpretation, disrupt thought in the form of cliché and opinion, and therefore produce affects such as anxiety, wonder, suspension and so on is to set ourselves the task of embracing how Pinter's work in several media challenges 'the world of the articulating, self-defining and enclosed subject'[83] qua reader and qua spectator.

If we accept Colin Counsell's twin assertion that human beings have an innate proclivity for sense making and as such our 'subjectivity', our 'consciousness, is built of the positions we take up in discourse [and thus] *consists* of our adoption of ways of making meaning',[84] then Pinter's consistent manipulation of this (ontological) appetency suggests that his work is engaged in problematizing consciousness and subjectivity; the former in great part enabling the latter. Bringing Deleuze to Pinter, then, means that to speak of affect and indeed the manner in which Pinter's works variously foreground and impinge upon the bodies of readers and spectators is not to posit a Pinter subject (spectator/reader) as a coherent and stable ego, but as a set of

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[83] Kylie Message, 'Body Without Organs', in *The Deleuze Dictionary*, ed. by Adrian Parr (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), pp. 32-34 (p. 33).
[84] *Signs of Performance: An Introduction to 20th-Century Theatre* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 209.

forces that is always already in process – the production and repotentialization of affective experience and thus processual thought engendering ontological incipiency, ongoing individuation. To ask how Pinter's work in various media gives us a body is not to explore how the dramas, screenplays, films, poetry and political discourse relate 'to the bodies we have already been given.'[85] Rather, it is to strive to discern the many ways in which the work and its performances give us bodies in formation, doing so by various performative means whose production of difference, and therefore the new, contests the notion, an arguably illusory one, that the self is unified, that its senses are innately given, and therefore that it cannot be reconfigured.[86]

Reading Pinter through the lens of Deleuzian conceptions of affect marks an attempt to probe beneath the surface of certain phenomenological claims which observe that in the event of an efficacious performance we leave the venue and event in a state different than the one we arrived in. The point, then, is not to reflect on how the work has changed us as subjects – which entails consciousness and self-reflexive narrativization – but rather how it induces a process of change and potentially sustains that process, as a reconfiguration of the culture we always already carry in our bodies – but which is by no means concrete and stable. As a 'being' introduced into process via myriad aesthetic gestures, the spectatorial subject's every perception, thought, speech act and gesture constitute a 'ceaseless activity of drawing and redrawing connections with each other through a process of self-modification or becoming.'[87] Thus we see that legitimate affect does not belong to the subject but rather puts the subject in motion to the effect of desubjectivizing 'it'. Moving in this direction dictates that we invoke the concept of ontological 'becoming' in order to worry the axiomatic notion that a spectator and an audience simply *are* and replace it with what they *do* and *are doing*. And it is the intention to explore by diverse means throughout this thesis how Pinter's interrelated aesthetics and politics repeatedly lay the conditions across several media for various becomings.

Over five chapters, this thesis introduces into the discussion of subjectivity extant observations of how Pinter's writing operates not 'by overt political argument, "propaganda", as by formal innovation' and 'by interventions and disruptions'.[88] At one level, this line of argument entails focusing not on the content of Pinter's writing but arguing that its form and content are both interelatedly and respectively expressive of affects, deploying forces in such a way that require us to rethink traditional conceptions which sunder content and form, and even those

[85] Marks, *The Skin of The Film*, p. 150.
[86] ibid., p. 151.
[87] Del Rio, *Deleuze and the Cinemas*, p. 3.
[88] John Stokes, 'Pinter and the 1950s', in *The Cambridge Companion to Harold Pinter*, pp. 28-43 (p. 34).

(*pace* Beckett) which posit their keeling into one another. But at another level, the argument for becoming enables us to re-approach the manner in which Pinter's work is political, accommodating the fact that various forms of political realities are its subject matter, but then pushing this further to account for how Pinter is not simply writing plays, screenplays, poems and speeches *about* certain political realities but is, more accurately, writing *politically*.[89] This is to say that across Pinter's oeuvre he has frequently called into question myriad 'structural principles of society',[90] not excluding the structural principles of the aesthetic and political media in which he works. And this can to some extent be regarded as a creation of openness and undecidability which gets overlooked by analyses that linger at the plateau of signification-representation.

In the early dramas and films to be addressed in Chapters 1 and 2, this claim is nearly axiomatic, especially given the ambiguity and instability of truth value and verification for which Pinter has become so well known in his revitalization of the modern stage. However, it is precisely by bringing affect and becoming to these aesthetics that we can force new thought in relation to the extant scholarship on the plays. As for the later stage of Pinter's career, any claim for openness and undecidability might seem obtuse given how these works are quite widely thought to depart from the artfulness and ambiguity that came before and have, moreover, even been said to approach didacticism and agit-prop in their apparent interpretive penetrability and legibility.[91] In bringing affect to this body of overtly political work – the post-1983 dramas addressed in Chapter 3, the political poems in Chapter 4 and Pinter's Nobel Lecture in Chapter 5 – this thesis posits an order of openness and undecidability by looking beyond the plateau of representation and towards the objective and illegible violence in sensation that issues forth from representation itself. While critics typically engage with this period with a decided investment in the political subject matter and its expression within representation, this thesis draws a through line from the earlier work to this later period on the basis of an economy of affect specific to Pinter, but which transmogrifies over time. Thus, of primary interest is the manner in which Pinter's work in every medium can be considered a theatre of the body for its

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[89] Vraeaeth Oehner, 'What Does Political Film-Making Mean?', *Republic Art*, May 2003, trans. by Aileen Derieg <http://www.republicart.net/disc/representations/oehner01_en.htm> [accessed April 2009].

[90] ibid.

[91] Esslin finds fault with Pinter's political dramas on the basis of a putative lack of ambiguity and mystery, characterizing the playwright at this stage as a pamphleteer – and thus by proxy his plays as pamphlets. 'Harold Pinter's Theatre of Cruelty', in *Pinter at Sixty*, ed. by Katherine H. Burkman and John L. Kundert-Gibbs (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993), pp. 27-36 (p. 27); Quigley claims that these plays are in fact trying 'to persuade a theatre audience that it should in general be against physical torture, murder and rape', a project he believes to be 'somewhat gratuitous in spite of the prevalence of all three in the modern world.' 'Pinter, Politics and Postmodernism (1)', pp. 7-27 (p. 10); and Volker Strunk dismisses *One for the Road* on grounds of its apparent lack of formal complexity, calling it an 'essentially undramatic and deliberately artless enterprise' and characterizing it as agit-prop. *Harold Pinter: Towards a Poetics of His Plays* (New York: Peter Lang, 1989), p. 216.

appeal to and manipulation of the perceptual faculties, each different medium presenting us with its own affects and means of potentially engendering affective experience.

Thinking Pinter's work and oeuvre as a theatre of the body, as a theatre of affect and ultimately as a theatre of becoming inspires us to reinterpret Peter Brook's serious yet somewhat lugubrious claim that 'theatre is always a self-destructive art'.[92] Indeed Brook's remarks speak indirectly to affect in that the performance's essence slips out of our grasp the moment of its completion, and can therefore never be retrieved or restaged as we apprehended it the first time. But rather than characterize this as loss, and the event a form of decay, in the context of Pinter's work the operation of the performance as a set of forces upon an audience, also a set of forces, can be regarded a *productive destruction* in so far as both the works' impact and its evanescent disappearance foment a momentary disappearance and destruction of the conceptual and perceptual ground upon which each of us constructs our subjectivity. Looking at Pinter's work for the way that it provokes processes of individuation that do not end in or amount to specific and coherent subject positions, or that create new ones, indeed brings forth the first two keywords we began with as they relate to affect. As Elena del Rio poignantly observes:

> [O]ne may say that a body's existence is always performative insofar as it does not pre-exist its own unfolding/becoming through particular actions and thoughts. As well, in performance as in expression, beings manifest/explicate themselves not as static entities, but as constantly evolving and mutating forces. Both expression and performance are conceptually linked to a rhetoric of action, relation, and modification. As an expressive modality, performance is the bringing forth of the power of bodies, in sum, the mobilization of the body's affects. Performance is the actualization of the body's potential through specific thoughts, actions, displacements, combinations, realignments – all of which can be seen as different degrees of intensity, distinct relations of movement and rest.[93]

Thus we find ourselves at the fold where performance, power, affect and becoming inter-resonate, providing us with as a near a working concept as can be formulated for the task of (re)addressing much of Pinter's work. Because becomings are affects – which is to say more precisely that affects are 'processes of "becoming"' in the 'engagements with the powers of other bodies'[94] – becoming will serve as a means to consolidate, conclude and point further beyond each of the following chapters' respective and interrelated explorations of affect and Pinter's theatre of the body in the media of drama and theatre, screenplay and film, political poetry and political discourse. At the same time, however, performance, power and affect will serve not as standing concepts which are applied to Pinter's work in each medium but rather as concepts that

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[92] *The Empty Space* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1968), p. 15.
[93] Del Rio, *Deleuze and the Cinemas*, p. 9.
[94] Paul Patton, *Deleuze and the Political* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 78.

shift and change according to our requirements in the moment and event of asking questions about the work; such questions, or 'problems' if you will, do not attribute meaning to Pinter's work on the basis of what is definable and classifiable but rather on the basis of significance. In exploring over the course of five chapters how Pinter's work is, before all else, comprised of various economies of affect, this thesis argues for a new way to discern a politics in Pinter, an order of politics that is predicated upon the capacity for specific aesthetic gestures to produce affects and to perform mediations of subjectivity. It is my hope that proceeding through each chapter will begin to sketch what an aesthetics as a politics looks like in the context of Harold Pinter.

Chapter Two
(Re)thinking Harold Pinter's Earlier Plays

This chapter brings affect theory to Pinter's dramatic aesthetics in the early plays, focussing, interelatedly, on selections from the dramas and conducting a meta-critical analysis of discourse that has developed around them. The purpose is to review and consolidate but also, and more importantly, to open specific critical discourses to a conception of Pinter's work in terms of its extra-discursive and affective dimension. This chapter engages extant characterizations of both menace and comedy, while drawing out from them an investment in Pinter's earlier drama as a theatre of the body, an investment in the material implications of its aesthetics. In what follows I do not seek to challenge the critics I address so much as to coax a language from their analyses that is sufficient to begin to speak about affective experience in the context of Pinter's dramas. Thus, this chapter proposes that the best way to table a discourse of affect is not to start afresh, so to speak, but to return to and probe scholarship with a view to interrogating its frequent partial investments in, obfuscations and even apparent elisions of the body, as well as its primary attachment to the mind and cognition vis-à-vis Pinter's plays. The initial stage of what follows is largely contextual; it reiterates the emergence of the phrase and concept comedy of menace and then sketches its dominant orientation. Following this, some of the aesthetic features and devices considered to be germane to Pinter's dramas are interrogated as a means to argue that, much more so than a theatre of ideas and of representation, Pinter's is a theatre of the body and of affect. Finally, the conclusion considers Pinter's unique and vanguard style in these formative plays as effecting a politics of becoming, which is to say the dramatic production of processual experience that can overturn standard understandings of what it means to read, attend and 'see' a Pinter play.

Comedy of menace revisited: the 'problem' of representation

For many, the use of the phrase comedy of menace has over four decades become tantamount to saying Harold Pinter's name. However, equally evident for many is the fact that Pinter did not coin the phrase, nor was he the first playwright with whom it was associated. As has been often noted, the phrase first appears as the subtitle of David Campton's 1958 play, *The Lunatic View*. Yet despite comedy of menace being Campton's 'birthright', it was Irving Wardle who to lasting effect applied the phrase to Pinter's play *The Birthday Party* when it appeared on stage the same year as Campton's. In an article he wrote for the theatre journal *Encore*, the piece itself titled after the fashion of Campton's subtitle, Wardle spoke in glowing terms of the play's handling of destiny 'not as an austere exercise in classicism, but as an incurable disease which

one forgets about most of the time and whose lethal reminders may take the form of a joke'.[1] Wardle furthermore invested this aesthetic with a politics by suggesting that Pinter's admixture of comedy and menace is 'an apt dramatic motif for an age of conditioned behaviour in which orthodox man is a willing collaborator in his own destruction'.[2] In portraying not Campton but Pinter as the bellwether of this emergent theatrical aesthetic, and in linking Pinter's unique dramatic formulation of comedy and menace to the post-World War II social climate, Wardle began to fashion Campton's subtitle into a concept and a critical tool that would have significant consequences for those interested in Pinter's work.

Retroactively surveying the landscape within which the *Encore* critic's essay emerged, John Stokes notes how

> [t]he enthusiasm of the *Encore* critics reveals the political dimension of Pinter's work; his abiding perception that political reality invariably lies buried beneath official language, was grasped from the start [...] Pinter's early visions of local totalitarianism spoke directly to a constituency that, like himself, was steeped in Orwell and Kafka and the anti-fascist plays of Sartre and John Whiting.[3]

Wardle's linking of the aesthetic to the post-war social milieu in *The Birthday Party*, as Stokes observes, caught on with many Pinter scholars, and as a result created a salient through line in the literature which continues today. Martin Esslin was arguably the most enthusiastic to take up Wardle's position, and regarded Pinter's emergent work as demonstrative of his own ubiquitous 'human condition' thesis; this very analysis of course appearing in that monolithic yet nonetheless conceptually constraining tract on European traditions of post-war avant-garde drama, *The Theatre of the Absurd* (1961).[4] Later, by the time Esslin published *The Peopled Wound: The Plays of Harold Pinter* in 1970, he had further emphasized the second term, menace, in the ubiquitous phrase, and had refined the human condition thesis along the way. The principal argument at this stage was that Pinter's plays *demonstrate* 'the opaqueness, the uncertainty and precariousness of the human condition itself', as that so-called predicament is said to be the real menace lurking 'behind all these menacing images'.[5]

Even decades later, Esslin continued to push his human condition thesis, while further inscribing it with notions of moral panic and Cold War anomie:[6]

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[1] 'Comedy of Menace', p. 33.

[2] ibid.

[3] 'Pinter and the 1950s', p. 32.

[4] Esslin's examination of Pinter's work only appeared in a later edition of this text, in 1968.

[5] *The Peopled Wound*, pp. 51-52, passim.

[6] One among many, Michael Scott argues that Pinter 'is concerned with the human condition as it is today.' 'Introduction', *Harold Pinter: The Birthday Party, The Caretaker and The Homecoming, A Casebook*, ed. and intro. by Michael Scott (London: Macmillan, 1986), pp. 9-22 (p. 9).

The label of 'comedies of menace' that has been applied to Pinter's plays is correct as far as it goes, yet behind the menace there stands the consciousness of an anxiety about the cruelty of the post-Holocaust, postnuclear world itself. In the same way the frantic search for a territory of one's own, a safe haven from which that world can be excluded – the territorial element of Pinter's work – also emerges as merely an aspect of that basic realization of the ruthless brutality of the times, a panic-stricken desire to shelter from a world pervaded by terror and torture.[7]

Following Wardle, Esslin places menace in advance of comedy, the *Encore* critic having seen the latter functioning in *The Birthday Party* as a mere formal vehicle (i.e. 'joke form') for menace. At once Esslin embarks upon a distinctly Marcusean reading of 'man's' existential plight within a post-Holocaust and a post-nuclear world and, ultimately, invests in drama as an art form whose function is foremost to communicate this very predicament, as a barometer of sorts, to audiences.

Esslin's compounding of Wardle's socio-political reading of Pinter's work with existentialist, as well as psychoanalytic, approaches has inflected a great deal of Pinter scholarship until very recently; from Walter Kerr's observation (nine years after Wardle's appraisal of *The Birthday Party*) that '"[m]enacing" is the adjective most often used to describe the events in a Pinter play',[8] to D. Keith Peacock's understanding that the single 'political implication' of plays such as *The Room* (1957), *The Dumb Waiter* (1957) and *The Birthday Party* is that they reflect '*a threat to individual autonomy*'.[9] For Peacock, the first play dramatizes fear and violence as a conveyance of 'the insecurity generated by the postwar lack of housing and the irrational fears generated, particularly among the working class, by the increase in black immigration during the 1950s', while the latter play is 'informed by the recent European experience of left- and right-wing totalitarianism, the Holocaust, and the nuclear threat that overshadowed the 1950s and 1960s, leading to the formation of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in 1957.'[10] But it is Peacock's addendum that '[t]hese social concerns were, however, only symptoms of universal fears and phantasms that Pinter now appeared adept at evoking'[11] which most decidedly sustains the Wardle-Esslin thesis.

Charles Grimes extends this critical approach to speak to more recent political developments in the post-9/11 era, making links between the comedies of menace and contemporary expressions of terrorism and fundamentalism. Of *The Birthday Party* he states:

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[7] 'Harold Pinter's Theatre of Cruelty', p. 29.
[8] *Harold Pinter*, p. 14.
[9] *Harold Pinter and the New British Theatre* (London: Greenwood, 1997), p. 139, my emphasis.
[10] ibid., p. 68.
[11] ibid.

The actual psychology of torturers is accurately portrayed in the play through the characters of Goldberg and McCann. Certain men (and some women) are chosen by torturing regimes for their tasks due to a fervent belief in a set of external values that allows the world to be read in terms of an opposition between 'us' and 'them.' These 'others' are seen as a threat to the stability of society. The torturer is motivated by a belief that the world is just and that his actions make it more so. These beliefs in the correctness of oneself and one's cause are held with literal fundamentalism and with an absolute absence of doubt. Goldberg exclaims to Stanley in the first torture session, 'Of course [we're] right! We're right and you're wrong, Webber, all along the line!' (*BP*, 51). Pinter recurrently dramatizes this sense of complete rectitude as he creates the political villains and tyrants who populate his theater.[12]

At the same time, however, one finds critics reversing the flow of power such that the characters are not simply subjected to threat and oppression, they are seen to be reacting to and resisting it. Susan Hollis Merritt suggests as much in her argument that 'Pinter's early "comedies of menace"' offer 'representations of individuals anxiously confronting the forces of social authority'.[13] While these readings differ in the amount of agency and autonomy they attribute to the individual, they are all equally invested in the plays' accuracy of representation. In this way, the critics understand that the principal function of Pinter's dramatic aesthetics is to hold a mirror up to nature, as the saying goes.

Discussions of comedy of menace along with conceptual derivatives such as the word 'Pinteresque' have so often understood these terms foremost in terms of semiotics and representation. More often than not, however, one discovers that recognitions of the accuracy and relevance of dramatic representation and illustration are supervened upon by some degree of investment in the corporeal register of the work. By confronting this supervenience of an investment in the corporeal, then, I suggest that we can conceive Pinter's theatre and aestheticization of comedy of menace away from its familiar Platonic status as a medium whose principal function is to represent the truth about the world[14] and characterize it instead as a medium that produces reality. Focusing decidedly on the body should indicate that the relationship *between* comedy and menace is more complex, the 'anxiety' to which Esslin refers thereby entailing more than a recognition of 'cruelty' and its spectrum of experience outstripping descriptives such as 'anxiety' and indeed 'menace'. If one considers Pinter's earlier plays beyond the realm of representation circumscribed by Wardle's and Esslin's mutually reinforcing interpretations, along with the myriad interpretations which inherit this critical foundation, then all claims to the audience's *consciousness* and *realization* of what they are confronted with vis-à-vis

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[12] *Harold Pinter's Politics*, p. 44.
[13] 'Pinter and Politics', in *Harold Pinter: A Casebook*, ed. by Lois Gordon (New York: Routledge, 2001) pp. 129-60 (p. 130).
[14] NB In no way do I mean to suggest that Plato prized the theatre as an artistic medium.

the stage give way to a field of action, and indeed a plane of enquiry, whose politics precede the standard existential and macropolitical reading prevalent in scholarship.

The Room

Pinter's first play *The Room* (written in 1957 and first staged in 1960) makes a fine example, in particular the function and interrelation of one largely silent and relatively immobile character, Bert Hudd, and his antithesis, his wife Rose. Literally the opposite of her perpetually seated husband, Rose is extremely loquacious and nervous, both her constant movement and comically vacuous chatter performing a double corporeal-neural violence upon the audience, a violence that is intensified by Bert's silence and physical stasis. As these seemingly opposing dramatic lines of verbal and physical (non)movement act upon one another, a measured production of anxiety transpires, which reaches its zenith as the play concludes with the hysterical image of Burt's murder of Riley and Rose's related yet symbolically nebulous loss of sight. The final scene's stage directions and dialogue are sufficient to envision the dramatic force of a live staging. After re-entering the flat and discovering his wife with her hands on the stranger Riley's face, Bert waxes:

> I caned her along. She was good. Then I got back. I could see the road all right. There was no cars. One there was. He wouldn't move. I bumped him. I got my road. I had all my way. There again and back. They shoved out of it. I kept on the straight. There was no mixing it. Not with her. She was good. She went with me. She don't mix it with me. I use my hand. Like that, I get hold of her. I go where I go. She took me there. She brought me back.
>
> *Pause.*
>
> I got back all right.[15]

The strangeness and therefore conceptual 'indigestibility' of Bert's monologue destabilizes the audience by forestalling just long enough any efforts to parse the hermeneutic meaning of the character's monologue, so much so that these efforts are ultimately mediated and redirected by Bert's abrupt performance of a violent act which requires an entirely different and immediate form of attention and investment:

> *He* [Bert] *takes the chair from the table and sits to the left of the* NEGRO'S *chair, close to it. He regards the* NEGRO *for some moments. Then with his foot he lifts the armchair up. The* NEGRO *falls onto the floor. He rises slowly.*
>
> RILEY. Mr. Hudd, your wife –
> BERT. Lice!

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[15] *Plays 1*, p. 110.

He strikes the NEGRO, *knocking him down, and then kicks his head against the gas-stove several times. The* NEGRO *lies still.* BERT *walks away.*
Silence.

ROSE stands clutching her eyes.

ROSE. Can't see. I can't see. I can't see.

Blackout
Curtain[16]

Of foremost import is the manner in which the monologue and subsequent act of violence combine to set in operation a chaotic rupture in the passage *between* the provocation of one mode of investment to another – Bert's primal gesture fully sinking the spectator's thought processes into the body and setting discordant faculties in communication with one another. We see here also an occlusion of the play's narrative progression, eclipsed by an image whose force disperses affective experience that has no ready-to-hand name and does not attach itself to an immediately obvious symbolic framework, while it turns out, upon post-experience reflection, to be imbued with the entire work's partial investments in a number of issues germane to post-war Britain, those which Peacock observes above. Throughout, the play suggests, but never lingers on or foregrounds, the issues of racism, the gender-biased distribution of domestic labour, solipsism and so on. We are not presented with a coherent representation of this period in British history so much as we are attuned to a specific sense of the climate, one which can only ever be gestured at with critical descriptives that speak to what is at stake (recall here Peacock's socio-political and contextual remarks), gestures which ultimately fail to articulate the linguistic remainder that emerges and passes through us due to the resonance between the images and the characters' utterances.

The play's dominant order of meaning does not, I submit, manifest on the basis of our ability to ultimately ascertain what all the chatter, non-sequiturs, silences and physical violence represent, but instead in the way it prompts us to make enquiries in this direction, through the partially legible signs of mounting and inevitable violence, while subjecting us to the tacit and surreptitious tensions which ultimately serve to endow the final performance of actual violence with a force that it could never posses as a stand-alone image. For example, as a result of Bert's silence and refusal to respond to or engage with his wife's vacuous speech throughout the play, Rose's language itself becomes violent and monstrous. But in this, the play does not signal the path of investment: we are provided no indication of whether Rose's shift in linguistic register is the result of a conscious and deliberate act on her part to protest Bert's lack of engagement. In

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[16] ibid.

the same way, Bert's outburst late in the play – beginning with an intense, erotic monologue about having overcome another vehicle on the road and concluding in his attack and apparent murder of the mysterious black man – is a violent reaction to, appropriation and transcoding of Rose's sustained and violent chatter. The interaction of Rose and Bert's speech and bodies over the course of the play performs a rhythm, but one which has nothing to do with pulsed time and meter, as the two milieus that are the female's and male's antithetical performances manifest a low-level creeping tension with occasional partial easement or release. As such, the performance piques the audience's spectrum of faculties, engaging more than the axiomatic faculties of vision and hearing and ultimately throwing all into a sustained discord that fails in the end to provide cathartic expulsion and cognitive reconciliation through the acquisition of some kind of knowledge. Thus, the rhythmic chaos of the passage from Bert's general silence, to his brief absence from the play, to his reappearance and unexplained violent act, and ultimately to the blindness the latter induces in Rose, perhaps provides us with a useful analytical lens through which meaning might be construed.

The concluding violence and its effect are nothing without the production of vagueness and refraction at the level of symbolism and representational meaning that has occurred throughout the play. While Riley's identity, the purpose of his visit, Rose's blindness and even Bert's sudden verbosity remain symbolically myopic upon immediate encounter, the sudden eruption of naked violence is anything but mediated; it delivers an immediate blow to the perceptual faculties and sensorium. The disjoint between these milieus – between the mediation and refraction of interpretative meaning and the unmediated delivery of sensation at the deepest corporeal level – is precisely the play's most significant engendering of violence, and indeed it is the folding together of these two milieus that forges a sign unique to Pinter. The central affect of *The Room* is predicated upon a dual movement consisting of the attenuation of the narrative drive in its later stages and the final performance of violence, charged with the inflection of the momentum and force of all minor turbulences deposited over the course of the play. The force already deployed by the sign of Bert's violent act and Rose's loss of sight is only redoubled by the intellectual 'temporal sink' created by the conclusion's recalcitrance toward signifiers that will in the moment satisfy, even partially, any standard strategies for sense making the audience might employ on the spot.

The perpetually intertwined and mutually impacting dramatic patterns immerse spectators into a singular plane of sensation, and thereby solicit embodied investments which require on-the-spot revisions and reassessments of how the work is to be approached. Rather than depositing (partially) legible hints along the way that adumbrate or imply the egregious

conclusion, the play is constructed such that, along the way, it establishes tensions and movements incrementally which endow the final scene with a force it could not possess in isolation. In this way, the violence of Bert's savagery is nothing more than an actualization of the virtual violence that already exists and pervades the play from the beginning. The tensions deposited in our bodies along the way, a great deal of which are unlikely to be registered at a conscious level as we busy ourselves with an investigation into symbolic meaning, are consolidated in the play's concluding event; the openness of the sign system mediates the interpretive models of thought an audience will carry and reflexively grasp for, and in so doing prompts a recalibration of the perceptual faculties. In proportion to the play's blockage of hermeneutic consistency and symbolic clarity one discovers a clarity and precision of sensation, the effect of the play's meticulous provocation of experiential vicissitudes, which is ultimately the 'problem' the work presents to its audiences. The play's conclusion presents us with a dramatic experience that has nothing to do with Aristotelian catharsis – not an emotional purging but instead a resounding of contained anxiety – for the scene's affect is hysterical such that the audience are apt to be prevented from foregrounding the faculty of reason. Pinter's aesthetics are apt to collapse spectatorial efforts of interpretation back into a body which is made to continue to resonate large from the impact of a final image, the force of which is such that it cannot in the moment of experience be easily tamed by interpretive schemas. Thus it is precisely through aesthetic indeterminacy such as this that *The Room* produces an affective precision and presence we can call 'difference', in the Deleuzian sense: a difference which does not entail contrariety and the opposition of one thing to another in order to grasp identity (representation) but instead a *fracture* which is introduced into thought whose effect is to produce a 'Cogito for a dissolved self.'[17]

Viscerality

Peacock glosses the spectatorial field of action where the 'impact' produced by Pinter's comedy of menace initiates as he emphasizes two interrelated points: the subversion of cliché and the anticipation provoked by its instantiation *and* the plays' registration at a visceral level:

> Wardle recognized that Pinter's dramatic technique was based on the manipulation and subversion of familiar theatrical genres, not merely for meretricious, affective purposes, but to communicate to the audience a visceral sense of the pressures asserted on the individual in the modern world [...] it is not only the formal structure of the play that is subverted, its surface realism is also systematically dislocated. In consequence, what in

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[17] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 41, Preface xix, passim.

the normal realistic well-made play would be subtextual motivation is brought disturbingly to the surface as on-stage action.[18]

Regardless of the critic's obvious investment in the Enlightenment notion that Pinter's plays convey information and thus communicate, we can take the phrase 'visceral sense' as a claim to some form of 'intelligence of the body'[19] which derives from sub-conscious stimulation and ultimately involves multisensory perception. Peacock's phrase and characterization of Pinter's aesthetics compel us to regard and further explore the body as the site where new and different orientations to socio-political issues and phenomena are produced. What Peacock does is to suggest a heterogeneous connection, a congruence and infolding of two different plateaus: the deepest extra-linguistic register of the audience's body *and* the play as a sign system; the audience's viscera as a significant economy of perceptual engagement *and* how the work employs aesthetic tactics such as fragmentation, the subversion of convention and turns subtext into the dominant economy of dramatic action. Peacock's language implies that Pinter's aesthetics are body-centric and that 'communication' in these plays is a matter of immediate physiological movement and change; the spectatorial act which derives from an imbricated mind and body and which thereby transpires within and across the folds of the body. Occupying this critical territory puts one at quite a remove from the rationalism of Descartes, on the one hand, and the idealism of Kant, on the other.

Reflecting more closely on the meaning of the word visceral enables us to push Peacock's language further. Visceral experience, according to Brian Massumi, is 'the perception of suspense'; an act which induces 'a rupture in the stimulus-response paths, a leap in place into a space outside action-reaction circuits' whereby a jolting of the flesh produces 'an inability to act or reflect, a spasmodic passivity, so taut a receptivity that the body is paralyzed until it is jolted back into action-reaction by recognition.'[20] Pinter's exploitation of the temporal sink Massumi describes, whereby recognition has yet to jolt the body back into action-reaction, is made plain in a number of Pinter's concluding tableaux, especially those whose aesthetic grammar consists not only of compelling, hysterical and therefore 'memorable' images, but also their 'strong visual impact'.[21] In addition to the onset of Rose's inexplicable blindness vis-à-vis Riley's savaging at the hands of Bert in *The Room*, take for example Gus and Ben's unresolved standoff in *The Dumb Waiter*, and the turbulence fostered as Meg and Petey sit down at table and

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[18] *Harold Pinter and the New British Theatre*, p. 64.
[19] Marks, *The Skin of the Film*, p. 112.
[20] *Parables for the Virtual*, p. 61.
[21] Sakellaridou, 'The Rhetoric of Evasion as Political Discourse', p. 44.

return to a quiet life in the wake of Stanley's brainwashing and abduction to the unexplained 'Monty' in *The Birthday Party*.

That Pinter's dramas are capable of performing an intense and prolonged violence upon spectators in this way is suggested by Elin Diamond's claim that the audience are haunted by their experience long after they have left the theatre.[22] Resonating beneath Diamond's remarks, I would suggest, is a sense of how the plays' production of affective and thus embodied experience charges thought and the will to interpretation with a force that resonates and promotes process, as opposed to relative closure and determination. Her observation acknowledges both the immediate sensory imprint Pinter's work can make and the way in which that action and experience can endow subsequent thought processes with a corporeal fullness, effecting an immanence of neural activity, flesh and thought. Thinking the impact of Pinter's plays as such galvanizes the word 'sense' in Peacock's critical discourse, enabling us to evoke and embrace the denotations of 'sense' that have to do with the collective operation of the perceptual faculties humans employ in responding to stimuli, the detection of physical phenomena and the experience of impressions which can be acute and/or more or less vague. In using Massumi's remarks to embellish Peacock's, we develop a mode of theatre spectatorship, and indeed of consuming Pinter's plays, which displaces thinking processes into the folds of the body.

Following this line, it appears that Pinter's various dislocations and manipulations of initially recognizable dramatic conventions betray their material consequences and present us with a new conception of semiotics whereby signs are fluidly connected to the audience body, discursive units that are languaged – both verbally and imagistically – and as such form an economy of sensation – one that need and should not be considered apart from its powers of signification and representation. Thus, it is representation itself that takes us beyond and into sensation and the corporeal to a species of thought that is derived from and propelled onwards by multi-perceptual inter-resonation, rather than an isolated focus on objects. In this way, an exploration of the visceral in Pinter does not place experience at the far end of a binary upon which can be found the playwright's representation of socio-political realities so much as it seeks to articulate a politics of the body which can then be inflected into dramatic representation. Not only do we see the keeling of form and content (*pace* Joyce and Beckett) but how form-content in Pinter become a matter of the dispersal of material forces and movements. To speak of politics in Pinter's comedies of menace is, therefore, to speak of dramatic signs whose humorous

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[22] *Pinter's Comic Play* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1985), p. 11.

and menacing affects fold into one another to foment molecular movement and change in a process which subtends representation.

Truth and verification

While it can be said that the extralinguistic experience certain critics acknowledge in Pinter's comedy of menace in fact derives from the linguistic itself, certain caveats are required, the first one pertaining to the elision and problematization of truth and verification on Pinter's stage. The issue of truth and Pinter's tendency to coax an audience's desire for specific kinds of knowledge[23] – only to ultimately frustrate it – have been chief concerns of scholars over the years, particularly as these aesthetics engender the affects of comedy and menace within spectators. Arguing from a position no less applicable to many of the plays that precede and follow *The Homecoming* (1964), Michael Hinden asserts that the central action of Pinter's 1965 play is 'both literally and symbolically [...] "to verify a proposition"', and for clarity adds that '[a]s the action of the play develops, the problem of ascertaining the full implications of [the characters'] propositions becomes increasingly difficult – not only for the characters, but for the spectators, as well.'[24] At base, the problem of truth is summarized by critics' observation of how 'statements of fact' in Pinter's world 'are capable of neither proof nor denial';[25] truth therefore being 'unverifiable'.[26]

More specific observations of how truth fails to body forth in the comedies of menace often look to moments when character background and motivation remain unclear,[27] and when a past that may or may not be real saturates the characters' dialogue in the present. Speaking to the first aestheticization and epistemological problem, Rodney Simard observes how Pinter 'refuses to explicate' his characters' 'backgrounds, both in terms of origin and personality. They simply exist without explanation or justification. Similarly, their motives for action and the motives of the intruders also are unexplained'; and thus readers and spectators are 'presented with a conflict without knowing its origins or motives and, quite often, its outcome.'[28] Speaking to the second problem, which entails the past, Alice Rayner notes that 'referentiality is "unverifiable" because it

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[23] For a thorough discussion of this see Judith Roof, 'The Betrayal of Facts: Pinter and Duras Beyond Adaptation', in *Pinter at Sixty*, ed. by Katherine H. Burkman and John L. Kundert-Gibbs (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993), pp. 79-89.
[24] 'To Verify a Proposition in *The Homecoming*', *Theatre Journal*, 34.1 (March 1982), 27-39 (p. 27).
[25] Arnold P. Hinchliffe, *Harold Pinter* (London: Twayne, 1967), p. 43.
[26] George E. Wellwarth, '*The Dumb Waiter, The Collection, The Lover*, and *The Homecoming*: A Revisionist Approach', in *Harold Pinter: A Casebook*, ed. by Lois Gordon (New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. 95-108 (p. 101).
[27] Samar Attar, *The Intruder in Modern Drama* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1981), p. 62.
[28] *Postmodern Drama*, p. 27.

is embedded in a creation of memory whose truth cannot be recovered'; Rayner's appraisal of course directed at Kate's 'I remember you lying dead' speech in *Old Times*.[29]

While it is easy enough to regard Pinter's withholding of the conditions for the verification of what is true and what is not as a distinctly postmodernist characterization of reality,[30] others have explored the experiential aspects of this epistemological problem by shifting their critical gaze from Pinter's representation of reality to the works' action upon the audience body, investing therefore more in what is at stake in having to negotiate a process where one is hard pressed to verify the truth value of a Pinter proposition. Rayner, for example, speaks to how language fails to produce the given, and frames the problem of truth quite neatly in a language whose structural discourse begins to invest in the struggle that shapes up between the play and the audience: 'Pinter has a remarkable capacity to make his plays resist any attempts to re-form the dislocations of his plotting into a story. Yet he maintains a sufficient number of a story's features to invite such reformations'.[31] To this she adds:

> Pinter tends to take the desire for consonance between beginnings and endings and to bring it into his drama, not as narrative, but as a kind of antagonist. The structural *agon* is in this sense [...] located [...] in the contest between meaning and its refusal, or between signification and the denial of a signified. As characters battle for 'territory,' the plays battle for (and against) signification and its forms.[32]

Rayner's gloss of how the plays manipulate 'desire' is the virtual discourse of affect that underwrites her attention to semiotics. To begin to produce meanings that are desired, but only to in the end refuse their consolidation, is to problematize the kind of spectatorship that gives the impression of pure intellection, the impression that the *cogito* is free standing and thus is, or even can be, isolated. Certainly in Rayner's observation of the latter battle for (and against) signification, one finds Beckett's stamp on Pinter's work. Pinter inherits from Beckett a predilection for inviting the audience to read the 'text' in specific ways that soon prove difficult

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[29] 'Image and Attention in Harold Pinter', in *Pinter at Sixty*, ed. by Katherine H. Burkman and John L. Kundert-Gibbs (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993), pp. 90-99 (p. 92).

[30] Mireia Aragay, for example, reads Pinter's earlier work thus. 'Pinter, Politics and Postmodernism (2)', in *The Cambridge Companion to Harold Pinter*, ed. by Peter Raby (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 246-59 (p. 254). Although not the focus at hand, I would briefly assert that Aragay's, as well as others', understanding that Pinter's earlier work betrays a postmodernist expression should be contested on grounds that it does not follow from an embrace of unstable and perhaps multiform truth that one, or one's art, is postmodernist. Pinter has made clear from the beginning the importance of searching after truth, regardless of its elusiveness (see Chapter 6). It is here that he can be attached to his modernist forebears as they were quite uniformly invested in the issue of truth, despite recognition of its mutable ontological status; whereas the trend in postmodernism is to reject truth out of hand and even oppugn it.

[31] 'Harold Pinter: Narrative and Presence', *Theatre Journal*, 40.4 (December 1988), 482-97 (p. 483).

[32] ibid., p. 487.

or even impossible since there are in fact no signposts written into the form that would otherwise signal how to read, and indeed invest, in the plays.[33]

We can follow the implications of the solicitation and refusal Rayner observes to the fold between representation and the extra-linguistic precisely by considering the consequences of subject formation vis-à-vis a language that is shy of truth claims and, more broadly, a drama that is to a great extent shy of dramatic irony. Consider how any spectator's inability to evaluate, infer from or judge what is said on stage and/or what has putatively happened off it will problematize their own individuation as subjects. In destabilizing truth at the level of the characters' dialogue, Pinter withholds from spectators that which is given. And in doing so he mediates and troubles their performance of the acts of inference (from the empirically given) which are *de rigueur* if one is to become a coherent subject. In short, the assemblage spectators enter into with Pinter's dramas does not readily establish the conditions whereby they might always already function and take themselves to be stable egos. If we accept, following Deleuze, that 'in order to judge and posit oneself as a subject, one must affirm more than one knows',[34] then we see how Pinter's obfuscation of that which is given, which is to say that which enables belief, troubles the formation of subjectivity itself. In this light, menace can now be characterized as the experience which derives from an inability to stabilize one's subjectivity, the contours of the ego loosening as the characters' language withholds certain kinds of information. Moreover, as Pinter's refusal to produce the given via dialogue marks a foreclosure of audience belief, it can be argued that the plays' loosening of the contours of audience subjectivity can actually introduce spectators into a processual state of becoming.

Walter Kerr's existentialist appraisal of Pinter's comedy of menace is not unreceptive to this argument:

> Pinter deprives us of our detachment – and our security – by taking us into the pattern. He does so by refusing to say what the pattern is, or by hinting very strongly that there is no pattern. *Bewildered*, we look about us for points of reference. Finding none, we begin to share the anxiety of the characters whose lives we can observe but cannot chart. We no longer judge their collective state of mind, we inhabit it.[35]

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[33] Charles Grimes follows this trend from Pinter's drama into the medium of screenwriting: 'Like *The Homecoming*, *The Comfort of Strangers* links sexuality and violence without clearly signalling how the combination should be responded to.' *Harold Pinter's Politics*, p. 72. Referring more generally to theatre, Colin Counsell remarks that '[i]n practice, a particular form of theatre signals to its audience how it must be interpreted, the kinds of interpretive strategies that must be used in its own reading, and so "creates" its audience as interpreter. Different theatrical forms will therefore manufacture different audiences. Each form can be regarded as a distinct *interlocutor*, one partner in an exchange, whose "identity" automatically offers a complimentary role to its audience.' *Signs of Performance*, p. 23.
[34] Deleuze, *Empiricism and Subjectivity: An Essay on Hume's Theory of Human Nature*, trans. and intro. by Constantin V. Boundas (New York and Chichester: Columbia University Press, 1991), pp. 85-86.
[35] *Harold Pinter*, p. 20, my emphasis.

The connection between the inducement of a state of 'bewilderment' and the audience's move to inhabiting as opposed to judging the characters is a significant one. On the one hand, Kerr's emphasis on our futile search for points of reference implies strongly the in-betweenness that is a definitive trait of becoming through affective experience. While on the other and related hand, the performance of an ongoing act of (in)habitation of an other which precludes judgement – judgment necessarily requiring an invocation of opinions and principles – also constitutes a becoming: for to suspend what we think we know is precisely the first and most crucial step to preventing higher order thinking from defusing the force of embodied thought.

The embroilment of audience and characters Kerr posits is not rooted in empathy or recognition – for such structures of feeling and actions would arguably function to moderate anxiety – but rather a process of captivation and linkage that pronounces the event of immersion without defining it. By definition, anxiety is an affect qua neurosis whose physiological envelopment is total, an assiduous resonation across the body that produces feelings which cannot be explained in large part because the source that produced a sense of impending punishment is either nebulous or simply can not be known.[36] Even in moments where we *can* identify the source of what is producing anxiety in us as spectators, it is more often than not that the affective resonance remains elusive to even the most responsive attempts to frame the energetic and material experience in language. Kerr's critical discourse can be easily put into dialogue with Massumi's description of the interruption of action-reaction circuits, discussed above, especially given that an affective state and the animation of the viscera are both the physiological predicates and symptoms of bewilderment, preceding and potentially intervening in one's efforts and ability to assimilate to and to render judgment on perceptual experience.

The Pinter pause

It should not be too much of a strain to situate the notorious Pinter pause, and concomitantly Pinter's use of silence – both devices 'frequently noted as [Pinter's] signature dramatic innovation'[37] – within these dramatic coordinates; particularly given how both are well known for their function and capacity to destabilize spectators in their deferral to standard modes of investing in characters and dramatic structures. However, before rolling out such a thesis, it is important to note the tendency of critics to invest Pinter's pauses and silences with conceptual and symbolic values. Freighting a register of speech that is devoid of lexical and even phonological content with a representational and conceptual load has been a trend since Esslin

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[36] 'Anxiety', *The Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought*, second edition, ed. by Alan Bullock, Oliver Stallybrass and Stephen Tronmbley, assisted by Bruce Eadie (London: Fontana, 1977), pp. 43-44 (pp. 43-44).
[37] Grimes, *Harold Pinter's Politics*, p. 217.

suggested that not only does the 'line with no words in it' have 'all the ambiguity and complexity of true poetry [...] it is also a metaphor, an image of overwhelming power.'[38] Francis Gillen extrapolates on Esslin's position, claiming that '[t]he silences in Pinter's theatre are [...] often political statements, non-consent, refusals to accept the games, premises or political assumptions that are attempted to be forced on one',[39] while Charles Grimes understands that the 'permanent, irredeemable silence' in *Ashes to Ashes* 'betokens the enduring lack of connection and communication between individuals and across societies. As *Ashes to Ashes* concludes by issuing into a barren silence, obligation to social others fails to extend past the domestic sphere – the home, the now.'[40]

By no means, however, are these sorts of engagements with the pause dominant, particularly since the performative hypothesis has entered the critical discourse. Critics have also come to appreciate and explore the myriad dramatic virtues of these devices, for example their capacity to suggestively punctuate dialogue and to serve as a resonating chamber which itself captures and charges the speech of characters. While the absence of semantic and lexical forms cannot be construed as belonging to representation, it is still possible to see the dramatizing function of these devices if we look, following speech act theory, to how they orient interpreting spectators to the illocutionary function and dimension of speech. In this regard, the lexical content of a proposition can never be considered apart from the style of utterance, as Wardle suggested in the beginning,[41] from its context of utterance and, relatedly, from the often undeclared desires, investments and motivations of the utterer and the interlocutor. The pause displaces spectators' investment in the lexical onto the importance of the characters' 'sober syntactical invention', the latter appearing with the utmost import[42] for it constitutes the performance of power and struggle within specific fields of action. In their acknowledgment of the performative dimension and function of language in Pinter's dramatic aesthetics, critics such as Austin E. Quigley[43] and Marc Silverstein[44] respectively engage in readings which begin to lift the pause and Pinter's language as a whole out of the realm of representation. They refuse to endow blank space, as it were, with symbolic meaning, illustrating rather how it is precisely 'the

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[38] *The Peopled Wound*, pp. 220-21.
[39] 'Appendix: Two Letters to the Nobel Academy', *The Pinter Review: Collected Essays 1997 and 1998* (Tampa: University of Tampa Press, 1998), 224-28 (p. 227).
[40] *Harold Pinter's Politics*, pp. 217-18.
[41] 'Comedy of Menace', p. 30.
[42] Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka*, p. 26.
[43] See both *The Pinter Problem* and 'Pinter, Politics and Postmodernism (1)', in *The Cambridge Companion to Harold Pinter*, pp. 7-27.
[44] See *Harold Pinter and the Language of Cultural Power* (Lewisburg, London and Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1993)

study of the functions in distinct languages' that permits us to 'account for social factors, relations of force, diverse centers of power', which is to say such an approach 'escapes from the "informational" myth in order to evaluate the hierarchic and imperative system of language as a transmission of orders, an exercise of power or of resistance to this exercise'.[45]

However, my claim that these critics begin to move away from representation needs qualification since in the final analysis those who embrace the performative hypothesis deliver readings of how the plays dramatize and thus represent the manner in which language circulates as force and power, how it structures – very much in the sense of Foucauldian 'governmentality' – the field of action within which agents engage in struggles of myriad kinds.[46] In other words, their attentiveness to what is not explicitly apparent in the dialogue, to the order words erased from the lexical surface of the characters' declaratives and questions – yet which nonetheless function to bring about social (and indeed political) effects – characterizes the plays as representing how the production of comedy and menace via speech is in fact a power play. Thomas F. Van Laan offers a crucial provocation here in his attention to how certain adherents of the performative hypothesis often sideline the undeniable and arguably most crucial dimension of Pinter's plays. Van Laan points out that '[t]hrough his readings of Pinter, Quigley provides us with a lens for viewing the plays which frees us from having to endure the kind of experience that Ben and Gus go through and that so many spectators of Pinter's plays have felt themselves going through.'[47]

Thus, concomitant to the pause as a 'transparent'[48] or quasi-representational aesthetic which dramatizes the performance of power, we can sight the ontological character of these devices – or machines for they are indeed productive and as such depend upon their co-functioning with other structures and elements in each play – as an extra-linguistic dramatic phenomenon in their respective yet interrelated capacity to create experience for spectators who are predisposed to feeling their way through Pinter's plays. Each device respectively positions

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[45] Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka*, p. 23.

[46] Despite the immediate relevance of Foucault's theories of governmentality and biopolitics to Pinter's dramatization of interpersonal relations and the characters' reflexive enactment of specific discourses and rationalities, such an intervention remains to be carried out in the scholarship. Charles Grimes and Ann C. Hall are the exceptions in that they have employed Foucault to read Pinter; but their respective analyses observe how some of Pinter's works offer dramatic illustrations of Foucault's development of Jeremy Bentham's panopticon. See Chapter 2 of Grimes's *Harold Pinter's Politics*, 'Early Plays and Retroactive Readings: *The Birthday Party*, *The Dumb Waiter*, and *The Hothouse*', pp. 36-71; and Hall's 'Lost in the Funhouse: Spectacle and Crime in Pinter's Screenplay of Kafka's *The Trial*', in *The Art of Crime: The Plays and Films of Harold Pinter and David Mamet*, ed. by Leslie Kane (New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 105-18.

[47] 'The Dumb Waiter: Pinter's Play with the Audience', in *Harold Pinter: Modern Critical Views*, ed. and intro. by Harold Bloom (New York and Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987), 117-25 (p. 121).

[48] John Lutterbie, 'Subjects of Silence', *Theatre Journal*, 40.4 (December 1988) <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3207889> [accessed 19 February 2007], 468-81 (p. 473).

the audience *in-between* the actors on stage, subjecting the former to the force of the material blows registered by the latter on one another via artful speech and precise physical postures. The moment one accepts these postulates, one soon enough finds that the Pinter pause ceases to appear as a stand-alone dramatic device, a vessel into which the audience might pour their preferred symbolic meaning, and ceases, more importantly, to appear the cliché that it has seemingly become from liberal use across Pinter's oeuvre. If our conception of Pinter's language as an exercise in the transmission and resistance to orders and a matter of relations of power takes the form of a pragmatism which uncovers the violence language performs upon and within the body – comedy as pleasure and laughter and menace as anxiety – then it follows that we must pursue that violence into the theatre seats.

Inserting the pause into the body

In regarding the Pinter pause, it is paramount to consider how the production of menace is in great part contingent upon the violence engendered by the characters' speech, their postures and movements and the interaction of those two (sometimes antithetical and sometimes congruent) dramatic milieus. Hearkening back to the critical discourse of 'impact' addressed in the thesis Introduction points us more decidedly towards how the plays' aestheticization of both pauses and silences, along with the dialogue and physical regimes bound up with these devices in a mutually empowering relationship, are material realities that get inserted into bodies, thereby producing material effects and changes which can be regarded from social and even political points of view.[49] Again, delving further back in the scholarship enables us to open up Van Laan's claim to the link between the characters' and the audience's experience, and move into a conceptual register that accounts more for the audience body and how it is affected. One can see how even early critical engagements with the Pinter pause are invested in the device's correlation to the body and in the kind of affective thought that is expansive and processual. Steven H. Gale, for example, suggested in 1977 that the 'pause is the pause because of what has just happened in the *minds and guts* of the characters',[50] and Esslin opined that underneath the pause there exists an incipient, experiential zone whereby 'intense [yet indiscernible] thought processes are continuing'.[51] While this critical language does not explicitly bring the audience to bear and is

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[49] As Lecercle notes: 'Words do not only *do* things; they *are* things. Language cannot be a simple representation of the world; it is also an intervention within it'. *The Violence of Language*, p. 47.

[50] Steven H. Gale, *Butter's Going Up: A Critical Analysis of Harold Pinter's Work* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1977), p. 273, my emphasis.

[51] Esslin, *The Peopled Wound*, p. 220. Cf. John Lutterbie's observation that 'the significance of the pause' is that its 'transparency [...] allows the audience to witness the actor's process of decision, and, in this representation of gestation and transformation, an intuition of subjectivity.' 'Subjects of Silence'

invested in dramatic representation *per se* (and not function), we can coax a discourse of affect and of Pinter's theatre of the body from the former critic's connection between minds and guts (i.e. the corporeal body) and the latter's reference to thought processes which remain just that: in process, and thus ongoing, incipient and waxing. As outlined above, Kerr's argument enables us to push Esslin's and Gale's characterizations further so as to implicate the Pinter pause in the production of thought, a form of which that brackets the mind and body and that instantiates process as a performance of (and a subjection to) embodied action.

Building upon this discursive potential, Mark Taylor-Batty accommodates the audience directly (and indirectly connects us up to Deleuze) when he asserts that because the pause is 'a line with no words in it at all' – these being the reflexive words of the character Mark in Pinter's novel the *The Dwarfs* – the device is effectively an '*act* of silence that is articulate simply and only through its being *experienced*'.[52] Taylor-Batty's use of the keywords 'act' and 'experience' characterize the pause and silence as performed actions whose effects are material and extralinguistic; his appraisal ultimately accentuating the fact that '[l]anguage is rooted in the body'.[53] To regard the textual sign in Pinter – pauses and silences becoming semiotic phenomena as they interact reciprocally with the spoken language and performed actions of the characters – as having an extra-textual life is to reflect on how it not only signifies and therefore 'means' but also resonates deep within the body, in and across its many regions and folds. Pauses in Pinter, and silences as will be further discussed, achieve a form of meaning that derives from dramatic details that are replete with *significance* and that produce *effects* as such[54] in the way of a modification at plateaus within the flesh, along the neural network, within the psyche and in extensity (higher order thinking). And it is these effects which are the dramatic cornerstones of each play's more general tendency to invest the act of presentation with 'a presentness' and 'giving birth to the unexpected'.[55]

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[52] 'Fling Open the Door and Let Pinter's Pause Be Heard', *Times Higher Education*, 27 April 2007 <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/story.asp?storyCode=208730&sectioncode=26> [accessed 10 May 2007], my emphasis.

[53] Marks, *The Skin of the Film*, p. 141.

[54] Anthony Uhlmann, 'Expression and Affect in Kleist, Beckett and Deleuze', in *Deleuze and Performance*, ed. and intro. by Laura Cull (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), pp. 54-70 (p. 68). NB I am transposing Uhlmann's language from his own discussion of Beckett's directorial work: 'the tiny details' Beckett attended to in the direction of his own plays, those which were, as Uhlmann observes, 'replete with significance: that this minute control was crucial to Beckett's own vision of what his plays were, as much as what they were "about"' (ibid.). Beckett qtd. in Dougald McMillan and Martha Fehsenfeld's *Beckett in the Theatre: The Author as Practical Playwright and Director. Volume 1: From 'Waiting for Godot' to 'Krapp's Last Tape'*.

[55] Herbert Blau, 'Performing in the Chaosmos: Farts, Follicles, Mathematics and Delirium in Deleuze', in *Deleuze and Performance*, ed. and intro. by Laura Cull (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), pp. 22-34 (p. 29). Cf. Bert O. States's assertion that '[i]t is, finally, a matter of gestation: theater ingests the world of objects and signs only to bring images to life. In the image, a defamiliarized and desymbolized object is "uplifted to the view" where we see it as being phenomenally heavy with itself'. *Great Reckonings in Little*

The following exchange between Ben and Gus in *The Dumb Waiter* is a particularly receptive surface for considering the argument:

> Ben. You know what your trouble is?
> Gus. What?
> Ben. You haven't got any interests.
> Gus. I've got interests.
> Ben. What? Tell me one of your interests.
> *Pause.*
> Gus. I've got interests.[56]

Here we see the extent to which the pause in Pinter's aesthetic repertoire can function as a 'sign' endowed with the capacity to effect rather than to signify. As a linguistic device that interrupts and circumscribes speech and that is devoid of lexical content and symbolic meaning, the pause can perform so as to effectively reverse the direction of the signs.[57] The specific context of Gus's utterance and the production of repetition, which in itself becomes a refrain that is ultimately interrupted by the character's use of the pause, transforms the pulsed meter of the language into a force and intensity, one that prompts the spectator's body to flood and destabilize the act of interpretation as that which continues on in absence of symbolic and thus conceptual anchorage in the very moment of its consumption.

As such, the pause's effectuation of a semiotic fissure (within the text) and an incipient act of interpretation (on the part of the audience) catalyzes experience deep within and across the folds of the spectator's body; experience whose visceral animation waxes in proportion to the concretization of thought in extensity and its ultimate absorption into a linguistic and thus conceptual and interpretive architecture. As an affective-performative, the pause does not produce representational meaning so much as an insecurity that hastens ontological diversification, a swelling of sensation that plunges spectators into a zone of processuality as lexical and symbolic meaning are dispersed rather than captured and ordered. The pause in many cases has the capacity to direct or displace narrative coherency towards an event, the movement from one milieu to the other effectively marking an in-between where the audience's temporary inability to subjugate and order meaning instantiates a feeling akin to chaos, however fleeting or lasting that might be.

Given this reading, it is always important to consider how the pause's 'meaning' qua function and effect depends upon the verbal language which at once bookends it and which is

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Rooms: On the Phenomenology of Theater (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985), p. 37.
[56] *Plays 1*, p. 118.
[57] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, fourth edition, trans. by Brian Massumi (London and New York: Continuum, 1987), p. 493.

subject to the device's performance of its special violence. As a non-lexical unit of language, the pause does not just ironize or hang an interruptive question mark over a character's utterance,[58] it creates a field of action within which activity from the level of the viscera to the emotions is prompted; two registers, each of which has the capacity to contest and transcend the cultural imprint of standard and familiar modes of investing in sign systems, plots, narratives and such customary dramatic units or building blocks. The investment of thought with movement via pronouncing the shape and significance of events overwhelms meaning proper and orients us to Pinter's affirmation of the value of 'shape, structure, and overall unity' over lexical content in the context of both his dramas and poetry.[59] This is essentially Pinter's reiteration of Beckett's insistence to Harold Hobson in 1956 that 'I am interested in the shape of ideas [...] It is the shape that matters'.[60] Language's movement, and the displacement of audience attention from meaning onto texture – something Howard Barker celebrates in his aesthetic ruminations on tragedy and catastrophe[61] – stalls the extension of any dramatic event's expression into thought where it might be tamed there by Procrustean images of thought and ready-to-hand explanations.

Silence

If we retain Taylor-Batty's argument for an appraisal of the pause from the standpoint of experience, then Pinter's aestheticization of silence appears as a logical extension of the pause and the above discussion. Even before the first sounds and words issue forth in *The Dumb Waiter*, the play's stage directions posit *three* uses of silence,[62] doubtlessly as a means to produce a dramatic atmosphere whose considerable experiential charge can introduce the audience into processual states where the body's movements and changes cannot be captured and thus fully charted within a verbal framework and system of hermeneutic ordering. It is in this sense that we can see how the use of silence begins to present us with another register, and another order of power; one which does not involve the representation of power (*pouvoir*) but rather a circulation of power (*puissance*) that solicits the audience body to perform. *The Caretaker* (1959) provides a more conspicuous example, particularly its opening scene at which point audiences are subjected to a stage occupied by a lone, silent character (who we later discover to be Aston's brother, Mick), while the overall sign system remains 'silent' for at least thirty seconds, as

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[58] Guido Almansi and Simon Henderson, *Harold Pinter* (London and New York: Methuen, 1983), p. 80.
[59] 'Harold Pinter, 'The Art of Theater No.3', p. 27.
[60] Mark Taylor-Batty and Juliette Taylor-Batty, *Waiting for Godot* (London and New York: Continuum, 2008), p. 32.
[61] *Arguments for a Theatre*, third edition (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 81.
[62] *Plays 1*, p. 113.

recommended by the stage directions.[63] Cluttered with furniture, among which is a bucket suspended from the ceiling, the space and its objects are invested with and begin to throb from the force Mick's silent presence and surveying eye – the sign system in its entirety at this stage and within the context of the dramatic milieu a constellation of moot signifiers. As he 'slowly looks about the room at each object in turn',[64] both the character and a *mise en scène* do not bring forth a legible system so much as set lines in motion and effect movements whose force and significance cannot but be felt by the audience. Characterizing the play's beginning as 'a silent, prologue-like scene', Bernard F. Dukore emphasizes how the scene solicits anticipation such that it 'is neither comic nor noncomic'.[65] These remarks direct our attention to the incipience of Pinter's semiotics, resulting from which is the audience's subjection to an in-between, the temporal and semiotic sink which confers texture to the perceptual faculties and inspires movement and sensation within the body, the entire conjuncture becoming the primary order of dramatic meaning.

Taylor-Batty develops this in language that accommodates and coordinates the on-stage sign system and its operation upon the audience body:

> By choosing to set an enigma into operation in *The Caretaker's* first minutes and profiting from all its dramatic worth, Pinter is perpetrating an act of menace upon his audience and we find ourselves contracted into a theatrical experience which is relatively less comfortable than might normally be expected. He denies us any direct access to a quick assimilation of what his play might have to say by refusing us any definite exposition of his characters. In doing so he makes a dramatic virtue of ambiguity, striking a tone of pervading uncertainty which serves to qualify and magnify our response to the drama.[66]

In emphasizing how the play's offering up of something quite other than what 'might normally be expected', concomitant to which is its problematization of 'direct access' to and 'assimilation' of that something, these remarks indicate how the play effectively foregrounds and manipulates the audience's performance of their role as witnesses. While we can speak in general terms of how Pinter creates an atmosphere, it is more to the point to observe how the setting into operation of vectors and movements, as opposed to the erection of a legible system, and the

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[63] *Harold Pinter: Plays 2*, second edition (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), p. 5. It is important to consider how this dramatic scenario will be exponential in a live staging, the audience being subjected to the empty stage with or without Mick on it as they file into the auditorium and take their seats over the course of, say, fifteen to thirty minutes. In a production at the Crucible Theatre in Sheffield, for example, the audience were made to listen to a dripping bucket and survey a stage packed to the hilt with old furniture and miscellaneous items before Mick took the stage and proceeded to linger for well over the proscribed thirty seconds; the effect produced one of particular discomfort. *The Caretaker*, Dir. Jamie Lloyd, Perf. Nigel Harman, David Bradley, Con O'Neill, Crucible Theatre, Sheffield, UK, 11 October-11 November 2006.

[64] Dukore, *Where Laughter Stops*, p. 25.

[65] ibid.

[66] *Harold Pinter* (Plymouth: Northcote House, 2007), pp. 8-9.

progressive destratification and decoding of the signs that only begin to cohere effects '*a freeing of the molecular*'[67] within the spectator. It is not that in the moment of their consumption the plays model alternative audience subjectivities, cue specific individuations. Rather, they problematize our construction of a coherent subjectivity by putting the perceptual faculties 'into operation' such that the material composition of the body and mind undergoes change as the play instantiates in spectators processes of attraction and repulsion whose dramatic value is, precisely, movement.

Bodies

The example of the opening sequence in *The Caretaker* edges this discussion in the direction of bodies and objects on Pinter's stage. One of the principal (spectatorial) consequences of the plays' fissuring of signified meaning and exploitation of linguistic polyvalence via silence and dialogue which problematize the verification of truth is that the stage images – bodies and *mise en scène* – become incandescent. It is the solidity, immediacy and tangibility of spaces, bodies and actual physical action without the decided fusing of signifiers and signifieds that put the disassociated faculties 'into [a] violent relation in which each transmits its constraint to the other', and therefore permit spectators to grasp corporeal intensity independently of extensity (higher order and conceptual thought).[68] It would seem that this aesthetic arrangement inspires the not uncommon observation that in the plays (and the screenplays, as we will shortly see) the 'what' takes precedence over the 'why';[69] the dramatic formula predicated upon an intensification and foregrounding of significance over signification, meaning in the sense of presence and immediacy over meaning in the sense of definition and explanation or the deferral of perceptual activity to conceptual frameworks whose aim is to capture and territorialize.

Confronted by Pinter's work, our culturally-encoded desire to establish symbolic meaning and coherence in the way of narrative and characterization is mediated by dramatic images whose affective register typically surges up to overwhelm their own performance as signifying entities; both the images conjured through the dialogue and those which manifest through the actors and theatrical apparatus forming a single dramatic constellation where each of

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[67] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 382, authors' emphasis.

[68] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 285, 297, passim.

[69] Cf. Pinter's own remark that in *Accident* 'everything happens, nothing is explained', as Esslin reports in *The Peopled Wound*, p. 187. Rodney Simard observes quite rightly that 'Pinter is concerned with how his characters react, not with the nature of the action itself or its origins. The existential choice [not solely 'choice' but a matter of coercion and force] his characters make is the subject of investigation, for these decisions comprise the texture of life, not their motivations'. *Postmodern Drama*, p. 27.

these milieus interacts to form a higher totality than the parts taken individually. In this way, spectators are subjected to the mutual immanence of a language which problematizes truth value and dramatic irony *and* the intense presence of the bodies and stage objects, the latter endowed with a givenness which permits the production of belief within the audience. It is precisely here that an affect specific to Pinter's style arises: in the friction between our ability to believe in the givenness of that which is beheld and the absence of truth value in that which is said.

The 1973 film version of *The Homecoming*[70] exemplifies the argument and dramatic phenomenon, in particular the 'glass of water scene' during which Lenny (Ian Holm) remains standing over a seated Ruth (Vivien Merchant). The scene's dramatic logic entails the formation, delinkage and then partial relinkage of specific circuits. In slow but precise advances, Holm moves about within the sitting room, occupying points or spaces for brief periods as he relates a humorous-cum-shocking anecdote about helping the anonymous woman with her mangle. Merchant remains relatively motionless and for a long stint the silent auditor to her brother-in-law's quasi dramatic monologue; Lenny's speech performing ambiguously somewhere between a Romantic divulgence of his feelings and reflections of his past experience (the classical formulation) *and* a discursive expedient to get at his auditor: an inversion of the aesthetic one finds in Robert Browning's use of this poetic genre. The counterpoint of movement and stasis performed by the actors' joint performance is expressed even at a micro level in that Holm's body remains entirely erect and seemingly calm against his increasingly animated voice as he relates a violent story intended to unnerve both Ruth and the audience. Like the bars enclosing the leaking and screaming figural bodies in Francis Bacon's paintings – is the sitting room and Max's house not their cage? – Lenny's voice becomes increasingly frantic after he takes the ashtray from Ruth, but then fails to wrestle the glass of water from her, his hands for the most part clasped decorously behind his back and his posture rigidly upright. As a result, the energetic tension engendered between Lenny and Ruth's antithetical postures and dialogues and, moreover, in the friction between Lenny's peripatetic voice and his static body get cathected into, first, the ashtray and then the water glass – both objects functioning as resonating chambers which make the narrative stammer and the image vibrate even more violently.

Ruth only animates these stammerings and vibrations as she alters the direction of the flow of apparent control: loosening the authority Lenny only appears to have while standing over her relatively speechless person, Ruth takes up the role of speaker in a subtly adversarial

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[70] Dir. Peter Hall. Perf. Ian Holm, Cyril Cusack, Michael Jayston, Vivien Merchant, Paul Rogers and Terence Rigby. The American Film Theatre. 1973. Screened at the Cannes Film Festival in 1974, but not entered into the main competition.

manner that is actively inflected with sexuality and innuendo. As first she invites Lenny to sit on her lap and then stands and orders him to tilt his head back so she can pour the water down his throat, Lenny's body breaks from its former posture and his voice ceases its erstwhile performance and falls silent. But this transition hardly becomes coherent as a new linkage occurs in the final stage where Holm retaliates too late: his body and voice finally fall into harmony as he rushes to the stairs and shouts '[w]hat was that supposed to be? Some kind of proposal?',[71] the congruence of emotional expression between these two milieus (speech-action and bodily-action) impacting forcefully after having been withheld for so long throughout the scene.

Because these bodies dispose themselves to a style of investment which differs from that solicited by the dialogue, when characters do in fact speak the milieu of dialogue-action and that of physical-action cut one across the other to produce one unique sign whose meaning emerges in the production and exploitation of the space between two dissonant milieus, an intermilieu or intermezzo.[72] A significant dramatic force manifests in this in-between as the combination of bodies and dialogue constitute two milieus that exist in a relationship of mutual presupposition, but which is at once predicated upon a rift between the shape, character and affective force of the respective milieus. As such, one milieu performs a violence upon the other, pushing the alchemic process into other and new territories of experience, feeling and emotion. Given the extent to which the bodies of the actors, the spaces they occupy and the objects populating those spaces function in league with the dialogue to produce affects, one is perhaps surprised at the lack of attention to bodies in Pinter's work and its various stagings. While Pinter scholarship classically favours speech over action and bodies, and while the two milieus are easily construed as running parallel, exposure to any well-rehearsed production of a play indicates how the physical regimes and dialogue are mutually constituting, the significance of either typically deriving from what is created *in between* the two as they perform conjunctively and therefore form a single dramatic constellation, as the glass of water scene in Hall's *The Homecoming* demonstrates.

Emotion

Given how narrative development is subsumed into a dramatic field of action whereby the milieus of speech-action and physical-action inter-resonate, it is predictable enough how critics invoke a discourse of moods and emotion in order to make sense of Pinter's image-centric style of drama. Again, one finds that Esslin took formative steps in this direction,

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[71] *Harold Pinter: Plays 3*, third edition (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), p. 43.
[72] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 346.

bolstering his observation that Pinter is predominantly a poet with the claim that the 'structures of images of the world' that 'present us with a situation, or a pattern of interlocking situations' in fact 'coalesce into a lyrical structure of *moods* and *emotional insights*.'[73] Notice that Esslin's use of the phrase 'emotional insights' follows the same logic of Peacock's 'visceral sense' in that it seeks to marry the mind and reason to their putatively non-rational and non-cognitive relatives: the body, feeling and emotion. If we regard Esslin's claim from an epistemological standpoint, it suggests that 'emotion is part of the way one knows about the world around us',[74] Pinter's poetic images somehow imparting knowledge to spectators via routes that are not roundly cognitive. Investing in representation but from a standpoint that differs from Esslin, Katherine H. Burkman and Ricki Morgan respectively posit an emotional dimension in Pinter. While Burkman claims that '[y]ou find the basic emotional values[75] in Pinter's plays, Morgan claims more specifically of Pinter's 1961 play *The Collection* that the work 'presents a "collection" of some of the most diverse emotional states'.[76] While Esslin understands that knowledge is dramatized within representation but imparted through extralinguistic channels of emotion which manifest at the level of audience, Burkman and Morgan understand the plays to be signifying emotions on the stage, the representation of emotional values as Burkman has it and, as Morgan understands, the viability of emotion for characters as a guiding factor for behaviour.[77]

As a response, Pinter's own remarks are quite useful here, in particular his assertion in 1971 that it is 'in emotion which is contained, and felt very, very deeply' that he is interested.[78] Pinter does not seem here to be directing our attention to the plays' representation of an emotion that can be named but rather to experience's resonation in absence of a transparent pathway from interiority to dialogue. In speaking of containment, Pinter underlines how it is not emotion that is staged, and thus articulated within representation, but the expression-event that emerges in the event of its containment, suppression and more often than not its cathection onto other seemingly unrelated objects and persons. Hence, the importance, function and meaning of the ashtray, glass of water and Lenny's stories in *The Homecoming*. As such, emotions are semiotically vaporous; while their energy is unequivocally palpable, a dramatic load and value transferred by means of an experiential economy that occupies the hem of representation.

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[73] *The Peopled Wound*, p. 43, my emphasis.

[74] Peter Goldie, *Understanding Emotions: Mind and Morals*, ed. by Peter Goldie, intro. by Peter Goldie and Finn Spicer (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), p. 10.

[75] *The Dramatic World of Harold Pinter: Its Basis in Ritual* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1971), p. 122.

[76] 'The Range of Emotional States in Pinter's "Collection"', *Educational Theatre Journal*, 30.2 (May 1978), 165-75 (p. 175).

[77] ibid., p. 166.

[78] Pinter in Gussow, *Conversations*, p. 29.

Michael Scott brings us closer, opining that Pinter's 'plays communicate feelings, emotions, experiences which the playwright sees and which he then mediates for our perception as an audience.'[79] This emphasis on *communication*, sensory phenomenon and Pinter's *mediation* of it suggests the manner in which the aesthetics operate by means of transmission, transfer, conveyance and passage, the load consisting of psycho-corporeal *values* (values taken in the phonetic or musical sense, i.e. import or force) and the process of transfer itself being a 'state' of becoming. We are indeed moving away from the direct representation of emotion. If Scott is not positing a link between characters and audience but instead something more in the way of a prompt to and facilitation of feeling, experience and emotion – transmuted in its mediation – then I suggest his remarks can assist us in rethinking the discourse of emotion in Pinter scholarship.

Penelope Prentice is expressly interested in emotions in Pinter, her readings looking to audience experience, but with a specific investment in the emotions of interspecies relation and concern. Looking to the conclusion of *The Dumb Waiter*, Prentice posits the engenderment of 'audience sympathy for [both] characters'[80] as Ben levels the gun at Gus; the former's turn on his partner demonstrating how the two are not so much killers as they are victims of something much greater than themselves. Elizabeth Sakellaridou delineates the conditions for the relationship Prentice posits:

> Pinter's break with tradition lies in that he does not turn crime into a breath-taking adventure nor the killers into tough masculine heroes. On the contrary, his approach is totally anti-heroic because his concern is to lay bare the killers' psychological deficiencies as human beings. What he does is destroy the myth of male ruthlessness and the heroic spirit attached to it by disclosing the fears of the fearsome killers, by turning the victimisers into victims.[81]

Sakellaridou's observation of how figures we are used to seeing perform the role of victimizers morph into an antithetical role is a salient moment in Pinter criticism and takes place in a number of Pinter's works such as: *The Caretaker*, *The Lover* (1962), *The Servant* (1963), *The Homecoming* and *The Go-Between* (1969).[82] In light of these readings I would suggest that we heed

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[79] *Harold Pinter: The Birthday Party, The Caretaker and The Homecoming. A Casebook*, p. 10.

[80] *The Pinter Ethic: The Erotic Aesthetic* (New York and London: Garland, 1994), p. 19.

[81] *Pinter's Female Portraits: A Study of Female Characters in the Plays of Harold Pinter* (Totowa, NJ: Barnes & Noble, 1988), p. 125.

[82] I address this politico-aesthetic in Chapter 3. Sakellaridou's observation of the victimizers' role reversal finds its various expressions within the literature. Esslin, for example, asserts: 'The sadistic torturers and executioners of Pinter's universe, the characters seeking domination through verbal fencing are thus engaging in a sadomasochistic quest for human contact; there is a distinctly erotic element in the various forms that cruelty, the striving for dominance and power over the other, is taking in Pinter's plays'. 'Harold Pinter's Theatre of Cruelty', p. 34. Following Esslin, John Stokes asserts that '[c]ulturally sanctioned identities are capable of frightening reversals, as Pinter famously shows when members of oppressed groups – McCann and Goldberg in

Pinter's consistent development of narrative and visual patterns which only dissolve and reterritorialize into something else before what is familiar can turn into wholesale recognition, and ultimately the sort of comprehension and understanding upon which are hinged both Prentice's and Sakellaridou's arguments for investment in the victimizers turned victims.

Approaching the process whereby the victimizers are transmogrified into victims from another angle will perhaps prevent us from speeding towards the conclusion that our apprehension of a victim necessarily evokes concern and empathetic or sympathetic reactions. Looking through Claire Colebrook's brief Deleuzian analysis of *The Caretaker* and *The Lover* permits us to extract and underline the potential in Sakellaridou's approach for an analytics of affect. Colebrook's take on Pinter is that the plays invest the everyday or the recognized with affects that we typically would not attach to or associate with them; for example, the dramas' evoking the menace in marriage or bourgeois life, such as *The Lover* does, or the hostility and violence in acts of charity and hospitality, which she argues to be *The Caretaker's* principal gesture.[83] If we focus not on the reinvestment of meaning achieved but on the process of its effectuation – the epistemological inversion Sakellaridou notes, and which Colebrook portrays as a process rather than an endpoint – then we return again to Deleuze and Guattari and their appreciation of the capacity of the aesthetic to introduce the perceptually engaged spectator into an ontological 'in-between'. As process *per se*, the in-between is a space that has yet to be inflected and tamed by emotion, whose force and intensity can modify institutionalized modes of perception, opinions and common sense *precisely because* it has not yet been fully taken over and ordered by models of thought and feeling which have been solidified in the body from past experiences.

It becomes possible to see specific affects as problematizing our rapid embrace of the familiar emotional categories or units of experience that Prentice, and by proxy Sakellaridou, suggest, especially if we reflect on the consequences of apprehending the inverse of that which seemed so clearly to be the case regarding Ben and Gus. *The Dumb Waiter* devotes much time and effort to subjectivizing its two characters as hit men and a comic music hall duo that when the inversion of their roles or identities does occur – beginning most overtly from the early stages of the dumb waiter apparatus' performance of force and control over the two agents – spectators suffer the shock of the incipient appearance of the real. In the event of having to

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The Birthday Party – become, seemingly, the oppressors themselves; when, in *The Dumb Waiter*, the hunters become the hunted; when, in *The Hothouse*, the director ends up at the mercy of his own staff; when, in *The Caretaker*, the tramp gains the upper hand (doesn't he?); when, in *The Homecoming*, the woman is the victor (isn't she?)'. 'Pinter and the 1950s', p. 41.

[83] *Gilles Deleuze*, p. 23.

promptly revise opinions about Ben and Gus which the play already invited, a spectator can be quite readily edged into a space where the usual or expected symbolic relation breaks down, which is to say reality breaks down and begins to produce something else. While the characters' subservience to a higher power begins to develop as the commands issue from the voice at the other end of the speaking tube, Gus and Ben's victimhood is only suggested in the play's open-ended conclusion: the showdown. At one level, we are apt to be niggled by the lingering question as to whether Ben has all along planned this, having been employed by the voice at the end of the speaking tube to exterminate his partner, a scenario which I would argue to be sufficient to block the consolidation of the kind of sign that enables the formation of empathetic and/or sympathetic bonds between spectators and characters. But if we invest at another level in this arrangement, and thus feel for Ben's having been made to plan the execution as a matter of his subjection to the control of a higher power – a form of subjection analogous to Goldberg and McCann's reference and deferment to the mysterious Monty in *The Birthday Party* – consider how for spectators the paths to empathetic connection and expression are subject to being underwritten by the salient anxiety of being perpetually unable to identify that invisible power *and* its extensive humour function in the play as a whole. At best, we are confronted with an empathic bond that cannot cohere, its failure to expressly do so returning us to affective experience that is incipient, and therefore non-narrativizable.

At base, the argument for bonds of empathy and sympathy relies upon the spectator's projection, voluntary or involuntary, of an apparently coherent self 'into the feelings of others or, anthropomorphically, into the "being" of objects or sets of objects; it involves psychological involvement'.[84] But if the emotional definition of the characters' inner lives is semiotically fuzzy, and therefore elusive to narrativization and not given, then the audience are hard pressed to engage in the action that Prentice's analysis requires in order to legitimate itself. And if a spectator is moreover not a stable ego to begin with, then the decidedly corporeal, emotional and psychological experience they undergo is more apt to remain in an incipient state than to concretize into emotion. Thus, emotion might yet be too ontologically stable a category, particularly given how these subject positions – where knowledge and insight actualize – sit in tension with the Massumian definition of viscerality adduced above, and which pervades this chapter. Massumi is again instructive here as he delineates the difference between emotion and affect on the basis that the two 'follow different logics and pertain to different orders'.[85] 'An emotion', he offers, 'is a subjective content, the sociolinguistic fixing of the quality of an

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[84] 'Empathy', *The Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought*, p. 268 (p. 268).
[85] *Parables for the Virtual*, p. 27.

experience which is from that point on defined as personal.'[86] 'Emotion is qualified intensity,' which is to say that it is affect that has begun to be subjected to an assessment – recognition with a view to understanding and classification – based on the intellectual understandings and reflexive body knowledge qua muscle memory accumulated within the subject over time and from past experience. Emotion begins to take shape precisely in the 'point of intersection of intensity into semantically and semiotically formed progressions, into narrativizable action-reaction circuits, into function and meaning.'[87] Affect, therefore, must be distinguished from emotion on the basis that it remains, for the duration of its life, unqualifiable; the linguistic consequence of which is of course that it is 'not ownable or recognizable', and is thus 'resistant to critique'.[88]

That the emotions of Pinter's characters are so often barely legible, yet immediately and strongly sensible, is highly important for the sign system to which this dramatic pressurization amounts translates at the level of audience as palpable and moving extralinguistic experience. And as long as that experience remains 'cognitively impenetrable', and therefore falls outside what we can name or ascertain,[89] the dramatization on stage of that which is contained, suggested, symbolically vaporous and evanescent is apt to correspondingly give rise to the effulgence of new emotions and thought within spectators. And with these orders of newness, we grasp the possibility of the instantiation of subjective processes of difference. These propositions enable us to push further Esslin's remarks concerning how the plays permit 'emotional insights'; the plays' facilitation of transitive and mobile subjectivities being the deeper event. We are not dealing here with the provision of insights which pique emotional responses but rather the immanent production of ways of seeing that are contingent to the specific collaborations of the play's material action upon the body and the spectator's reaction in the moment.

Strategies of anti-connectivity

The discourse of emotions is of course countered by critics who make the case for the operation of a (quasi) Brechtian economy of distantiation in Pinter's aesthetics, this being one of the overarching features of Epic Theatre. Victor Amend, for example, brazenly describes *The Birthday Party* as 'Brechtian – nearly two decades before the phrase "political Pinter" became

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[86] ibid., p. 28.
[87] ibid.
[88] ibid., pp. 27-28.
[89] Del Rio, *Deleuze and the Cinemas*, p. 24, n. #14. Del Rio draws upon Noël Carroll's use of the term 'cognitively impenetrable', in *Beyond Aesthetics: Philosophical Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 389.

common'; his argument built on Goldberg and McCann's wholesale dehumanization of the play's anti-hero as that act and process supposedly prevent empathetic connections to the effect of promoting in spectators 'a rational examination of what happened to Stanley and why'.[90] In this argument for disconnection, which is classically performed with a view to the audience's engagement in critical evaluation and thus a free-standing operation of the faculty of reason, we find a position that runs counter to arguments that Pinter's plays establish the conditions for spectators to develop bonds of empathy and sympathy with the dramatic characters. Amend's reading effectively sheds the emotional component of Esslin's argument for insight vis-à-vis Pinter's drama. With the foreclosure of emotional connection between characters and audience, it is thought to necessarily follow that the audience will engage in critical analysis of the character's circumstances, examination of the 'what' giving way to the 'why'. Here we are faced with what might be called 'a reverse strategy to the principle of connectivity,' as given by the aesthetic, 'a strategy of anti-connectivity' whose outcomes entail 'deviation, disjunction and disruption'[91] but, as Amend has it, to the effect of an orientation that is specifically intellectual and which, as the critic portends, ends in enlightenment and cognitive acts that are rationally precise and focused.

However, when regarded from the standpoint of affect, the argument for 'disconnectivity' can no longer entail an isolation of the intellectual faculties, and thus the kind of distantiation Amend is referring to, since the effectuation of rupture and disconnection is a dramatic gesture and process predicated upon an objective violence that breaks the sensory-motor link and action-reaction circuits necessary to the end game in reason Amend posits. On the one hand, Pinter's dramatization of the reduction of Stanley to psychological pulp and his being whisked away to the unidentified Monty is the ironic *gestus*,[92] a dialectical representation of history, though one that is altogether absent of the coherent sign systems that are central to Brecht's aesthetics. And on the other, the play's third act and conclusion do not *de facto* permit the audience to shed the corporeal vestments of perception (which Amend's reading seems to wish to deny) and isolate the faculties of reason in the event of being made to witness the real of Stanley's interrogation and abduction. Indeed the play's dehumanization of Stanley may be said to trouble the emotional paths that would permit a feeling and concern for the character

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[90] 'Harold Pinter – Some Credits and Debits', *Modern Drama*, 10 (1967), 165-74 (p. 166).

[91] Simon O'Sullivan, *Art Encounters Deleuze and Guattari*, p. 26.

[92] Colin Counsell relates that in accordance with Brecht's vision, '[e]ach gest would be performed distinctly and with clarity so that its meaning was easily apparent. Gestus is sometimes viewed as a kind of archetyping or stylisation, but in practice gestic acting varied greatly from production to production, the plays' different settings, styles and polemical projects demanding different forms [...] Gestus operates at that point where the distinction between the individual and the social dissolves'. *Signs of Performance*, pp. 87-88.

subjected to oppressive power, but this process does not entail its apparent opposite, distantiation. In preventing the audience from invoking familiar emotional categories, the play does not by default go the way of rendering the faculty of reason salient and focusing it on the object of Stanley's plight.

Christopher C. Hudgins imports what is arguably a Brechtian discourse of shock into his analysis,[93] but in doing so the critic replaces alienation with a species of identification that somehow involves the production of alternative textual readings. Hudgins reads Pinter via an application of Hans Robert Jauss's fifth mode of (ironic) identification, his mandate to sight a politics whereby the play's status as a purely aesthetic object is worried to the effect of liberating the spectator's consciousness such that other interpretations become possible. In short, shock effects potentialize the imagination and thereby actualize new textual meanings, thus producing difference in the form of interpretations alternative to the dominant. At base, Hudgins characterizes the principal action of Pinter's plays as teaching us to read against the grain. In the final analysis, this critic's reading returns us to Pinter's manipulation and circumvention of cliché as the shock effect Hudgins posits is 'dependent upon' and thus produced by 'the violation of convention or expectations' – in order to foment 'the liberation ... of the receptive consciousness'.[94] Firstly, the ideological focus one finds in Brechtian Epic Theatre – effected through dialectics – is inverted in Pinter such that a kind of intellectual expansion transpires. Thus the politics do not, as with Brecht, entail the adoption of a specific ideological subject position, but rather the adoption of a subject position which thinks non-specific alternatives; the act of creation as such being a politics (of difference). But we must note how in quickly moving beyond the corporeal body, as Hudgins does, this release of consciousness and the imagination born out of shock leaves us with a Cartesian mind and a relative neglect of the flesh.[95] In taking the road to the epistemological and the faculty of reason via shock, Hudgins neglects to enquire

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[93] Not only does he seem to hearken back to Brecht, Hudgins indirectly connects Pinter to his own post-WWII committed and socialist contemporaries, namely Edward Bond whose notorious play *Saved* inaugurated the politics of shock, while his oeuvre of philosophically rigorous essays have developed and redefined shock as a politico-aesthetic. See Chapter 3 for a discussion of shock in Pinter's post-1983 dramas.

[94] 'Intended Audience Response, *The Homecoming*, and the "Ironic Mode of Identification"', in *Harold Pinter*, ed. by Steven H. Gale (London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1986), pp. 102-17 (pp. 104-05), passim.

[95] My intension here is not suggest that Descartes was uninterested in the body but that his division between mind and body has oriented subsequent generations to the human's rational life and activities such that the distinction between mind and body is always already preconceived and thus axiomatic to any discussion of materiality, the emotional, psychological, and so on. To this effect, we would do well, as Peter Goldie urges in *Understanding Emotions: Mind and Morals* (p.2), to revisit Descartes' realization that our mental and emotional lives are 'very closely joined and, as it were, intermingled'. René Descartes, 'Sixth Meditation', in *Meditations on First Philosophy, with Selections from the Objections and Replies*, trans. by John Cottingham, intro. by Bernard Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 56.

into the nature of shock itself, for the violence of what the critic describes cannot be deemed efficacious without its having registered at a neural and physiological level.

Along with Hudgins, Susan Hollis Merritt permits us to see how critical discourses embracing the tension, turbulence and shock in Pinter are always already invested in the mind and some version or other of the Cartesian subject. Hollis Merritt observes how Pinter's plays effect a tension in the interaction between 'what we must (on some "level") already know' and 'what we do not already know'; her focus on knowledge grounding the analysis squarely in the mind and the cognitive dimension. Somewhat paradoxically she adds that the break away from the familiar and clichéd in Pinter effectively renders the unfamiliar *recognizable*.[96] Her use of a language of recognition is as germane to scholars working on playwrights other than Pinter who conceive of theatre in idealist terms as it is to readers of Pinter.[97] Hollis Merritt's general thesis only further obfuscates the body and material experience as it sights a politics in how the plays' proliferation of ambiguity and uncertainty 'about what [spectators] know' impels us to learn to negotiate a world outside the theatre, itself arguably no less shy of ambiguity and uncertainty. As such, Pinter's theatre is conceived of in mimetic terms while its perplexing representational economy provides the opportunity for spectators to change their epistemological relationship to and within the world.

Nevertheless, despite the body's ostensible absence in this discourse, Hollis Merritt's two theoretical movements provide us with an effective means of thinking how comedy of menace, and in particular menace, can be conceived beyond representation and in terms of what Pinter's plays can make a body do. It is in their respective outcomes that Hollis Merritt's and Hudgins's readings dovetail as they both argue that the plays introduce spectators into a state of intellectual processuality which produces difference. Witness how Hudgins's argument for shock and Hollis Merritt's argument for the recognition of the unfamiliar (*pace* Freud's theory of the 'uncanny') embrace the thesis of anti-connectivity, but in the end they reterritorialize what begins to look like a form of distantiation whose process permits spectators to engage in a free play of the imagination and an exercise of the intellectual faculties whose conceptual outcome is unspecific.

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[96] *Pinter in Play: Critical Strategies and the Plays of Harold Pinter* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), p. 81.

[97] The critical investment in recognition expresses itself in Grimes's reading of Pinter's later, overtly political plays: his argument being that this 'theater challenges us to *see the familiarity* of oppression and abuse of power' and that the 'stark *insight*' that '[p]olitical violence is a historical constant [...] motivates the social and temporal range of Pinter's political art'. *Harold Pinter's Politics*, pp. 218-19, passim, my emphasis.

Dangerous jokes: toward a politics of shock

Contrary to the thesis of interpretative liberation we find in both Hudgins's and Hollis Merritt's conceptions, Francesca Coppa characterizes Pinter's invocation of convention as a means to dismantle and move beyond cliché as a (political) process whose outcome becomes productive via an essentially negative capture of the audience. Building upon Elin Diamond's understanding that Pinter's use of parody is 'skewed' so as to undercut the laughter it provokes,[98] Coppa argues that 'the important jokes' in Pinter 'are generally the ones which make the audience *stop* laughing' such that they 'question their own alliance with the aggressive joke-tellers'.[99] The critic returns us to the viscera in her focus on the manifestation of laughter and delight and, more importantly, the transmutation of these pleasurable affects into something other in the event that our performance of laughter is suddenly undermined and interrupted. For Coppa, Pinter's politics begin when a rupture or crisis manifests in the flow of ostensibly familiar and manageable experience. While her reading certainly bears the traces of both Kerr's and Prentice's respective alignment of characters and audience, Coppa links the experience of bewilderment and sympathy we find with these earlier critics to a specific moral schema.

The affects of comedy invite specific emotional responses that the affects of menace, anxiety and shock then undermine and render ambivalent to the effect of creating a conscious and morally reflective subject. The play's impact can therefore be defined by that primary series of responses – the impact of one response on subsequent ones – and that subsequent narrativization of the series of impacts as the entire event confronts the subject with its own misrecognition and ideally foments a process of auto critique. The logical extension of Coppa's delineation of how Pinter's jokes make us stop laughing to serious consequences is that through instrumentalizing the experience of laughter and menace, Pinter is seeking to foster in us an intellectual awareness of the degree to which we subscribe to certain ideological positions. It is in being staged and then evoked – for is not our 'approval' captured in our laughter? – that these ideological positions or viewpoints are being obliquely critiqued.[100] Thus the function of the affective absorption of spectators into the dramatic landscape ultimately serves to alert them to how ideologies operate *through* them, how the subject articulates ideology it might otherwise

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[98] *Pinter's Comic Play*, p. 12.

[99] 'The Sacred Joke: Comedy and Politics in Pinter's Early Plays', in *The Cambridge Companion to Harold Pinter*, ed. by Peter Raby (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 44-56 (p. 55).

[100] Speaking more generally to Pinter's politicized contemporaries, and indeed enabling us to tentatively situate Pinter within this tradition, Billington argues that the species of comedy at play in a number of post-WW II state of the nation plays 'often leaves us trapped inside our own prejudices'. *State of the Nation: British Theatre since 1945* (London: Faber and Faber, 2007), p. 258.

reject. In the final analysis, this might be construed as a prompt to thinking more reflexively, to being more vigilant about our social positionings and investments, an appeal which happens to surface in Pinter's discourse outside of the theatre.[101]

In the same way that Pinter recodes the familiar signs of thriller and crime genres so as to produce the uncanny and all the illegible affects which derive in and from the event, the comedies of menace reinvest jokes with a different function, one whose means involves the provocation of specific responses and whose ultimate effect is to problematize those very responses and investments. While its outcome is different, Hudgins's Jaussian logic is clear here. More often than not, the contract upon which a joke is based does not involve being made to stop laughing. Thus the plays' manipulation of the end goal (pleasure in unadulterated laughter) of a universally familiar cultural practice undoes and transcends cliché by displacing comedy's axiomatic experience and function onto a plane where the intermingling of physiological turbulence and the apprehension of ideological complicity produces a new sign and orientation. While Coppa's reading of Pinter makes the body a locus for a spectatorial engagement whose sensory amplitude and capture ultimately gives rise to a consciousness in possession of morality, we should ask whether or not thought on her terms in fact retains the residue of the sensation. Coppa's engagement at the moment of cognitive turbulence indeed seems to pass quickly from the body, the quiddity of experience, to the mind, lifting knowledge and ideas out of the senses and their field of action in order to transform them into a system of morality and self-judgment. But as subjectivity is stabilized, the totality of affective, corporeal experience as a politics itself is jettisoned in order to discern a politics in that (post-Massumian) stage of the process whereby the infliction of a blow that effectively makes us stop laughing has already begun to dispose itself to 'sociolinguistic fixing', which is to say personal evaluation, and thus ownership and critique.[102]

Conclusion: 'becoming' as a politics

Despite these important critical interventions and their embrace of how Pinter's comedies of menace perform or express and do not merely represent a politics, the instantiation of affect theory requires that we part company and thereby attempt to locate a politics at another stage: one prior to the formation of empathetic and sympathetic bonds, prior to any conscious subjective awareness of our own implication and indictment and indeed prior to the plays' respective promotion of interpretive engagement; all of which I have hitherto discussed. As an alternative to both the descriptions of comedy of menace as a matter of symbolic representation

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[101] I am referring here to Pinter's analysis of political language and ultimate appeal to rigorous thinking in his 2005 Nobel lecture *Art, Truth and Politics*. See Chapter 6.

[102] Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual*, pp. 27-28.

and as an aesthetic whose endgame is a specific intellectual orientation – one typically pervaded by a discourse of consciousness, (socio-political) enlightenment and the coagulation of a specific audience subjectivity – I argue that Pinter's various aestheticizations, as they amount to what we perhaps too superficially call 'comedy of menace', constitute a politics of 'becoming'. As an alternative to the above readings of Pinter's aesthetics, which both start from and in the final analysis imply a formed and coherent subject, I propose a conception of Pinter's plays as 'ontologically difficult'.[103] This critical move can be made on grounds that the consequence of the myriad assemblages between singular moments in the plays and engaged spectators results in '*the unassimilability* of the intensities'[104] engendered in the experience and an upsetting of the egological stability that is axiomatic for most theatre goers. The unassimilability of Pinter's many images and dramatic constellations betrays its productive consequence in the orientation of thought towards process such that it continues and creates, crossing all the body's thresholds but without fostering processes of subjectification. The production of rupture in stimulus-response paths I have posited, via Massumi, as a means to better comprehend what is potentially happening when spectators are subjected to Pinter's aestheticizations of comedy and menace has as its upshot an 'operative' rather than 'instrumental' form of reason: 'a form of thought that is materially self-referential as opposed to reflective' and as such it 'absorbs possibility without extensively thinking it out, or extrapolating from where it is'; thought which 'infolds without extending' and which 'chooses according to principles unsubordinated to the established regularities of cause-effect [...] Not an extending out of matter into thought; not a doubling of perception by thought: a folding of thought into matter as such'[105]

Thus I posit that the event that is most important is not the moment at which we become cognizant of our attention being directed to or having arrived at other interpretations which are not cliché, dominant or even hegemonic, as Hudgins has it. Of utmost import rather is the (space) which forestalls experience's speedy movement into cognitive extensity where spectatorial thinking and feeling are taken over, colonized if you will, by extant and pre-formulated interpretive models. It is the concept of becoming through affective experience which orients us to the space between the inducement of shock and the reinstitution of action-reaction circuits, those necessary to the apprehension of our own inculpation along with all the

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[103] O'Sullivan, *Art Encounters*, p. 68.
[104] Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual*, p. 27. NB the gesture towards unassailability in Ionesco's claim that 'what is theatre [in its purest state] but "live antagonism, dynamic conflict, the motiveless clash of opposing wills. Abstract thesis against abstract anti-thesis, without synthesis: either one adversary has completely destroyed the other or one force has driven out the other, or else still disunited they coexist.' *Notes and Counter-Notes*, trans. by Donald Watson (London: John Calder, 1964), p. 232.
[105] ibid., p. 110.

moral and ideological inflections that (spectatorial) reaction may or may not entail. The political territory across which we are moving here is not an aesthetic shock that induces evaluation but rather the shock which restores the immanence between thought and the body, a critical but not conclusive territory. While the former shock, embraced by the critics I have adduced, begins at a stage of formed subjectivity and entails the evocation of ways of seeing, the latter shock entails a break with pre-established forms of visibility and sense that facilitates a form of seeing that is incipient and perceptually intermodal. There is neither pure experience nor pure thought at the flash point of Pinter's comedy of menace, but only embodied thought taking place in an imbricated rather than Cartesian mind-body.

If we understand Pinter's aestheticization of comedy of menace in these terms, in terms of affect before representation, reflective consciousness and understanding, then the audience-play relationship necessarily presents itself as a matter of relations of force. Thus Pinter's aesthetics appear to be about 'experiencing sensations' and 'allowing the force(s) of art to act upon the force(s) of our subjectivity' as much as they are about intellection and gleaning meaning(s).[106] The upshot of construing Pinter's plays not as objects upon which we gaze but as 'a reaction in/on the body at the level of matter', the play therefore being 'immanent to matter',[107] entails a collapse of the space between stage and audience. As such, the sensations spectators experience – as engendered by the play materializing across the entire spectrum of faculties unconscious, semi-conscious and conscious plateaus – 'are not images perceived by us "outside" of our body; but rather affections localized within the body'.[108]

Following this line means, then, that we replace the standard idealist conception of Pinter's drama and theatre we find implied throughout the scholarship with a materialist one whereby meaning is sought for in the works' significance, as opposed to its signifiance. Meaning, more specifically, is construed on the basis of the dramas' expression of force and the challenges and opportunities it offers in the way of individuation. As such we must set aside notions of inside versus outside, here versus over there, and so on, for they no longer hold. If the fact and manner in which plays 'act upon the force(s) of our subjectivity' can themselves be regarded a significant form of meaning, then important consequences ensue: Firstly, we are presented with a different way to attribute meaning to Pinter's plays, and to his body of work more generally. And secondly, we must trouble the dominance of a coherent subject in both Pinter scholarship

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[106] O'Sullivan, *Art Encounters*, p. 58.
[107] Simon O'Sullivan, 'The Aesthetics of Affect: Thinking Art Beyond Representation'. *Angelaki: Journal of Theoretical Humanities*, 6.3 (December 2001), 125-35 (p. 125).
[108] Barbara M. Kennedy, *Deleuze and Cinema: The Aesthetics of Sensation* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), p. 119.

and theatre discourse more broadly. For to do so is to begin to rethink the notion of theatre spectatorship on the basis of each playwright's style and the individuations, and indeed the becomings they may or may not be said to be soliciting and inspiring. This analytics, an analytics of affect, must begin with a rigorous embrace of our every experience of a play. Again, to reprise and extend the citation of John Russell Brown in the Introduction, thinking Pinter through affect enables us to see how Pinter's 'sense of "truth"' involves a 'theatrical exploration of immediate experience';[109] truth's discursive construction in language is replaced in Pinter's plays with a truth as an embodied event which forces and propels thought.

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[109] *Theatre Language*, p. 116.

Chapter Three

The Pinter-Losey Machine

This chapter examines selections from *The Servant* (1963), *Accident* (1966) and *The Go-Between* (1969). The approach adopted is to explore and articulate how an economy of affect is at work and even central to each film, and to consider, moreover, what the consequences of this might be said to be in terms of our relationship to these films as spectators. The specific means to do so are twofold and are developed in conjunction through a discussion and analysis of a) Pinter-Losey's handling of character and b) the cinematic apparatus. Concomitant to this analysis, the chapter endeavours to pinpoint certain expressions of the 'European art-house tradition'[1] in each film, and how all three respectively and interelatedly transpose notable aesthetic and political aspects of that tradition into the post-WW II British context. Noting how Pinter-Losey's cinematic aesthetics are imbued by aspects of various European films and directors enables us to locate a politics of embodied cinematic thought, precisely in the authors' use of characterization and the cinematic apparatus to imply, solicit and then break down straightforward, readily legible and clichéd images and ways of connecting with and investing in the films. The conclusion, finally, translates and elaborates my closing remarks in the previous chapter on Pinter's early dramatic aesthetics, arguing here that the film's respective and singular engenderment of affects presents us with a politics of becoming that overturns cinema spectatorship as it is commonly understood, and therefore presents us with a different understanding of the meaning of Pinter's work with Losey, one which is predicated on the films' operations and effects rather than their signification and symbolic representation.

The Servant: towards a post-war cinematic anti-hero

Speaking to the issue of characterization in the Pinter-Losey trilogy, Foster Hirsch emphasizes how the work expresses the very 'coolness' and 'utter ironic detachment' with which Pinter has been said to treat his dramatic characters.[2] Looking closely at Tony in *The Servant* (James Fox), one can discern the emergence of Pinter-Losey's aestheticization of a specific kind of anti-hero, a figure who can be situated within a tradition of European cinema whose characters problematized and rejected standard modes of spectatorial investment. As a laconic voyeur whose performance from these coordinates of subjectivity prevents him from reacting to situations, and therefore from acting out to change himself and/or his milieu in any significant and productively transformative way, Tony participates to a great extent in his own demise. The

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[1] Colin Gardner, *Joseph Losey* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), p. 3.
[2] *Joseph Losey* (Boston: Twayne, 1980), p. 25.

character's failure to act out is precisely an ironic form of action that facilitates a fate which can only come about through non-action.

Distilling a key moment in Deleuze's comprehensive writings on cinema, Peter Hallward relates how in post-war cinema we frequently behold '[a]ctors become the victims of the events that befall them. Deliberation is replaced by chance, purpose is consumed by fate, journeys dissolve into aimless wanderings', so much so that these situations are not 'integrated through action and narrative' but rather assembled in 'dispersive situations characterised by the absence of plot and 'deliberately weak links' and an association of images that becomes 'elliptical', 'irrational' and 'direct', without 'intermediaries'.[3] 'Stimuli no longer provoke reactions', Hallward concludes, 'so much as summon up terrifying visions or dreams'.[4] All this transpires quite early on in *The Servant*, specifically from the time Douglas Slocombe's peripatetic camera picks up, deviates from and then returns to Hugo Barrett (Dirk Bogarde) ambling through the streets of Westminster, playing the London flâneur, to the subsequent foreboding scene where the *mise en scène* darkens considerably and presents Tony dozing horizontally – having had 'too many beers at lunch, that's what it is',[5] as he puts it – well into the afternoon meeting he had arranged with Barrett for the position of manservant.

Tony's behaviour during that second, much-analyzed scene functions immediately to call into question the character's integrity as a classical or even familiar protagonist. For his dramatic trajectory is even at this formative stage signaled as a process of stasis and degradation, rather than of vitality and progression. Steven H. Gale's observation of Tony and the milieu in which we first discover him indirectly brings Hallward's Deleuzian description of the post-war cinematic antihero to bear on *The Servant*:

> Tony's house is untidy, and he is asleep when he has an appointment, sprawled out and unkempt, at three in the afternoon (so a clock's chimes announce). Upon emerging from his slothfulness, Tony appears a little uncertain and confused, unfocused particularly in comparison with Barrett, who is fully in control of himself and the situation.[6]

Although quite a discreet performance at this stage, each close-up and the total visual regime capture the role reversal and hierarchy between master and servant that are to be continually and progressively dramatized over the course of the film. This arrangement of course climaxes when

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[3] *Out of this World: Deleuze and the Philosophy of Creation* (London: Verso, 2006), p. 168. Hallward drawing upon Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, trans. by Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (London: Continuum, 1986), pp. 207-10.
[4] ibid., p. 115.
[5] *Harold Pinter: Collected Screen Plays 1* (London: Faber and Faber, 2000), p. 4.
[6] *Sharp Cut: Harold Pinter's Screenplays and the Artistic Process* (Lexington: University of Kentucky, 2003), p. 49.

Barrett, in the role of a 1960s Faust,[7] ultimately finalizes his appropriation of Tony's home, body and soul.

Two scenes after Tony's interview with Barrett for the position of manservant, the putative master develops further, yet ever so slightly, his disposition as a 'weak, sybaritic, and feckless aristocrat'[8] during key interactions with his fiancée Susan Stewart (Wendy Craig) while at a table with drinks. In a predominantly one-way conversation, Tony's description of clearing the jungle as part of 'a giant development' – 'They're going to build three cities [...] Mm. Gigantic project. Matter of clearing hundreds of miles of jungle', he claims[9] – is a smug performance of power and social importance, but one which fails to persuade as he shifts in the same breath to laconic assertions that quickly defuse his credibility as an entrepreneur:

> *Head waiter returns with bottle. Pours. Tony sips.*
>
> Tony: Fine. I'm having lunch with him next week.
> Susan: Where? In the jungle?
> Tony: Either here or in Paris, actually. Anyway there's no hurry. I could do with a rest.
> Susan: *(laughing)* A rest from what?
> Tony: No. Seriously, what do you think of the idea?
> Susan: *(lifts her glass)* Cosy.[10]

Tony's claim to need a rest, and indeed the laugh and question Susan issues in response to it, score the young man's narrative of capitalist ambition in a way that makes the language and the entire sign system stammer. Thus the audience is confronted with, however consciously or unconsciously, an attenuation of the pathways that might permit unguarded investments in the principal character; 'protagonists' in mainstream and Hollywood films so typically opening themselves to associative and empathetic connections with spectators.

However, while this attenuation functions to potentially decentre spectators who seek concord and desire to believe in the principal characters, the absence of this order of convention gives way to the partial formation of another. Not so much an end to the restaurant scene as a fluid segue into the next, the camera's framing of Susan saying 'Cosy' cuts to a shot of the couple lying together in Tony's opulent drawing room, now apparently well on their way to making love. The image of Tony and Susan's intimacy immediately registers itself as typical of cinematic heteronormative love scenes whereby a wooed female is seduced by the male toward an intimate encounter which the audience are made to anticipate. Among its numerous mimetic

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[7] Julian Petley, 'The Servant' <http://www.filmreference.com/Films-Se-Sno/The-Servant.html> [accessed 10 July 2009].
[8] Michael Palmer and James Riley, *The Films of Joseph Losey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 45, 50, passim.
[9] *Collected Screenplays 1*, p. 8.
[10] ibid., pp. 8-9.

props, the camera's presentation of kissing, soft music and a fire that backlights a darkened room 'automatically plugs into a network of existing cultural associations'.[11] The cultural constructs Pinter-Losey offer up for reading this 'love scene' effectively territorialize the familiar cinematic discourses promulgated by Hollywood and thereby prompt spectators to bring equally constructed interpretive strategies to their reading experience;[12] those which in 1963 (and even today in many contexts) would surely have constituted some of the frames through which mainstream cinema goers interpreted and understood films.[13]

However, the series of images indeed perform a function analogous to a number of Pinter's dramatic images in that they begin to perform a familiar code, but only to subsequently break the associative circuits audiences are apt to begin to form and thereby move beyond such clichés. Hence, the narrative momentum is stalled by Tony's perseveration of the Brazil project as that creates an awkward moment in the courtship; Pinter-Losey's invocation of the classic love scene instrumental to initiating its dismantling:

> Tony: Want to go there?
> Susan: Where?
> Tony: The Jungle.
> Susan: Not now.
> Tony: No, not now.[14]

The lack of attention span suggested in Tony's mention of a needed rest from a project which has yet to get underway is analogous to the distracted manner in which he relates to Susan. And while Tony's solicitation of Susan's approval of his capitalist enterprise in the previous scene seemed an expression of his desire to seduce the young woman, here the case begins to look otherwise as his break away from Susan, performed in the film but without notation in the screenplay, fractures the romantic posture assumed by the putative lovers, delivering instantly a violent blow to the formation of this immediately recognizable cinematic and narrative cliché. Not unlike the affective-performative moments in Pinter's plays we saw in the previous chapter,

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[11] Counsell, *Signs of Performance*, p. 150.

[12] ibid., p. 168.

[13] There is an argument to be made here that Losey is at once signalling the fact that he has a command of such codes – having been a Hollywood director – and is at once playing with them, as is suggested in the manner in which the scene plays out. As with Pinter, Losey's use of specific genres as a means to create something altogether different has been observed to be a project of his from the beginning: 'right from when he started to make films, genre films, whatever films he gets to make, *The Gypsy and the Gentleman, The Criminal,* he was clearly doing something different with these genres. He was taking quite traditional genres like "the gypsy film", the "bodice ripper", or the "police thriller", in *The Criminal* and he was doing something special with them.' Ian Christie, 'Film Analysis by Ian Christie'. *The Servant.* Dir. Joseph Losey. Perf. Dirk Bogarde, James Fox, and Wendy Craig. Screenplay by Harold Pinter, adapted from the novella by Robin Maugham. London: Optimum. 2008.

[14] *Collected Screenplays 1*, pp. 9-10.

the altered pattern performs a 'rhythmicity'[15] whose sudden change of direction exploits an affective space within the image, one which temporarily eludes narration and pushes our thought beyond the already-seen which cliché only ever offers.

There is an attempt to reinstate the previous romantic code as Tony and Susan do re-engage momentarily, assuming the lovers' posture on the floor by the fire: '*He kisses her* [...] (*she kisses him*)'.[16] But the image is already stammering and unable to cohere as a cliché given how the dialogue, performance and narrative trajectory abrade the credibility of the lush, romantic score (John Dankworth), cinematography and *mise en scène*. The development of the cliché is wholly impeded in the final movement of the scene as Tony breaks away from Susan, his action coupled with an entirely unrelated yet new revelation: 'Oh by the way, I forgot to tell you, I found a manservant'.[17] In response to this most untimely declaration, Susan giggles awkwardly and blurts out: 'A what?', and then in the film she breaks into a laugh which resonates violently across the camera's panning shot to a moonlit window – a parenthetic image and shot that would ordinarily conclude the romantic scene. This marks the double movement whereby the courtship signified by the acting and *mise end scène* are subjected to the violence of both Tony's obsessive refraining of the Brazil project and his quite untimely announcement that a man will be occupying the very milieu the couple are to imminently share as husband and wife. The principal male character's inadequacy at heterosexual interplay is implied as the courtship narrative fails to cohere into a lucent sign, eroded instead by various speech acts and postures which displace Tony's sexual desire and render his tangential speech a proxy for action in the present romantic context. This overtone in the image resounds more fully as the film progresses, but never actualizes a coherent sign and therefore narrative or visual system.

Susan only bolsters the Pinter-Losey shot's initiation and subsequent troubling of these romantic codes as she bursts into laughter in response to Tony's remark about the manservant; the camera's flitting but poignant capture of her face performing something reminiscent of Hitchcock's close-ups in that the image does 'not carry the story forward', but rather turns 'the apparently neutral actions of everyday life [...] ever-so-slightly offbeat'.[18] In this scene, a transformation of bodily attitudes eclipses the will to storytelling,[19] as both Tony's sudden

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[15] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 346.

[16] *Collected Screenplays 1*, p. 10.

[17] ibid.

[18] Alan Brody, 'The Gift of Realism: Hitchcock and Pinter', *Journal of Modern Literature*, 3.2 (April 1973), 149-72 (p. 154).

[19] Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time Image*, second edition, trans. by Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (London: Continuum, 1985), p. 186. Building from Deleuze's claims about John Cassavetes's films, the context from which I am lifting his language, Elena Del Rio states: 'Bodily components characteristic of performance break down the formulaic structures of narrative by introducing the elements of temporality and surprise into the

intervention with the news of Barrett and Susan's response in the form of laughter exemplify the use of bodily performance and gesture to break down the narrative codes established or intimated hitherto, along with any audience expectations those codes have likely begun to invite: namely the anticipation and cognitive construction of a heteronormative romance narrative. Susan's role is crucial in Pinter-Losey's displacement of narrative focus onto a series of images that foreground body movements and voices. This is particularly salient in the way her character provides a series of opportunities and choices for Tony over the course of the film that are wholly predictable as narratives – heterosexual love, marriage, monogamy, companionship, guardianship of the home and stability – but those which Tony shuns in his alternate pursuit of Vera (Sarah Miles), and then his ultimate failure to foster a relationship with either woman; a reality which is expressed in his addictions, his surrender to Barrett's temptations and orders – 'Well go and pour me a glass of brandy [...] Well don't just stand there, go and do it!', shouts Barrett on the stairs[20] – and his final collapse at the orgy in the film's last scenes.

Tony's increased preoccupation with his manservant and move away from his fiancée steadily transform him into the real servant in his own house, this servitude being to his own base and slothful inclinations as much as to Barrett, the new master who manipulates the old master's desires and thereby fosters addictions in him. Thus Tony's ability to act is replaced by an optic situation whereby he becomes a spectator of his own life – a specific dilemma a number of Pinter characters have oppugned but also succumbed to.[21] As *The Servant* unfolds, the seeds planted within these early and crucial scenes featuring Tony and Susan flourish such that by mid-film the audience sees clearly how Tony is, contrary to his performance of ambition and importance, 'largely without individuality or purpose'[22] and remains reliant 'on others both to initiate and to carry through any action',[23] all of this of course enabling the manservant Barrett to render Tony increasingly 'a prisoner of his own senses'.[24] Whatever modicum of 'ambition, sense

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acting and moving body. Storytelling is thus practiced in the film as the development and transformation of bodily attitudes rather than as the confirmation of a preconceived set of psychological traits.' *Deleuze and the Cinemas*, p. 20.

[20] *Collected Screenplays 1*, p. 79.

[21] This of course runs through Pinter's oeuvre as both a dramatic predicament and discourse, the most prominent examples of which are: Pete's accusation of Mark in the novel *The Dwarfs* (1952-56/1990) that his friend is 'operating on life and not in it'. Teddy's diagnosis of his family members' inability to attain a properly objective view of objects; Ralph's praising of the virtues of acting rather than thinking in *Moonlight* (1993); and the Waiter's final monologue in *Celebration*, a paean to his grandfather who 'introduced [him] to the mystery of life', in the middle of which he claims to remain. *The Dwarfs*, second edition (London: Faber and Faber, 1992), p. 79; *Harold Pinter: Plays 3*, p. 69; *Harold Pinter: Plays 4*, third edition (London: Faber and Faber, 1993), pp. 342-43; ibid., p. 508.

[22] Palmer and Riley, *The Films of Joseph Losey*, p. 47.

[23] Gale, *Sharp Cut*, p. 59.

[24] Palmer and Riley, *The Films of Joseph Losey*, p. 47.

of purpose, and self-confidence'[25] spectators may register in Tony is merely a Potemkin sign system that dissolves in the wake of Tony's effeteness and increasingly self-destructive behaviour. As we see, Tony's Brazil project and putatively momentous business connection fade to the background as quickly as he tabled them. When Lord and Lady Mountset question him mid-film about his entrepreneurial prospects, Susan speaks for the now seemingly uninterested Tony. When he does offer a response, we find that the details have changed from clearing the jungle to building '[o]n the plain'.[26] As a matter of course, his ambitious talk and relative inaction give way to a nightmarish state of alcoholic torpor and apoplexy such that Tony assumes a foetal position while the manservant-cum-master Barrett takes charge of the old master's possessions and his life. Not long after this stage of the film and of the couple's engagement, stimuli in the form of Susan's attempts to wrench Tony away from his burgeoning attraction and addiction to both Barrett and Vera no longer even provoke reactions from the young man. The full de-linkage of the romance narrative gives way to the very sort of terrifying visions and dreams Hallward speaks of, the film's dramatic current arguably requiring the audience to continually reposition themselves in relation to all characters.

In defence of post-war Japanese and European cinema, Deleuze observes how 'Marxist critics have attacked films and their characters for being too passive and negative, in turn bourgeois, neurotic or marginal, and for having replaced modifying action with a "confused" vision', adding 'that, in cinema, characters [...] are unconcerned, even by what happens to them'.[27] We need not force Deleuze's text to see how it indirectly describes Tony's role within *The Servant* and, moreover, how the confused vision that is this character's psycho-social predicament is a force that becomes the dramatic trajectory, replaces the modifying action to which Deleuze refers and eclipses the film's narrative. Deleuze's rebuttal to the 'Marxist' criticism he illustrates is twofold in that he locates the possibility of a politics within the local image itself and characterizes this aesthetic as a different political economy, appropriate for the post-war era. 'But', he intervenes, 'it is precisely the weakness of the motor-linkages, the weak connections, that are capable of releasing huge forces of disintegration [...] it is not the cinema that turns away from politics, it becomes completely political, but in another way [...] A new type of character for a new cinema.'[28] Consider how it is precisely the 'forces of disintegration' Deleuze speaks of which issue forth from *The Servant* and push past the familiarity of any safe and easy investment in cinematic characters only to produce a politics and a critique by other

[25] Gale, *Sharp Cut*, p. 53.
[26] *Collected Screenplays 1*, p. 38.
[27] *Cinema 2*, pp. 18-19.
[28] ibid.

means. If there is a politics to be found in this film, it is arguably in the force of the social and psychological collapse suffered by the characters, not a traditional moral but rather a *memento mori* whose valence is determined by the force it achieves in the event of shifting from the break up and dissolution of conventional and easily negotiated characterization, plot, narrative, action and images into a territory where the agitation produced by the movement and intensity of the film's codes becomes fractious.

Susan's abuse

Pinter-Losey's dismantling of clichéd cinematic codes to the effect of manipulating the interrelated plateaus of characterization and spectatorial investment in the characters is further exemplified in Tony's and Barrett's respective maltreatment of Susan. This female character is both abused and marginalized, suffering a twofold violence that consists, firstly, of Tony's progressive rejection of her in favour of his manservant and then, later in the film, for the newly hired maid Vera, a woman Barrett introduces as his sister, but who turns out to be his lover. Secondly, the violence consists of a) Barrett's perpetual crowding of the space between the engaged couple: 'Every time you open a door in this house that man's outside,' complains Susan;[29] b) Barrett's surreptitious taunting of his female opponent: 'I'm afraid it's not very encouraging miss ... the weather forecast', he underhandedly asserts while holding the door for Susan as she departs after being quietly chastised by Tony for criticizing Barrett;[30] and c) Barrett's 'removal' of Susan from the premises in the film's conclusion. Tony goes from choosing Barrett, to the detriment of Susan's marginalization and gradual absence from the house, to failing in the end to prevent or even respond to Barrett's humiliation of Susan, her betrothal to Tony now effectively a nightmare.

However, before the performance-narrative of Susan's abuse can sediment to the effect that spectators might fully abide any solicitation to regard her character as a victim, Pinter-Losey clutter the path to comfortable investment in her. Establishing the struggle between herself and Tony's new man servant, Susan undertakes to berate Barrett early in the film by questioning him as to his white Italian serving gloves – 'what ducky gloves' she japes[31] – and then actively attacking him in the scene where she turns up in Tony's absence one afternoon and openly demands to know what the servant 'wants from this house'.[32] This question, however, only expresses what the entire scene dramatizes in gestures pervaded by class ideology as Susan

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[29] *Collected Screenplays 1*, p. 24.
[30] ibid., p. 26.
[31] ibid., p. 17.
[32] ibid., p. 59.

commands Barrett to collect her shopping from the taxi, to find a vase for the plant she has purchased, coaxing him to compliment her on the purchase no less, and then finally to make her lunch.[33] The inversion of victims and victimizers returns us to Pinter's dramas (see Chapter 2), and Susan's brief assumption of this role only piques the irony of the presently absent Tony's progressive drift into subservience. Nonetheless, the inversion does not complete itself, the audience therefore hamstrung in concretizing the codes they are likely to digest from this narrative thread. Susan's attempts to claim her place alongside Tony in a house she has yet to become the mistress of, even before Barrett can do the same, renders her something of an 'ambivalent linchpin of the entire film'.[34] Colin Gardner points out, quite rightly, that Susan is a 'woman caught *between* the classes as much as she is trapped in a sexual and degenerate *ménage à trois* between the two men'.[35] Additionally, though, we might consider how Susan is also subjected to a gender disadvantage and displacement within the film by the sexual ambiguity which saturates Tony and Barrett's relationship. Susan's victimhood is inflected by her own moments of victimization such that her status as an abused woman who in kind performs abuse on others – particularly before the full range of her own maltreatment is actualized in the film's conclusion – renders spectatorial investments in the female character subject to renegotiation; a process which repeatedly folds the spectator's formation of opinions back into the affective space where intensities dramatize thought in so far as they direct the course of the actualization of other ideas.[36]

The Go-Between

Leo's abuse

The Go-Between presents us with an analogue in the way of performances of abuse that decentre spectators in their processes of individuation at the behest of specific cues issued by the film. In this film, it is Marian Maudsley (Julie Christie) who in fact turns out to be something of a user *pace* Barrett, Vera (and Anna in *Accident*, as we will see). This is epitomized late in the film, when Leo (Dominic Guard) discovers Marian's affair with the neighbouring farmer Ted Burgess (Alan Bates) after opening a letter from the former he is en route to delivering into the hands of the male lover. When Leo reacts to the event by refusing to continue as the lovers' 'postman', Marian fulminates in a close-up:

[33] ibid., pp. 58-60.
[34] Gardner, *Joseph Losey*, p. 137.
[35] ibid., p. 138.
[36] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 305, 306, passim.

You come into this house, our guest, a poor nothing out of nowhere, we take you in, we know nothing about you, we feed you, we clothe you, we make a great fuss of you – and then you have the damned check to say you won't do a simple thing that any tuppeny-ha'-penny rag-a-muffin in the street would do for nothing!

Long shot.
Marian and Leo alone on the path.

Nothing!

She raises her hand. Leo starts back. They are still. Close-up of Marian.[37]

Marian's performance of verbal and psychological violence on the innocent boy is indeed a transmogrification of several scenes in *The Servant*: from Susan's abuse of Barrett to the various uncontextualized and constrained exchanges between characters, namely in the Soho French Restaurant scene[38] where the hierarchies between a gallery of characters come briefly to the fore: the Bishop (Patrick Magee) and Curate (Alun Owen), the Society Woman (Ann Firbank)[39] and Man (Pinter) and the Older Woman (Doris Knox) and Younger Woman (Jill Melford). While at the same time this order of performance and regime of violence is quite reminiscent of the infrequent aggressive outbursts in Pinter's dramas when a character goes so far as to put his or her 'cards on the table', as Teddy says in *The Homecoming*. Given Marian's formerly apparent transcendence of her family's elitist posturing and a classist rationality via her engagement in (transgressive) relationships with visibly working class characters (Ted and Leo), her abrupt selfish and hierarchical investments resonate with violence in her mouth.

Marian's outburst appears to be a symptom of the desperation she has reached while trying to husband a socially transgressive affair with Ted that she knows will be terminated by her arranged marriage to Hugh Trimingham (Edward Fox). And under the integuments of her classist discourse is the ironic reality that she berates the boy for refusing to facilitate her love affair with a member of the very class to which Leo 'belongs'. Thus, a strange dynamic is operative here such that Marian's behaviour towards a child whose innocence renders him able to solicit and accommodate more or less easy and stable investments and the irony of that behaviour given her love for the working class Ted are likely to take the audience from pillar to post, and therefore challenge inclinations to invest in Marian by means of, say, association and even empathy. Further, Marian's outburst at this stage of the film renders Ted Burgess the boy's only ally. But when Marian fails to show up for Leo's birthday party not much later in the film

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[37] *Collected Screenplays 2*, p. 74.
[38] *Collected Screenplays 1*, pp. 30-36.
[39] Perhaps it is worth noting that Firbank plays Laura in *Accident*, the wife whom Charley (Stanley Baker) leaves for the character of Anna (Jacqueline Sassard).

and the boy discovers her and Ted in an intimate posture, this life-changing 'birthday present' marks the zenith of Leo's subjection to abuse where all characters are concerned.

Here we see an inflection of the cinematic aesthetics of Vittorio De Sica and later François Truffaut, in whose films the child's role is central and appears such that 'in the adult world, the child is affected by a certain motor helplessness, but one which makes him all the more capable of seeing and hearing.'[40] As a wounded, prostrate and silent child figure, Leo functions here as a resonating and amplifying surface for the woman's performance of ideology. But manifested in this dismantling of ideology through its performance is the intensity of the image of Leo cowering in subjection to Marian's performance of power. The specific aestheticization of the image at this stage of the film reveals 'itself in a visual and sound nakedness, crudeness and brutality which make it unbearable', a performative gesture capable of effecting a 'disturbance of equilibrium between stimulus and response' which suddenly frees the image from the laws of the sensory-motor schemata which are automatic and pre-established, thus giving the tableau 'the pace of a dream or a nightmare'.[41] Thus we find in Leo's debilitating nightmarish state a similar aesthetic developed by quite different means than Tony's debilitating dream and nightmare in *The Servant*.

Passive spectatorship and the violence of nonreaction

As young Leo is subjected to various forms of coercion after Marian dresses him down,[42] the relative security spectators are liable to have initially discovered in Leo's female friend and guide in the upper class world of Brandham Hall is swept away. Each marginalization and humiliation performed upon the boy effectively renders Leo a victim for whom spectators can feel sympathy, while all former opportunities of investment that Marian made available are foreclosed as her character, not unlike the mansion Brandham Hall, continually undergoes an inexorable loss of its formative majesty. A further and evidently more indelible violence is performed on Leo when Marian fails to appear at his birthday and then Mrs. Maudsley (Margaret Leighton) drags the boy to the carnal scene where the lovers are entwined and forces him to bear witness. This is Leo's most important voyeuristic act since it debilitates him for the rest of his life, the confrontation snuffing the last bit of youth, activeness and curiosity in him and rendering him a wholly passive spectator from here on in. The oscillation between Leo's and

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[40] Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, p. 3.
[41] ibid., pp. 3-4.
[42] W. Russel Gray refers to such abuses as coercions: 'Colston is subjected to different kinds of coercion by older women (Mrs. Maudsley drags him to Ted and Marian's hayrick and Lady Marian tries to browbeat him into bearing one more message'. 'The Time in Our Minds: The Presence of the Past in *The Go-Between*', *The Journal of Popular Culture*, 40.4 (2007), 643-54 (p. 649).

Mrs. Maudley's gazing upon the lovers and their returning the gaze as they are discovered performs several movements. At one level, the image is scored by the fact that Marian's getting caught out with Ted is not an act intended to scar Leo, as it inevitably does, but rather to complicate the socially determined trajectory on which she finds herself in having to shortly marry Hugh Trimingham. But the image also stammers as a result of the violence Mrs. Maudsley performs when she forces the boy to witness a scene that ultimately ruins him spiritually; this act being, according to Neil Sinyard, a cathection of her own desire for her daughter's lover.[43] While this complex of dysfunction and abuse implies that audience investments should flow unequivocally to the child character, Pinter-Losey problematize this vector of compassion and connection by means of a temporal aestheticization that abruptly removes Dominic Guard from the film and dedicates the final scene to Colston (Michael Redgrave), Leo's much-aged self, a character who has up to this point remained largely undeveloped in that he appears only in montage with cryptic and uncontextualized voice-overs.

Even if and after epistemological purchase is achieved on the film's deft rendering of time – a conflation of past and present – the character who now confronts the audience no longer bears the promise of the sorts of investments his younger self did, precisely because, as Sinyard observes, 'Leo finally becomes a spectator of life, a man who wants to be involved but is afraid of involvement.'[44] But as Sinyard continues, it becomes clear how the conditions for elderly Leo's full entry into the narrative and the boy's ultimate fate in older age were embedded all along within the images, despite being illegible in the moment of consumption:

> 'Why are you bringing your bathing suit if you're not allowed to swim' is a recurrent refrain, and Leo is carrying his bathing suit, which is perfectly dry, in his last meeting with Ted Burgess when he is to carry the one more message that will consign Leo to an arid future. He becomes a man whose disappointed idealism will find the greatest difficulty in adjusting to the imperfection of human contact.[45]

This characterization of Colston indeed resonates with Tony (and Stephen in *Accident*, as will be shortly examined), as well as with several of Pinter's stage characters, the most notable example in that context being Teddy in *The Homecoming* who, as critics repeatedly emphasize, is so taken

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[43] 'Her [Mrs. Maudsley's] impulse to take Leo to the outhouse with her becomes the irrational act of a rejected woman, avenging herself on the boy for his connivance in a relationship which has destroyed her own sexual hopes ("No, you shall come", she says, pulling him after her, as if this were a kind of punishment). Further, if she knows exactly where to go, could it not imply that she has been in that outhouse with Ted Burgess herself?' 'Pinter's Go-Between', *Critical Quarterly*, 22.3 (1980), 21-33 (p. 30).

[44] 'Pinter's Go-Between', pp. 32-33.

[45] ibid., p. 33.

with the all important 'question of how far you can operate on things and not in things'[46] that he simply fails to be.[47]

Marian, Leo, Ted and Mrs. Maudsley express identifiable tendencies of post-war neorealist characters in so far as they do not act out against their milieu but succumb, rather, to its dictates and even collapse from the convulsions brought on by the pressures deriving from the hegemony of social decorum and mores within their elite context. While Leo's presence at Brandham Hall and function as the go-between for the socially transgressive affair might be understood to ultimately destroy 'the stability' of the Maudsley's upper class world,[48] the boy's own destruction, also noted, defuses the force of such a narrative. In this way, Leo's spiritual stalemate, along with all other characters', presents us with the inversion of 'the American model of the action-image' whereby

> the young man's violence is an active violence, a violence of reaction against the milieu, against society, against the father, against poverty and injustice, against solitude. The young man violently wants to become a man, but it is this very violence which gives him as his only choice either dying or remaining a child. The more violent he is, the more of a child he becomes.[49]

Between Leo, Ted, Marian and her mother, we do not find an active expression and performance of violence but rather a passive one, its implosive force nullifying the characters' acting *against* the forces, or problems, adduced in this passage.

In fact, the degradation of all parties results in the milieu and the hegemony of the class system and social decorum undergoing no change at all. In the end, Marian's marriage to Hugh, instead of Burgess, indicates her 'choice' to not transgress the dictates of class to which her family are bound: 'I was Lady Trimingham, you see. I still am. There is no other', she says to Colston in the film's final scene.[50] Meanwhile, Marian's love for the farmer is underscored as she appeals to Colston, yet again in the role of go-between, to entreat her grandson who has become estranged due to an inherited knowledge of the socially transgressive affair. 'Our love was a beautiful thing, wasn't it?', she asks the now aged Leo and then solicits her go-between to tell the grandson 'he can be proud to be descended from our union, the child of so much happiness and

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[46] *Harold Pinter: Plays 3*, p. 69.

[47] 'You won't get me being … I won't be lost in it', Teddy concludes in what Hudgins characterizes as a pun 'on "being" as an existential word' which amounts to a 'refusal of subjectivity, of involvement, [that] destroys any possibility of life.' 'Intended Audience Response', p. 112.

[48] Sinyard, 'Pinter's Go-Between', p. 24.

[49] Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, p. 139.

[50] *The Go-Between*. Dir. Joseph Losey. Perf. Julie Christie, Alan Bates, Dominic Guard, Margaret Leighton. Screenplay by Harold Pinter, adapted from the novel by L. P. Hartley. London: Optimum. 2007, 1:49:25; and *Harold Pinter: Collected Screenplays 2* (London: Faber and Faber, 2000), p. 118.

beauty. Tell him.'[51] Prior to this, a single shocking image reveals to us that Ted has chosen suicide in a visceral demonstration of how thoroughly saturated are his circumstances by class ideology and social stratification. And Leo's return to his duties as go-between for Marian is demonstrably not the courageous act and demonstration 'of a strong free will in the face of adversity' that it might appear,[52] but instead an exemplification of the post-war cinematic anti-hero's symptomatic failure to react against his or her milieu and the challenges it presents.

The Servant redux: the orgy's over

Here we find a cinematic commensurability between *The Go-Between* and *The Servant.* While each film proceeds with a fair commitment to dramatizing social and sexual hierarchies of all sorts, their final stages actually perform a reversal by breaking them down in a strange and oblique way. All the clichés of a love destined to be and of English heritage in *The Go-Between*'s performance as a period piece are swept away by the violences endured by all characters in the final shift to the present and clarification of the film's temporal logic. So too with the lurid orgy comprising the penultimate scene in *The Servant*: Tony becomes apoplectic and incommunicative in his intoxication, at one moment provoking laughter in all 'guests', save for Susan, as his body collapses violently into the furniture and onto the floor; Barrett in an increasingly frenzied state broadcasts for the guests what vaguely appears to be a pornographic film – that decidedly vulgar genre of film serving as a film within Pinter-Losey's own cinematic capture of a debased social milieu; meanwhile, Susan hovers silently at the margins, watching Tony watch his own life's reduction to naught, both with a passivity not uncommon to the antiheroes in subsequent Pinter-Losey films and indeed in a number of Pinter plays.

Eventually entering the fray, Susan attempts to assert power over Barrett by kissing him on the mouth in a moment that seems to adumbrate Ruth's instrumentalization of intimate acts on certain of her in-laws in *The Homecoming*, specifically as a means to establish hegemony over the male-dominant household into which she has entered as an unwelcome guest. While both these dramatic households betray a twisted sexual economy, Barrett's pornographic film mirroring the climate, Susan is unable to claim the same degree of power (vis-à-vis the males) in Tony's abode that Ruth does in Max's. Thus Tony's fiancée moves squarely into the role of a

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[51] *Collected Screenplays* 2, p. 119.

[52] 'Though subtle and ambiguous, Losey's concluding scenes do violence to the spirit of the novel and to Pinter's script, which beautifully reflects the novel's core in cinematic ways. Most critics misread the filmscript's implications that old Colston has grown, has finally managed to muster the courage to affirm life after years of sterile retreat.' 'Harold Pinter's *The Go-Between*: The Courage To Be', *Cycnos*, 14.1 (11 June 2008) <http://revel.unice.fr/cycnos/document.html?id=1238> [accessed 12 May 2009].

powerless victim and marginalized character, but whose potential solicitation of empathetic investments in this position are mediated heavily by the lingering trace of her formative abusive behaviour, particularly as it seems motivated by pretensions to social mobility within Tony's nouveau riche milieu.

The signifier of the kiss is complex in that it is charged with all the negative energy, tension and emotion that have built up within Susan and Barrett's agon since their first encounter. Susan's motive and desire to vanquish Barrett are thus cathected in an act that habitually signifies contrary ends: desires and emotions of a pleasurable species. But Susan's is a kiss that delivers neat surprise for spectators, complicating the categories into which we might seek to place the characters due to the symbolic taciturnity of the action and indeed the manifestation of desire and intent not through confession but rather suggestive behaviours, expressions and postures which vibrate and become monstrous due to the characters' containment of emotion. In this way, an affective force waxes in proportion to Pinter-Losey's refusal to deliver up clear and distinct meaning and the characters' refusal to deliver their psychological states in explanatory language. But even if Susan's strategy of attack becomes coherent for spectators, the promise of manumission its success might bring – i.e. its having the effect of somehow wounding Barrett and thus transferring power into Susan's hands – the 'empty gesture'[53] is mediated and ultimately defused by Barrett's unsettling response: Parrying Susan's 'blow', the imminent master engages heartily with the kiss and embraces Susan, laughing ghoulishly (for at this point Barrett has, along with Tony and the house itself, become a ghoul)[54] as she begins to writhe and scowl. Barrett's sexual act here diverges from the same act as Lenny and Joey perform it with Ruth in *The Homecoming* insofar as, unlike Teddy's brothers and father Max, Barrett's desire is not for sexual gratification, nor does the character seek female approbation via the kiss.

What little emotional discharge Susan's attempt to act may offer spectators is in this way complicated by an equally surprising and piquant action whose affective-performative charge and quality surge up and overwhelm the image's narrative-drive and meaning. Thus, by contrast to arguments that Susan 'asserts her place in the social hierarchy by smacking Barrett across the face'[55] and that in Pinter's plays more broadly 'the women can endure and even triumph in the

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[53] Gardner, *Joseph Losey*, p. 142.
[54] Gardner suggests that 'we should read Barrett less in terms of the intriguing guest and more as an impulsive libidinal *ghost* who already haunts the unsuspecting host [i.e. Tony].' (ibid.)
[55] Edith de Rham, *Joseph Losey*, pp. 12-13.

face of, say, 'misogynists like Albert in *A Night Out*' or Wendy's 'boss in *The Tea Party*',[56] the Pinter-Losey shot performs here a distance precluding identification which, in the absence of critical points of subjectivity from which to perform judgment and evaluation, insinuates spectators into the cinematic milieu and its highly unsettling atmosphere. After Tony collapses at the top of the landing and Barrett ejects the female guests, he and Susan stand face-to-face before the house's ponderous entry, the passage through which Barrett entered to discover Tony in the film's first scene. The kiss having backfired, Susan is driven to a path of action that no longer mediates or cathects her feeling: she strikes her competition across the face, sending Barrett against the wall; the blow charged by the film's erstwhile performances of static and barely contained violences but also reechoing the typically single outbursts of physical violence in Pinter's early dramas. But the discharge of energy quickly takes another direction as Barrett recovers himself and half heartedly helps Susan with her coat and then Susan dashes through the door, Barrett closes it and the camera cuts in a deft use of montage, first to the exterior to close-up on her in the street, her face distraught as she clutches a tree, and then to the interior where Barrett can be seen leaning in apparent exhaustion against the other side of the door, a hint of distress creeping about his body and face but by no means clearly legible.

The force of Susan's performance of a violent act only defuses as the camera renders that close-up of her in the street: Susan's 'punishment' of Barrett replaced by an image of a static Wendy Craig, the throbbing contours of which convey the force of Susan's own suffering and subjection to abuse. Here a cinematic double movement expresses itself as the resonance within the images themselves create further intensity as the camera moves from the exterior to the interior image. Reminiscent of the effect the kiss had on Barrett in the prior scene, the manservant fully becomes master as he calmly puts the lights out and very slowly mounts the staircase, past Tony and into the displaced master's room where Vera awaits and we hear her laughter; the iconography effectively re-instating that very anxiety and lack of closure which a moment ago the film seemed committed to discharging via Susan's two confrontations with her foe.

Our close attention to the bodies teases out a through line that links Pinter's writing for film and his dramas. Richard Allen Cave, for example, provides force here notating in the context of Pinter's drama that '[b]y bringing audiences to focus their attention on body language and its potentials for significance within the larger stage picture [...] Pinter contrives a strategy whereby, in resolving the action into an icon of richly allusive intensity, he opens the play up

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[56] Sidney Homan, with Stephanie Dugan, Sandra Langsner and Thomas Pender, *Pinter's Odd Man Out: Staging and Filming Old Times* (Cranbury, NJ, London and Mississauga: Associated University Presses, 1993), p. 47.

beyond the performance to the enquiring imagination'.[57] The critic's phrase 'allusive intensity' begins to invoke the language of affect, in which Allen Cave grounds the post-performance consequences: 'A refined use of body language in these instances ensures the plays an after-life for audiences [...] Movement may never die, but neither does it conclusively determine meaning.'[58] If we understand the intensity and movement of the performing bodies, and concomitantly the movement and intensity *of* and *within* the cinematic image, as productive of unwieldy movement at the level of audience, Allen Cave's concluding remarks can serve to underline how it is in fact the continuation of movement, it's never dying as he puts it, that effectively problematizes symbolic meaning, and thus constitutes another order of meaning in the form the movement by which the image is constituted – a force we might call, following Deleuze, a 'differential, or intensive instant'.[59]

The Servant's conclusion exemplifies this aesthetic. Pinter-Losey's final image is somewhat paradoxical in that Barrett's ultimate and wholesale mastery of the household, along with Tony's complete motor-sensory breakdown, performs a kind of narrative completion, while at once the stalemate between all characters issues forth an indigestible violence that is far from the kind of resolution we are fed in the experience of much mainstream cinema: where debts are settled and the forces of evil are vanquished by the forces of those who are good. With the elision of signals that coax one or another decided style and pattern of investment and the failure of the 'purely optical and sound situation to extend into action',[60] the agitation produced by the movement and intensity of the film's codes becomes uncontainable.[61] In this way, action takes the form of affect, exaggerating and electrifying a plane which differs than that of signified action.

The final image evolves the three-shot of Tony, Susan and Barrett in between them which Pinter-Losey introduced quite early in the film. Except that here in the final moments of *The Servant*, all three characters are sundered, the cinematic apparatus rendering them embattled and exhausted figures relegated to their own spaces. What was suggested in the earlier and repeated use of the three-shot is now a landscape completed: Susan is isolated and trembling against a tree in the street, the new master in the foyer turning out the lights and mounting the stairs to retire for the evening, and the old master barely conscious and drawing on his brandy glass, 'a broken, leaden fragment [...] spatially trapped in the "prison" bars of the staircase

[57] 'Body Language in Pinter's Plays', in *The Cambridge Companion to Harold Pinter*, ed. by Peter Raby (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 107-29 (pp. 122-23).
[58] ibid.
[59] *Difference and Repetition*, p. 293, 296, passim.
[60] Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, p. 17.
[61] Steven Shaviro, *The Cinematic Body* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), p. 56. I am importing Shaviro from a cinematic context other than *The Servant*.

railings[62] outside his (former) bedroom. However, Vera is here the added fourth element, as she stands at the threshold of Tony's former bedroom. As such, Vera tears a real image from the cliché of the 1950s housewife awaiting the arrival of her husband. Here we see a catastrophic disruption of the clichéd: the wracked bodies of the actors, pronounced by the camera and *mise en scène*, resonating in excess of the film's appeal to (symbolic) interpretation and the image constituting an objective violence that communicates something 'from one faculty to another, but it is metamorphosed and does not form a common sense'.[63] Pinter-Losey's style opens the path for a becoming that is at once embodied and engaged in a cinematic encounter that forces thinking *through* a galvanization of the faculties, an encounter which does not readily or easily permit the reflex invocation of extant interpretive schemas and thereby draws a further energetic charge. As the faculties are thrust into 'discord', they are effectively 'unhinged', and in turn dispersed such that the derangement of both already ordered and ordering schemas produces 'a profound affectivity: terror, rage, wonder, hatred, suffering, awe'.[64]

The extent to which an economy of affect is immanent to the film's prominent social and political themes – such as class, moral corruption, 'domestic power' and the equivocal nature of sexuality'[65] – is strongly suggested in the following response to the film:

> A super, confusing but entirely visceral experience, *The Servant* is a rich collaboration between Pinter (the writer) and Losey [...] Losey keeps everything claustrophobic: there's also an edginess through the stiltedness of set pieces – in restaurants and bars, and even in the Mounset's country pile [...] Bizarrely, the film is erotic for the first half but then simply frightening for the second, the drama wound around a single moral trajectory – downwards – throughout. We are engulfed from the start with open-ended sexual permissiveness and suggestion, which runs alongside the class divide whose tension drives the drama to the same degree.[66]

In its use of terms which speak to experience ('visceral', 'claustrophobic', 'edginess', 'erotic'), this appraisal of *The Servant* foregrounds Pinter-Losey's turn to a cinematic 'language' that is predominantly affective, a language whose grammar is comprised of images that move spectators in indelible ways and that solicit a mode of perceptual engagement that folds the mind and body together and thus renders aesthetic form a matter of the deployment of forces. Not

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[62] Gardner, *Joseph Losey*, p. 142. Cf. Billington's observation of 'the final image of the slumped Tony caged and imprisoned behind the barrier of the staircase-slats.' *Harold Pinter*, p. 153.

[63] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 183.

[64] Olkowski, *Gilles Deleuze and the Ruin*, p. 231.

[65] Billington, *Harold Pinter*, p. 150.

[66] Ian Harris, 'Superb, Sinister Movie', *The Internet Movie Database* (IMD), 'IMDb User Reviews for The Servant', 25 November 2002 <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0057490/usercomments> [accessed 12 March 2008].

only does this cinematic aesthetic represent social realities such as class divide, sexual permissiveness and so on, it disperses them as units of experience that engulf and create tension.

Spectators who have rehearsed the formulaic responses that tend to be signalled and invited by films endeavouring to either entertain or enlighten will likely find that with *The Servant*, and indeed *The Go-Between*, 'perception becomes a kind of physical affliction, an intensification and disarticulation of bodily sensation, rather than a process either of naive (ideological and Imaginary) belief or of detached, attentive consideration.'[67] Indeed dominant formulations of spectatorship have traditionally subscribed to a binary logic whereby the aesthetic enables and even invites spectators to associate with and/or recognize themselves in the film's characters and its landscape, *or* it effects an alienation and distantiation that animate the audience's concerted intellectual evaluation of the fictional characters' circumstances. However, in the context of these two films, and as should become evident the analysis of *Accident* that is to follow, I suggest we consider how an included middle, which is to say a third term, is at work. Such a position presents us with a spectatorial modality whereby the vectors pointing towards familiar and negotiable investments in characters and the cinematic landscape and on the other hand towards distantiation are variously and simultaneously instantiated and truncated; the effect of this violent antithesis and double movement being that spectators are thrust into ontological process as they are perpetually impelled and dispersed in multiple directions. Contrary to many formulations of alienation, the body never actually falls away, nor does it actually think when invited to adopt circumscribed and specific thoughts or ways of seeing. If *The Servant* and *The Go-Between* go so far as to haunt us post performance, to hearken back to Diamond's characterization of Pinter's comedies of menace (see Chapter 1), I would insist that such an experience can not be regarded as deriving from isolated acts of cognition. We must therefore seek to further reinscribe the body's presence, operations and capacity in the claim.

Accident

Stephen

In *Accident*, one finds in the principal character Stephen (Dirk Bogarde) an antihero not unlike Tony in his powerlessness to change and to react against the challenges put to him by and within the upper middle class milieu in which he appears. As with a great many of Losey's characters, Stephen's foremost action is precisely inaction. His sustained attempt to repress the desire for his pupil Anna (Jacqueline Sassard) results in a kinetic display of the 'static violence' Deleuze claims that 'every Losey actor needs', and gradually, moreover, 'a reversal against

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[67] Shaviro, *The Cinematic Body*, p. 52.

himself, a becoming which leads him to disappearance',[68] despite Stephen's physical presence in the film. An Oxford Don who is overly concerned with his entry into middle age – 'I'm getting old! Don't you understand? Old. My muscles. The muscles'[69] – Stephen's negotiation of his purely physical attraction to the newly arrived female student inspires perverse verbal and physical expressions and a general state of paralysis where listening and watching replace decisive action. Thus Stephen's behaviour throughout the film is the sort one might associate with the victim of a car crash, the event that constitutes the film's eponymous title. But while Anna is the one actually involved in that crash, the most glaring of many minor accidents in the film, it is Stephen who continuously manifests the symptoms of the crash's violent effects. Wholly reminiscent of many of Pinter's stage characters, Stephen's containment of his carnal desire for Anna expresses itself in wry, agitated and even deleterious ways in the tutor's speech and general behaviour as the film 'progresses' in non-linear time.

Stephen's condition is of course exacerbated most by the ongoing attempts of his pupil William (Michael York) and 'friend' Charley (Stanley Baker) to win Anna's affection. Stephen's inability to compete for the female on the terms William and Charley establish within a decidedly masculinist economy – both are gifted at sports and confident in a way Stephen can not be – gets cathected in bodily gestures, postures and speech acts that mediate and displace the violence that spectators can sense boiling under the surface of events which are visibly calm and devoid of classical action. Stephen's thunderous facial tick is merely one of several examples that embody Pinter-Losey's impulse-image. The nervous affliction's brief yet affective fulmination of uncontrollable violence forces the film's many images to shudder, while the actors remain otherwise immobile and unaffected, apparently unchanged. The facial tick has great performative value, its immediacy and percussiveness functioning much like the alarming flashbacks the camera continually performs to cue spectators back to the original car wreck, the film's lengthy opening sequence and cinematic *tour de force*. The tick manifests to this effect in the course of Stephen's being questioned by the police regarding William's death, at which time he excises Anna from his recollection of events – meanwhile she remains ensconced in his bedroom just upstairs. But the nervous affliction continues to manifest in subsequent scenes. When Stephen drops in to see Laura (Ann Firbank), the wife whom Charley leaves for Anna, and faintly attempts to console the jilted woman, the facial tick erupts and undermines Stephen's credibility – the philander Charley is in fact Stephen's ego ideal. Even leading up to and during the accident sequence we are subjected to this order of sensory sign: for example, the clattering of Stephen's

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[68] *Cinema 1*, p. 142.
[69] *Collected Screenplays 1*, p. 370.

typewriter as it scores the camera's inward tracking of Stephen's portentous house, and the starter of William's overturned car as it continuously attempts to catch but indeed fails; the clacking sounds an effective soundtrack to the several close-ups of William's bloodied and dead face, rendered from both in and outside the car by Losey's cameraman Gerry Fisher.

The women

This second film in the trilogy is arguably the deftest in its aestheticization of an immanence between the characters, *mise and scène* and cinematic apparatuses. And Pinter-Losey's handling of the female characters is perhaps the best place to take this analysis further. Despite her cinematic prominence, Anna's status is overtly that of an object, her nature expressly physical and visual. Like Vera in *The Servant*, Anna is 'a cipher':[70] she is entirely wooden, her appearance heavily underwritten, and her dialogue less than sparse, its content vacuous. Anna becomes all the more impervious to easy and associative audience investments in that she never performs an act sufficient to lift her from her overt status as object, a fantasy and image constructed by the male characters. But it is precisely this which gives rise to the film's plot: Anna's beauty and sensuality grows absurdly glaring over the course of the film to effect a distance precluding identification that goes so far as to infect our relationship with the male characters as they continuously objectify her. Anna's objectification is made resolute the moment we glimpse Stephen glaring at her as she lolls apoplectically on his bed, the traumatic effects of the car crash at their height. In absence of any dialogue, the male's ocular consumption of the female at this stage disperses throughout and saturates the entire film on the waves of the accident's early production of affective tremors; narrative and plot meaning subsumed into a cinematic economy that harnesses, repotentializes and transduces the experiential values engendered by the initial accident.[71]

The film's much remarked upon fragmentation and layering of time begins most overtly here, as the camera's rendering of Stephen glaring at Anna on the bed cuts to the now living face of William, in Stephen's office at Oxford. As the two men banter on the subject of Anna, William rises from the sofa and goes to the window, spying Anna as she approaches the building. 'It's her', William exclaims, to which Stephen responds: 'She's coming for her second tutorial';[72] whereupon the two men gaze down upon the new and interesting subject. At a representational level, the vast distance between the men and the female character and indeed

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[70] De Rham, *Joseph Losey*, p. 3.
[71] 'Transduce', '*v*. 1. trans. To alter the physical nature or medium of (a signal)', *Oxford English Dictionary*, second edition, University of Leeds database <http://0dictionary.oed.com.wam.leeds.ac.uk/cgi/entry/50256145? single=1&query_type=word&queryword=transduce&first=1&max_to_show=10> [accessed 2 October 2010].
[72] *Collected Screenplays 1*, p. 359.

their advantage in the way of height over her seem immediately to underline the difference of gender and to imply hierarchy and certain control. The camera moves through two shots: the first an objective rendering that apprehends both men from behind as they tuck up to the office window sill and look down at Anna, followed by which is the provision of a joint male subjective perspective of the female, who happens to be befriending, of all things, a white goat on the lawn.

While the mercurial presence of the goat no doubt creates symbolic polyvalence – its whiteness potentially a symbol of virginity; and its presence at Oxford as a pet suggestive of a domestication of that which is wild – the animal's presence interferes with the men's shared consumption of Anna in non-specific yet palpable ways. The goat, according to the cameraman Fisher, 'had no meaning, physically [...] It was an element within the film which is disturbing for some reason' and as such it served 'to introduce [Anna] but it also introduced the enigmatic nature of her role [...] to bring that element to create the uneasiness of the relationships... the pending drama of the relationships.' [73] Fisher's remarks underline the goat's affective function over its symbolic meaning, and Anna's attention to the animal operates, I would suggest, to neutralize the cliché spectators are made to anticipate in the cinematic lead up to the female's actual appearance, which is to say the sexualization of the walking female form. Critics have rightly observed that Pinter-Losey's innumerable aestheticizations of the male characters' ocular consumption of Anna throughout the film leaves 'no doubt that Anna is principally an object to them, rather than an individual'.[74] But upon close analysis the film does betray a performance of specific interventions that enable us to discern a politics at work in the characters' specularization, particularly in the way Pinter-Losey simultaneously mediate and push this perpetual objectification to lengths that raze the image's inflection of romanticism, the very temperament required for a contentious image to celebrate and affirm that which it portrays. This sort of play within the film's totality of images indeed complexifies the investment process for spectators.

At the level of *mise en scène*, the sexualization of Anna, of the walking female form, is neutralized in her attention to an animal whose cinematic presence has no claim to logic. Thus the goat can be seen to interfere in an immediate yet hardly coherent fashion in the performance of objectification which is certainly there. Yet at the level of cinematic epistemology, Stephen and William's subjective perspectives – the male gaze the film openly offers the audience – are

[73] 'Documentary'/'Special Features'. *Accident.* Dir. Joseph Losey. Perf. Dirk Bogarde, Stanley Baker, Michael York, Jacqueline Sassard, Vivien Merchant. Screenplay by Harold Pinter, adapted from the novel by Nicholas Mosley. London: Optimum. 2008.

[74] Palmer and Riley, *The Films of Joseph Losey*, pp. 85-86.

rendered unstable by continuous 'objective' compositions produced from various positions within Stephen's office. This becomes most salient when the camera performs its most dramatic rupture as it sharp cuts from inside, the privileged position the male professor and pupil occupy above Anna, to an outside and distanced shot that re-enacts the same purchase the men have hitherto gained on Anna, this time capturing Stephen and William in the image. In the first instance we are subjected to the popular eyeline match technique, a cinematic stroke whereby the audience are solicited to see and are indeed granted a clear view of what the characters on the screen see. Thus the camera cuts fluidly from Stephen and William looking at something off screen to that something: Anna. But the deployment of a third objective image which transcodes the men's act of looking into the audience's looking *at* the men (as they look at a now unobservable Anna) effectively traces a line of flight from the distinctly male perspective. As such, the shot begins to approach the fold between the performance of an act of objectification and an acerbic rendering of that very act.

This visual flourish becomes a critique by formal means as the image captures and indeed exposes Stephen and William in their desiring and objectification of the woman; the Pinter-Losey shot manipulating the 'fetishistic scopophilia' that has been observed to be a mainstay in Hollywood and mainstream film, more specifically its building 'up the physical beauty of the object' – in this instance Anna – and transformation of that object 'into something satisfying in itself.'[75] The cinematic aesthetic at this stage of *Accident* arguably presents us with an example of what Laura Mulvey imagined in 1975 when she suggested that already early 'radical film-makers' were beginning to perform the first political 'blow [...] against the monolithic accumulation of traditional film conventions', doing so by freeing 'the look of the camera into its materiality in time and space and the look of the audience into dialectics and passionate detachment.'[76] While Pinter-Losey threaten to bring 'the spectator in direct scopophilic contact with the female form displayed for his enjoyment', this very cinematic gesture and cliché is torn asunder by the film's dramatic movement through subjective and objective visual predicates, several of which objectify the men's processes of objectification. Further, working hand in glove with the cinematic apparatus employed thus is of course Pinter-Losey's characterization of the male protagonist (Stephen) as a passive actor, an aestheticization which undermines at every step the 'ego ideal of the identification process' that might solicit and permit spectators to see their

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[75] Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', in *Visual and Other Pleasures* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1989), pp. 14-27 (p. 22).
[76] ibid., p. 27.

'like', and therefore gain 'control and possession of the woman within the diegesis.'[77] Throughout the film, the distinctly patriarchal look which objectifies Anna is repeatedly performed and then dismantled in subtle ways – the male to which it belongs and through whom we are supposed to see continually and surreptitiously *de*romanticized and destabilized by the camera's general motility and the hapticity of abrupt montaging, and by a *mise en scène* that often becomes mercurial and pure simulacra as it remains unmoored to a stable and truthful perspective.

The voice-over

The characterization of the Oxford Provost's daughter, Francesca (Delphine Seyrig), in the voice-over scene is exemplary of the convergence of characterization and the cinematic apparatus. As Stephen and Francesca leave the restaurant, a constellation of inane statements broadcast over the physical regime creates a tonal language that strikes a blow to the film's signifying unity, creating a form of free indirect speech that echoes the aesthetics of Alain Resnais and Jean Luc Godard in its deposition of the form of the truthful story:[78]

> HER VOICE (OVER) I'm supposed to be on a diet. I'm too fat.
> *He lights her cigarette.*
>
> HER VOICE (OVER) So then you'll have three? Three children. Good gracious.
>
> EXT. RESTAURANT. NIGHT.
> *Doorman opening taxi door for them. Stephen tips him.*
> HIS VOICE (OVER)
> You're not fat.

As they leave the restaurant the shot cuts back to Francesca's flat:

> HER VOICE (OVER)
> I'm very happy.
> *Bathroom door opens. She comes out, walks across the room to him.*
>
> HER VOICE (OVER)
> My life is happy.
>
> INT. BEDROOM. NIGHT.
> Francesca and Stephen in bed, naked. His eyes are open. She lies in his arms, eyes closed.
>
> HER VOICE (OVER)
> Have I changed?
> HIS VOICE (OVER)
> You're the same.
>
> HER VOICE (OVER)

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[77] ibid., p. 21.
[78] Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, p. 148.

The same as I was? The same as I was…then?

HIS VOICE (OVER)
The same.[79]

Even before the characters leave for the restaurant, we are subjected to a barrage of awkward and inane banter that dissolves 'the action-image [...] in favour of the purely visual image of what a character *is*, and the sound-image of what he *says*, completely banal nature and conversation constituting the essentials of the script (this is why the only things that count are the choice of actors according to their physical and moral appearance, and the establishment of any dialogue whatever, apparently without a precise subject matter)'.[80]

Hence Francesca's clichéd and awkward question '[h]ow's your wife?', which Stephen answers digressively: 'That's a beautiful dress and a beautiful coat. You look marvellous';[81] their dialogue roughly amounting to the following seven or eight statements: 'Wonderful to see you'; 'Well it must be… ten years? [...] It must be'; 'You don't look a day older'; 'That's a beautiful dress and a beautiful coat. You look marvellous'; 'I'm in consumer research. Did you know? It's fascinating'; 'So then you'll have three? Three children. Good gracious.'[82] While the meagre dialogue and overt sexuality of Francesca, and indeed Anna, effectively convey their status as fantasies of the men, they at once do solicit a certain species of behaviour from the male characters whose contained emotion is a violence that subtends the narrative and the visual grammar from which it emerges,[83] and therefore impacts upon the audience within visceral registers. As the conjunction of the cinematic apparatus and the laconic acting of Bogarde and Seyrig perform a violent blow to the image precisely by underlining its status as cliché, a hasty and reflex bridging of subjectivities between spectators and cinematic characters becomes quite difficult.

Psychoanalytic lack, gaps and objects of desire

Despite mediations between spectators and characters such as these, one finds that that even scholars seeking to obviate the ascription of specific emotional appeals and character identifications unwittingly posit a cinematic subjectivity that is specifically male and heteronormative. Linda Renton's psychoanalytic reading of the screenplays provides a noteworthy example. At base, Renton denies audience-character identification as she argues that

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[79] *Collected Screenplays 1*, pp. 407-08.
[80] Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, p. 13.
[81] *Collected Screenplays 1*, p. 406.
[82] ibid.
[83] Reidar Due characterizes 'visual "grammar"' as 'the basic rules of composition for telling a story in images'. *Deleuze* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), p. 161.

spectators instead become linked to and 'led' along in their viewing by that which is absent in the images, which according to her is a Lacanian 'lack', a gap which spectators feel they must attempt to close.[84] Yet as she reads the car crash in *Accident* through to the film's latter stages whereupon the circumstances surrounding the accident are clarified as a memory of Stephen's – at the back end of the film when Stephen shockingly forces himself on a vulnerable Anna, no less on the very bed he shares with his wife Rosalind (Vivien Merchant) – Renton implies that the spectator's constant yet unconscious fixation on the transitory and semantically elusive 'object of desire' results in an audience-character alignment, specifically with Stephen:

> Although Stephen had no hand in William's death, would not consciously wish him dead, he wanted him eliminated because he wanted Anna – that was the real of his desire, and to a certain extent *the spectator is led to share* both that desire and that guilt [...] That fatal accident has proved a pivotal point which has *trapped the spectator's desire* to return for a second look. When we do, we find that the object we desired to see has come full circle and too close, creating anxiety.[85]

We might consider how the argument runs into trouble in so far as the shock and anxiety which Renton posits are reduced if not obviated by the fact that spectators are cumulatively made to feel uneasy about both Stephen's character and the relationship between him and William, particularly as a result of the characters' vying for Anna. This blockage culminates in the scene where William forces Stephen to participate in the aristocratic game of rugby and then savagely tackles his tutor as the latter reluctantly and indeed feebly tends goal. Furthermore, the manifestation of the psychoanalytic 'real' of Stephen's unconscious desire for William's death is unlikely to shock audiences given how the anti-hero's constant 'failure' to express in words, let alone realize physically, his desire to be intimate with Anna produces an extreme inner tension and violence in him which are sure to move spectators to increasingly anticipate its discharge. Stephen's affair with the Provost's daughter Francesca is a cathection of that desire for Anna; and his ultimate rape of the pupil, which we do not observe, is an extreme, egregious perversion of any desire for normative intimacy. Hence, this double violence is apt to perform a marked distantiation that problematizes any sort of emotional investment in and ego alignment with Stephen.

To share in Stephen's desire means that we must possess or adopt a heteronormative subjectivity capable of also desiring Anna at some level – yet the implications of audience members/readers sharing to some extent in Stephen's Oedipal desire for William's death as an

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[84] *Pinter and the Object of Desire: An Approach through the Screenplays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 157.
[85] ibid., pp. 29-30, my emphasis.

expedient to his having Anna for himself is as disturbing as it is unlikely. In suggesting that the spectator's gaze can be aligned with Stephen and that the audience can approach something of an emotional alignment with Stephen's unconscious desire for William's death, concomitant to his sexual desire for Anna, Renton seems to ultimately reinscribe the very character-audience relationship her theory denies in its general application.[86] Renton's analysis betrays the language of individuation and diagnosis, the most salient expression of which we find in her general assertion of all Pinter's screenplays that 'Pinter creates a lack, a gap in the picture which *traps* us into a relationship of desire', doing so to the effect that we are 'trapped' (whether we become conscious of it now, later, or not at all) by something inchoate or even 'absent', albeit anticipated, in the text. As such, Renton's reading isolates and prizes both the faculty of vision and the psychic life and presumes a stable ego, and therefore coherent subjectivity, while 'fusing [...] desire to law and prohibitions'[87] – the anxiety deriving from our realization that we, like Stephen, desire William's death.

Against all claims to identification with either a gap, object or character, I would suggest that the film produces a certain freedom by altering the usual connections between spectator and screen, and all it 'contains'. The spectatorial cinematic subject is not captured, but quite the contrary becomes 'confused, loosened and made more flexible' as it is solicited to work to make difficult connections.[88] In view of the gap or lack which 'traps' and defines the audience's experience, affect theory serves to remind us that embodied vision 'is invested in a series of elaborately constructed scenarios, but it cannot be satisfied or contained by any of them'.[89] Renton's theoretical paradigm, it should be noted, begins its 'thinking from organs and

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[86] A few examples of other screenplays suggest as much. Of *The Quiller Memorandum* (1965) Renton asserts: 'In the uneasy world of the Cold War, Quiller knows little more than the spectator, and the anxiety relates directly to vision as, like Quiller, we question what we see' (p. 27), and that '[t]he death as the screenplay opened created an object of anxiety for the spectator, and through Inge, alive and powerful as the screenplay closes, that object remains worryingly extant' (p. 28); of *The Go-Between* she argues: 'For the spectator also [sharing Leo Colston's predicament], the gradual establishment of the unhappy present [constructed by and from the past primal scene], and the return to the treeless hall, creates an object of anxiety, all enchantment gone' (p. 31); of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1980) she argues that 'the drive to return to the dynamic narrative of Sarah and Charles becomes, for the spectator, the equivalent of Sarah's desire for the lost Frenchman' (p. 40); and finally Renton opines of *Reunion* (1988) that 'we, like Henry, come face to face with the fate of Konradin' (p. 46). *Pinter and the Object of Desire*.

[87] Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, p. 91.

[88] Patricia Pisters, *The Matrix of Visual Culture: Working with Deleuze in Film Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), pp. 37-38.

[89] Shaviro, *The Cinematic Body*, p. 8. The critic adds: 'Outbursts of violence and gradations of light arouse, agitate, and unsettle the spectator. Narcissistic gratification is interrupted, not through any recognition of loss or lack, but because I am drawn into a condition of excessive, undischargable excitation. I am depositioned and dispossessed by the film's incessant modulations of visibility, no less than by its concise articulations of action and movement.' (p. 9)

organisms, especially the organism of "man"', from 'already defined terms',[90] when I would suggest that Pinter-Losey's provocation of bodily sensation through a dispersal of perspectives, the adjournment of interpretive meaning and the aestheticization of speed and movement through performing bodies and the cinematic apparatus can be seen to actually dissolve 'the contours of the ego and transgress the requirements of coherence and closure that govern "normal" experience.'[91]

Against Renton's theoretical application, which posits an inside (the story) and a transcendental or outside (the gap/lack) within the text, I suggest the film can be characterized as a diegetic reality consisting not of inside and outside but rather of affective plateaus that cut across and fold in and out of one another, those whose dramatic action is to collapse the distance between audience and screen in assembling each set of forces into a single plane of experience. Specific affects like desire and anxiety are not furnished by the film's narrative, broadcast as signs which travel a distance and ultimately impact on the formed and stable subjectivities of audience members. Rather, affects actualize in a process whereby the raw material of images coheres *within* the bodies of spectators by coming into contact with and animating sense organs; a material and psychological dramatizing that deploys intensities whose movement in sensation at once directs the process of thought's emergence and implicates thought in extensity (higher order thinking) in the enveloping order of difference.[92] As an act, perception is therefore synaesthesic such that it is not vision *per se* but a number of sense organs and faculties that perform our cinematic 'watching', each and all folding into one another such that the film's stimulus to corporeal activity and the circulation of passions simultaneously permeates and 'infects' the faculties that viewers seek to isolate for use with varying degrees of consciousness and unconsciousness – these classically being vision and reason. In this way, the distance collapses between spectators and the cinema screen such that images become not on the screen 'over there' but on the brain qua screen. Given this logic of corporeal and epistemological animation and production, *Accident* cannot be seen to disclose a preformed Lacanian subject and ego.

While Renton specifies that a linear path from desire to anxiety manifests in accordance with the car crash early in the film (desire is posited) to the realization of what Stephen unconsciously longed for all along (anxiety manifests with this enlightenment), one must consider how the film begins to engender low-level forms of both affects in its infancy: from its

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[90] Colebrook, *Understanding Deleuze*, p. 66.
[91] Shaviro, *The Cinematic Body*, p. 54.
[92] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 304, 305, passim.

first mobile long shot of Stephen's house and through the lengthy crash sequence whose narrative function and symbolic plateau are eclipsed by a vivid sensory dimension. We should observe how the psychoanalytic reading flattens the polyvocal real that is the film's cue to affective experience, doing so 'in favour of a symbolic relationship between two articulations: so *that* is what *this* meant',[93] the audience ultimately remaining 'anchored' in the text or to the screen, and Pinter's screenplay serving Renton's demonstration of Lacanian theory.

The fragmentation of time: a critique by formal means

Equally supportive of a unified and coherent cinematic subjectivity, James Palmer and Michael Riley locate a politics in Pinter-Losey's aestheticization of time. The critics contend that the cinematic apparatus' construction of Stephen's reflection on events is a form of judgment and criticality that effectively concedes and pressurizes his misogyny and variously dubious behaviour. In a most astute observation, the critics argue that the ultimate comprehension of the film's temporal mapping confronts spectators with the possibility that 'Stephen's character-narration has involved self-judgment all along', that the character's remembering implies 'self-judgment' as much as it constitutes an act of 'avoidance', and that its 'private' nature suggests Stephen's cognizance of his own immorality.[94] Palmer and Riley understand the film's 'objective' production of Stephen's world and the character's 'actions', as well as its various interventions into that world, not as objective narrative but as Stephen's hindsight subjective perspective; its retroactive performance a process that renders it a commentary. This reading can be extended by positing a 'dialectical automaton' in the film's clarification of its temporal logic and dispersal of perspectives, specifically as that tables 'the possibility of bearing an abstract social judgment', as was Sergei Eisenstein's aesthetico-political mandate.[95] This is to say that 'the composition does not simply express the way in which the character [Stephen] experiences himself, but also expresses the way in which the author [Pinter-Losey] and the viewer judge him, it integrates thought into the image'.[96] Therefore a 'circuit which includes simultaneously the author, the film and the viewer' is 'elaborated', and when completed 'the sensory shock [...] raises us from the images to conscious thought, then the thinking in figures which takes us back to the images and gives us an affective shock again', the deepest level of unconsciousness linked to the highest level of thought.[97] Here in the lifting of the spectator from the images to conscious thought, and

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[93] Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, p. 111.
[94] *The Films of Joseph Losey*, p. 81, 71, 73, passim.
[95] Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, p. 156.
[96] ibid.
[97] ibid.

then back again, we find a political formulation akin to that which presented itself in the previous chapter in the context of Pinter's plays.[98]

We must be attentive, however, to the importance of the motility suggested in the Eisensteinian reading I am invoking to work through and extend Palmer and Riley's critical offering. While we are dealing here with several perspectives and the multiple poles of shock qua affect, thought and indeed judgment, the process of actualization of those experiential and epistemological predicates is not only of great relevance to *Accident's* conclusion but also to the entire film. To regard the film as cutting across this territory enables us to see how the Pinter-Losey shot splits the final scenes such that events are dislodged from Stephen's memory (a subjective perspective) and rendered in real time. In these moments the Pinter-Losey shot sunders itself from Stephen's memory only to pick him up via two striking images. In the first, Stephen appears speechless and passive as he watches Anna depart from Oxford in a taxi, his position as an observer of his own life underscored. And in the second, a return and cinematic reversal of the approaching long shot in the film's opening sequence, the camera tracks slowly backwards and picks Stephen up as he collects the children in his driveway; one of which, the boy Ted (Maxwell Findlater), falls on the gravel in what is effectively the film's final 'accident'. As the boy stands and brushes himself and the three characters converge and enter the house as a family, the imposition of the opening sequence's score – the screeching tires, breaking windscreen glass and bending steel – tears a real image from the domestic cliché we are presented.

In the final analysis, the Pinter-Losey shot's various aestheticizations and foregrounding of the camera's disposition appear to erode the subjectivity of Stephen's 'internal monologue', such that his speech qua memory loses its personal or collective unity 'and shatters into anonymous debris: stereotypes, clichés, ready-made visions and formulas [which take] away the outside world and the interiority of characters in the same decomposition.'[99] Having followed Stephen through the film, his quiescent return to life as it was brings the audience very near to chaos. As a spur to all that has transpired, the fragments of which we carry in our bodies, the sound of screeching tires and William's crashing car tear the cliché of domestic middle class tranquillity from the image and replace it with the violence engendered by the whole flow of

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[98] See my discussion of Francesca Coppa's argument for the implication of the audience in processes of laughter which culminate in anxiety (Chapter 2, pp. 66-68).

[99] Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, p. 176. Deleuze adds that the internal monologue 'gives way to sequences of images, each sequence being independent, and each image in the sequence standing for itself in relation to the preceding and following ones: a different descriptive material' but such that '[t]here are no longer any perfect and "resolved" harmonies, but only dissonant tunings or irrational cuts, because there are no more harmonics of the image, but only "unlinked" tones forming the series.' (ibid.)

exchange which occurs between intensities and ongoing, processual thought.[100] When it comes to the affective economy in operation here, we can never emphasize too much 'that circular style which was to become a Losey trademark'[101] – no less a style of Pinter's writing – for the apparent circularity and return do not consist of a neat cyclical structure and refrain that signifies completion and conveys the familiar. What we have, rather, is a Deleuzian refrain that brings forth an event, one that is induced by the change (difference) in us as the cinematic repetition of components effectuates such a thing.

The Go-Between redux: an infolding of perspectives

In this we find an affinity with *The Go-Between's* conclusion. In this final scene, where a visibly septuagenarian Marian prescribes Leo his 'final duty' as go-between, the Pinter-Losey shot echoes *Accident's* final moments as it subjugates what might seem like Leo's subjective perspective to the cinematic apparatus. As the camera picks up Leo on the grounds of Brandham Hall, and then within the formerly majestic house, the objective perspectives rendered through a series of images are inflected by our blooming apprehension that this is yet again Colston's subjective memory at work. However, the camera's positioning and disposition loosen the contours of these apparently well-defined epistemological coordinates as the distance from which the shot picks up Leo is preserved despite the ascendant articulation of Leo's inner mind. In this way, Palmer and Riley's argument of *Accident* can be translated directly such that the apparently hindsight perspective offered to spectators appears as an act of self-judgment.

But again, there is a play between the objective and subjective positionings, effected by the shot's own foregrounding of its voyeuristic presence: the final image is rendered from outside looking in on Brandham Hall on a most inclement English day (notice here an analogue of the mediation performed in *Accident* where the camera observes and renders Stephen and Francesca's clandestine rendezvous through the rain flecked window of the restaurant they dine at). While Colston's replacement of his prepubescent self formerly performed a complete modification of the narration – the aesthetic shift taking place not so much 'according to subjective variations' than 'as a consequence of [the] disconnected places and de-chronologized moments'[102] – one finds that it is the camera itself intervening into Colston's subjective perspective, dispersing it. Thus we have an infolding where one perspective always bears the trace of the other: the film's objective rendering of the character and milieu always intimating but not consolidating a subjective positioning, and vice versa.

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[100] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 305.

[101] De Rham, *Joseph Losey*, p. 11.

[102] Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, p. 129.

In an aesthetic gesture reminiscent of *Accident's* conclusion, Pinter-Losey's final intervention with the cinematic mechanism, not just a conflation of past and present but also of narrative voice, permits spectators to see Leo's life not specifically through his own eyes but from a position which seems to linger quite tentatively somewhere between subjectivity and objectivity, the epistemological declension effectively making the audience witness to Leo's passivity as he watches his own life. A consideration of the film from beginning to end suggests the engineering of an epistemic complex, the Pinter-Losey shot's oscillation of the spectator's gaze passing through myriad predicates without stabilizing and thus prizing any one: Leo-child's tremendous experiences in the new and lush upper-class world of Brandham Hall at the turn of the century morph to his more emotionally turbulent moments as a marginalized and abused individual in what appears to be 1950s Britain; the sudden but increased ruptures in the narrative and images by an anonymous adult Leo adumbrate and dialogue with the crisis Leo-child experiences when forced to bear witness to the carnal scene of his only adult friends, the event marking his utter loss of innocence and fomenting his hoary existence in adulthood; and latterly the displacement of the tragedy in this crisis to the elderly Leo as the Pinter-Losey shot renders him in a space in-between subjective and objective coordinates. Carrying in mind what has been argued of *Accident*, with this reading I suggest that we regard the production of this epistemological and narratological complex in the second and third Pinter-Losey films as facilitating our passage as sensing and viewing subjects 'through all possible predicates';[103] the spectatorial consequence of which we might see as the possibility of becoming 'a faceless and transpositional subject'[104] in the event of assembling with the film, an event whose primary order of meaning is to solicit and produce embodied forms of spectatorship.

Politics

The films in the trilogy have ritually been discussed in light of political issues: class being the most salient, but gender, sex, marriage and patriarchy also cutting across this territory.[105] Nonetheless, despite the critical foregrounding of class as the Pinter-Losey trilogy's primary subject matter and political investment, the cinematic aesthetics effectively bring all forms of dialectics to a 'standstill'.[106] Drew Milne seems to pick up on this as he extends his argument for a 'political inarticulacy' in Pinter's dramas to *The Servant*, and by proxy *Accident*. The critic insists

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[103] Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, p. 86.
[104] ibid., p. 85.
[105] Among others, see Palmer and Riley, *The Films of Joseph Losey*, pp. 44-45; Ian Christie, 'Film Analysis by Ian Christie'. *The Servant*; Edith de Rham, *Joseph Losey*, p. 19; and Billington, *Harold Pinter*. pp. 153-54 and *Various Voices*, p. 78.
[106] Gardner, *Joseph Losey*, p. 3.

that 'the shock-effect of male violence often vitiates political analysis in favour of inarticulate provocations.'[107] As an ideal, Milne proposes that the 'critical task is to specify the political connections involved in moving beyond the inarticulacy of male anger' and that '[i]n this sense, Pinter's work can be understood as a long-term and indirect displacement of the class struggles of the 1950s, struggles displaced by dramatic forms which relied on unacknowledged structures of misogyny.'[108] Of course the films in the trilogy open themselves to the pursuit of a more dedicated critique given the violence of objectification and marginalization performed on the female characters in *The Servant* and in *Accident*, and the violence of instrumentalization and marginalisation so variously performed on Leo in *The Go-Between*.

I would suggest, however, that what Milne's reading presents us with is an either/or situation, specifically one whereby the work is seen to run the risk of promoting the contentious realities it stages if it does *not* successfully refer its images and storytelling processes to 'a *system of judgment*', particularly the sort 'one finds with films that develop (organically) a form of narration that becomes 'truthful' in its implication of 'an inquiry or testimonies which connect it to the true'.[109] Pinter's and indeed Pinter-Losey's putatively politically inarticulate signs appear at the opposite end of the binary framing Milne's argument. It is there where these signs are seen to fail at soliciting audiences to invest in defined and specific ways, failing to impose a commentary, and thus remaining too open for spectators to have confidence that the film and its images are actually undermining the credibility of that which is aestheticized, and therefore somehow providing a coherent spectatorial position from which to evaluate and to judge. Milne's intervention grounds its definition of political articulacy upon an implicit appeal to see the affect produced by shock effects ultimately taken over by 'a naturally upright thought, an in principle natural common sense, and a transcendental model of recognition'[110] that the audience can call a political sensibility and/or knowledge. In the final analysis, the elision Milne understands Pinter's shock effect to be performing in contentious and occasionally violent images, along with the aesthetics' putative displacement of the politics, is not an elision of thought but instead, I submit, an obfuscation of a system of judgment, which it must be noted is different than the audience's engagement in analysis.

Milne furthermore only claims that the intensity of the violence in Pinter vitiates the establishment of spectatorial terms that are sufficient for political recognition because he does not see knowledge as seated in the body, nor can he properly understand this violence's

[107] 'Pinter's Sexual Politics', pp. 195-211 (p. 204).
[108] ibid.
[109] Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, p. 129.
[110] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 170.

performative character and occupation within a field of action at once within and outside of the parameters of signification, and thus representation. In this way, he betrays his position as a strict mind-body dualist, drawing a firm line between shock effects and thinking and thus foregrounding intellection and occluding the body's role and potential in the actualization of thought, ideas and indeed critical engagements with the world. In overlooking the function of visceral experience in the production of thought and the brain's function and performance, the critic's argument takes us away from the important work that still needs doing in thinking the minutia of shock, in the contexts of cinema and drama both.

The response here must be twofold: addressing firstly the claim that the spectacle of aesthetics displaces political struggle, and secondly the claim that shock threatens to vitiate political analysis. Glancing back to several of the examples tabled in this chapter (namely the variegated cinematic conclusions in spiritual stalemate and degradation and the camera's various objectifications of male characters in the act of objectifying and 'otherizing' females, gazing upon the patriarchal gazer) should indicate clearly Pinter-Losey's, or rather the films', acknowledgement of political struggle and that the formal aspects of the work are not in fact displacing the key political issues of post-1950s Britain. As for shock effects, it must be stated that even though the performances of power and contentious behaviour across the trilogy do not signal modes of investment that facilitate the fusing of the isolated faculty of reason and cinematic object qua political reality X, spectators are by no means impelled to invest in these clichéd performances of power and masculinist perspectives and discourses given how the films ultimately sweep away the clichés they begin to erect, in the end contesting even the contours and coherency of a political subjectivity as spectator.

The violence of the images – not strictly a representational violence but a chaos which spreads at once through the plateaus of signification and the extralinguistic – opens a space between the two possible directions Milne sees as being available. Thus it collapses not only the binary the critic erects but traces a line of flight out of the image that neither presents the audience with a political position (i.e. a specific thought or opinion about these political realities) nor an endorsement of the subject matter. The argument that shock effects cannot achieve the privileged status of political analysis if they fail to offer an articulate perspective – thinking processes that have already been performed by the authors/artists – suggests a misunderstanding of both the relationship of affect and thought and the potential of affect to force critical thought and difference, interelatedly, at all levels of the body. If we understand, as Milne does, that the signifiers begin to head in a politically problematic direction as a result of being too experience heavy and without a coherent framework for analysis, then we must ask whether we have

attended closely enough to the experiential tensors within them, the force and violence of their movement as that cuts across the contentious representational territory that invites critical disapproval. The unwieldy power of affective experience does not fail to complete a sign or sign system we can call politically articulate because it does not even function within such an economy. The intensities of which affect is comprised are in fact the 'units' of experience responsible for giving a body to thought, for actualizing critical thinking that is speculative and not governed by a target or an image or architecture of thought. The more such predetermined intellectual structures orient the thinking process to an end, to arrive at specific thoughts or ideological fields, the less force can be given to cognitive activity; thus, the more apt thinking is to give itself over to already established opinions, ideas which are not thought because thought has already decided what it thinks. If Pinter-Losey's films do not perform clear signals as to what the authors think and how the audience should invest, it is perhaps because these are the most efficacious way to divest the act of thinking, and analysis, of the affect which renders it ontologically and epistemologically transformative.

To understand how the films comprising the trilogy perform a politicization of social realities, class in 1950s and 60s Britain among other things, is to account for how the moments in which a violence is performed upon clichés and disperses them into the void entails a sustained repotentialization of the force which opens spectators to the genesis of thought. This is an event whereby the act of thinking is faced with beginning free of the presumptions and assumptions which render it cliché, thus preventing one from even beginning to think when the signs are familiar and recognizable and modes of investment are axiomatic and reflexive.[111] To attend to the films' destabilizing of audiences in the process of investing in signs as either agents of condemnation or promotion of specific behaviours and discourses opens up the world in which Pinter-Losey's images engineer a groundless ground, a subjectless subjectivity, whose turbulent yet compelling movement through multiple predicates of subjectivity and processes of individuation establishes conditions propitious to the audience's becoming other as a result of the indigestible violence produced in thought by the force of images. There can be no judgment in the event of spectatorial becoming, at least judgment according to a value system the spectator carries with them into the encounter. While there is political analysis, it is of an order that does not begin from assumptions, presuppositions and orthodoxies; for the violence affect performs by bringing sensation to thought and breaking its addiction to opinion and preformulated investments is a violent politics of autonomy and criticality. As such, this

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[111] ibid., p. 196.

micropolitics is a sort of 'mad-becoming',[112] one which develops concomitantly with Pinter's own comedy of menace plays and which is interrupted by readings of the work, such as Milne's, that insist that political efficacy and legitimacy hinge upon an establishment of 'the familiar terms of political recognition';[113] a mode of critical intervention that measures and limits the quality that is affect by relating it to something which can be brought into language,[114] and that presumes a stable ego and diagnoses, and thus limits the spectator's desire in advance of its own affective expression.

For Pinter-Losey, a micro-politics emerges precisely at the point where aesthetic production engenders a lasting difference and where the cinematic image enters into and moves the spectatorial body. Rather than 'merely constituting a series of representations for the spectator to recognize', each film in the trilogy respectively turns perception 'back upon the body of the perceiver, so that it affects and *alters* that body'.[115] Through the production of repeated linguistic stammerings and monstrous resonances within the images, *The Servant*, *Accident* and *The Go-Between* are each in their way capable of sending the spectator's perceptual faculties into discord, the forced and broken sensory connection traversing 'the fragments of a dissolved self as it does the borders of a fractured I'.[116] This process therefore enables our critical analyses of selections from the three films to shift 'from an emphasis on subjectivity to the idea of subjectless subjectivities – singular becomings disengaged from egological agency'[117] – and to then reconsider the act of experiencing these unique films from the standpoint of 'an ontology of becoming rather than being'.[118] Spectators become as they negotiate the cinematic network consisting of continual refrains, evolutions and transmogrifications of the films' events and the myriad non-narrativizable, turbulent affects each produces in an audience whose viewing becomes multi-sensory as the films' images and overall aesthetic 'discourse' materialize within and across the thinking body. Looking to Deleuze in this way provides an alternative logic of cinematic 'individuation and invention [...] capable of freeing us from an "original" nature, contract, or law we must imitate or obey, and so allows us to really experiment with ourselves'.[119]

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[112] ibid., p. 178.

[113] 'Pinter's Sexual Politics', p. 197.

[114] I am drawing here on Deleuze: 'Recognition [...] measures and limits the quality by relating it to something, thereby interrupting the mad-becoming.' *Difference and Repetition*, p. 178.

[115] Shaviro, *The Cinematic Body*, p. 51, my emphasis. Shaviro transposed from another context.

[116] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 183.

[117] Del Rio, *Deleuze and the Cinemas*, p. 6.

[118] ibid., p. 7.

[119] Colebrook, *Understanding Deleuze*, p. 65.

Chapter Four
A 'More Precisely Political'[1] Drama, or a Post-1983 Economy of Affect

This chapter follows the twin focus adopted in Chapter 2, yet now in the context of Pinter's 'more precisely political' work: an examination of Pinter's work and a meta-critical interrogation of what has been said about it. Examining key scenes and structures from *Precisely* (1983), *One for the Road* (1984), *Mountain Language* (1988) and *The New World Order* (1991) and interrogating extant critical discourse, the aim is to discern where and how affective experience in Pinter's latter dramatic aesthetics can potentially be induced from dramatic representation. The chapter begins a consideration of the ostensible shift in Pinter's aesthetics from the problematization of spectators' access to epistemological clarity to an apparent stabilization of reality and a critique of specific political milieus, practices and consequences. Of particular interest are both Pinter's remarks on this shift and certain critics' understandings of it. The second stage of the chapter reads some of the plays with a view to delineating the style by which these works function to capture the sense of being that belongs to the political realities being fabulated. Finally, the latter stages of the chapter attend to critics who invest, to varying degrees, in the dramas' operation upon the audience body, doing so as a means to render sensation and the spectator's corporeal body a significant aspect of the political dimension of the work.

The concepts of affect and 'becoming' serve to interrogate and push these approaches further, as they typically dwindle in the realm of philosophical idealism and reinvest in a deeply embedded culture of representational thinking. By further attending to readings of Pinter that speak to the plays' production of experience as a political gesture, the chapter explores how a 'linguistic remainder'[2] is at stake in the 'political economy' of the post-1983 dramas. This remainder is characterized as an affective-performative that emerges and passes over the hem of that which is dramatically legible as each play's ponderous images and surreptitious dramatic patterns solicit a decidedly embodied form of spectatorship, a style of watching that vexes the perceptual faculties. Ultimately, this dramatic reality enables us to look afresh at a change of direction in Pinter's career and style which has been often characterized, if not derided, as aesthetically straightforward, crude and even devoid of any artifice.[3]

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[1] Pinter on *The South Bank Show*. Presented by Melvyn Bragg. BBC 3. 29 November 1998. Running time 60 minutes.

[2] *The Violence of Language*, p. 51.

[3] See Naoko Yagi, for example, who characterizes Pinter's later political plays as 'crude' ('Collections, *Press Conference*, and Pinter', *Hacиеhe 12: Journal of Language, Literature, Art and Culture, Harold Pinter Thematic Issue*, ed. by Radmila Nastić (Kragujevac: филчм), pp. 121-31 (p. 130)). As indicated in the Introduction, p. 33, fn. 92, readings that are more dismissive on grounds of an apparent lack of ambiguity and

Pinter's political theatre: 'facts', recognition, knowledge and epistemological clarity

After decades of trading in ambiguity, largely by troubling the audience's access to dramatic irony and forestalling hermeneutic meaning, Pinter shifted in 1983 to a dramatic aesthetics the character of which abruptly implied that reality can in fact be spoken about with a fair degree of exactitude. Reality and language in Pinter's dramas were at this stage no longer the 'quicksand' and 'highly ambiguous business' they had erstwhile been.[4] In contrast to most of what came before, the post-1983 political dramas do not at first glance invite spectators to read signs for specific meanings that ultimately fail to concretize, or to contend with Pinter's production of enigma by means of his now too-familiar troubling of verification processes, reliance on pauses and silence, and transmutation of subtext into dramatic action.[5]

Pinter's first overtly political drama, the sketch *Precisely* (1983), proceeds through two stages, the first illustrating how language can function to render specific events a mental abstraction and the second suggesting the reverse, that it is precisely language that can create proximity and immediacy where events are concerned. Roger and Stephen are two technocrats who perform the Chicago Boys mentality associated with Milton Friedman's 'religification' of free-market economics in their disquisition over drinks as to the correct integer with which to refer to the extermination of twenty million human lives:

> Stephen: I mean, we've said it time and again, haven't we?
>
> Roger: Of course we have.
>
> Stephen: Time and again. Twenty million. [...] It's a figure supported by facts. We've done our homework. Twenty million is a fact. When these people say thirty I'll tell you exactly what they're doing – they're distorting the facts.
>
> Roger: Scandalous.
>
> Stephen: Quite. I mean, how the hell do they *know*? [...] We've done the *thinking*. [...] I'll tell you, neither I nor those above me are going to put up with it much longer. These people, Roger, these people are actively and wilfully deceiving the public. Do you take my point?[6]

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artifice can be found in Esslin 'Harold Pinter's Theatre of Cruelty'; Austin E. Quigley, 'Pinter, Politics and Postmodernism (1)'; and Volker Strunk, *Harold Pinter: Towards a Poetics of His Plays*.
[4] *Plays 1*, 'Introduction', pp. x–xii.
[5] Esslin, 'Harold Pinter's Theatre of Cruelty', p. 27. Comparing the two epochs and aesthetics, Esslin relates that 'while all [Pinter's] previous work dealt with problems such as identity, verification, and the nature of reality, existential angst, the concerns of Beckett and Kafka rather than those of the committed political playwrights of his and a later generation, since 1982 his work has become entirely political, devoted to attacks on dictators who torture their subjects and civil servants who are unperturbed by the menace of a nuclear holocaust [...] these later pieces operate unambiguously on the surface, even relying on voice-overs to make the characters' thoughts crystal clear and proclaiming a message of blinding simplicity, a message which is a call to political action' (ibid.).
[6] *Plays 4*, pp. 215–16.

Roger and Stephen's dialogue is of a character which undeniably locates itself in a specific place and time when the technocrat becomes instrumental, albeit not often visible, in the advent of corporatism and neoliberal politics in the mid to late-Cold War era. Naomi Klein provides useful context:

> The Chicago Boys and their professors, who provided advice and took up top posts in the military regimes of the Southern Cone, believed in a form of capitalism that is purist by its very nature. Theirs is a system based entirely on a belief in 'balance' and 'order' and the need to be free of interferences and 'distortions' in order to succeed. Because of these traits, a regime committed to the faithful application of this ideal cannot accept the presence of competing or tempering world views. In order for the ideal to be achieved, it requires a monopoly on ideology; otherwise, according to the central theory, the economic signals become distorted and the entire system is thrown out of balance.[7]

As it turns out over the course of the brief sketch, the facts which the apparently well-considered number supports have to do with the murder of a population by means of what in 1983, at the Cold War's zenith, could only have been a nuclear strike. Roger and Stephen's desire to find a number the precision of which is incontrovertible is ironic given how the object of their struggle is in fact a unit of language capable of abstracting material reality – mathematics not being written in the stars as the likes of Descartes and Galileo had it – and certainly not some other constituent of language that might effect presence concerning the politically orchestrated violence and death that are actually at stake.

Such a word does however perforce emerge at the end of the sketch, when Roger becomes exasperated with Stephen's reluctance to accept the prognostication and his whimsicality regarding it; the latter evident in his use of drink in attempt to persuade Roger to alter the figure to which he is so devoted:

> Stephen: Another two?
>
> Roger: Another two million. And I'll buy you another drink. Another two for another drink.
>
> Stephen: (*Slowly*) No, no, Roger. It's twenty million. Dead.
>
> Roger: You mean precisely?
>
> Stephen: I mean dead. Precisely.
>
> *Pause.*
>
> I want you to accept that figure.
>
> *Pause.*
>
> Accept that figure. *They state at each other.*
>
> Roger: Twenty million dead, precisely?

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[7] *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (Toronto: Vintage, 2008), pp. 121-22.

Stephen: Precisely.[8]

As Stephen finally replaces the number, an abstraction it must recalled, with something concrete and operative on the imagination – the simple and blunt word 'Dead' – any suspicions regarding what the cipher hitherto stood in for are confirmed, made real. In the main, the sketch moves us to apprehend how discourses such as these technocrats employ do not in fact produce factual accuracy or material reality so much as put it at a distance, a process which enables opinion and ideology to sediment to the effect of replacing actual 'thinking' with habitual and therefore 'unthought' thought and behaviour. Hence the irony of Stephen's celebration of how the thinking is routinely left to him and Roger, and that they are paid handsomely for it.

Meanwhile, the characters' ineluctable embrace of the word 'Dead' in the final moment summons the material reality of the technocrat's twenty million victims in such a way that does violence to the abstracting function of the technocratic discourse. The dramatic trajectory of the sketch culminates in the antagonists' ironic turn to a form of language, captured in a single word no less, that speaks truth to the rationalizing and obfuscating capacities of political discourse. Thus one finds the twofold character of what is at stake, aesthetically and politically, in Pinter's dramatic writing from 1983 onwards: A tension struck between the characters' predilection to 'accept' a number without having to face the actually violent and nihilistic material reality it refers to *and* their ultimate usage of language to create presence, specifically regarding the victims of political violence and the abuse of power.

As has been noted often enough, Pinter himself remarked on this shift and his apparently newfound investment in epistemological clarity in a conversation with Nicholas Hern in 1985, his remarks betraying a preoccupation with facts, knowledge, recognition and therefore dramatic irony: 'The facts that *One for the Road* refers to are facts that I wish the audience to know about, to recognize [...] Whereas I didn't have the same objective at all in the early days'.[9] The altered objective Pinter emphasizes certainly suggests how his vision was at this stage beginning to dovetail with more standard conceptions of British post-war political drama as those invite us to read the work as invested in the kind of 'accuracy and directness of [the plays'] representation of the "political"' that is inherent to a great deal of socialist and committed drama since the 1960s.[10] Needless to say, the marked political and aesthetic reorientation of Pinter's dramas, and his ruminations on that reorientation as an emergent political activist whose chief

investments were torture and a discourse of facts and truth, prompted many scholars to direct their analyses of the dramas to issues of epistemological clarity, the stability of truth and our collective perception of reality within language.

Quite responsive to these cues, are Mary Luckhurst and Mireia Aragay. In order to suggest their accuracy of representation, the former reads the political plays in light of both Amnesty International reports on torture and Elaine Scarry's theorizations of torture's effects.[11] Luckhurst notes how Pinter's aestheticization of torture only intensifies with each play, the appearance of the marked bodies in *One for the Road* giving way to the bureaucratization of violence and images of hooded, bound, collapsed and shelled bodies in *Mountain Language*, *The New World Order* and most explicitly in the final scene of *Party Time*. In the concluding tableau of this 1991 play – its premiere in October just nine months after the US initiated the Gulf War with an aerial bombardment of Iraq on 16 January – the character Jimmy's appearance in the form of an abject body is, Luckhurst observes, 'the only moment in a Pinter play where a victim articulates the aftermath of torture'.[12] And as 'a reference to torture techniques which injure or blind their victims', Jimmy's 'reduction from subject to object'[13] makes it quite plain to us how his time-space image has been severely tampered with,[14] and that the blame for this violence done him can be placed with the self-centred, odious Thatcherite set in attendance at the party.[15]

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[11] 'Pinter's concerns reflect research over the last decades by various human rights organizations whose conclusions may surprise and should appal: that torture is usually "part of state-controlled machinery to suppress dissent", and that it is "most often used as an integral means of a government's security strategy" (Amnesty International 1984: 4).' 'Torture in the Plays of Harold Pinter', in *Blackwell Companion to Modern British and Irish Drama, 1880-2005*, ed. by Mary Luckhurst (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006), pp. 358-70 (p. 358). Cf. Grimes, who also reads Pinter's aestheticization of torture through the lens of Scarry. *Harold Pinter's Politics*, pp. 79-80, 83, 93, 102, 205.

[12] ibid, p. 367. Also, it is arguable that one finds this level of articulation in Pinter's political poetry, in particular 'American Football' whose speaker tersely details the plight of his victims, as opposed to employing the kind of language riddled with glittering generalities intended to obfuscate, which Pinter commonly attributes to politicians (see Chapter 4 for an analysis of the poem).

[13] ibid.

[14] Naomi Klein enables an even more detailed comparison between the reality of torture as it has been recorded in recently declassified CIA documents and Pinter's dramatic handling of it, especially in Jimmy's monologue at the end of *Party Time*: 'the way to break "resistant sources" is to create violent ruptures between prisoners and their ability to make sense of the world around them. [...] The goal of this "softening-up" stage is to provoke a kind of hurricane in the mind [...] It is in that state of shock that most prisoners give their interrogators what ever they want – information, confessions, a renunciation of former beliefs. One CIA manual provides a particularly succinct explanation: "There is an interval – which may be extremely brief – of suspended animation, a kind of psychological shock or paralysis. It is caused by a traumatic or sub-traumatic experience which explodes, as it were, the world that is familiar to the subject as well as his image of himself within that world."' *The Shock Doctrine*, pp. 18-19.

[15] Both Mark Taylor-Batty and Robert Gordon make the link between the party guests and the Thatcher regime, the former critic observing that Dame Melissa is '[a]n elderly Margaret Thatcher figure' (*About Pinter: the Playwright and the Work*, p. 71); and the latter observing that in Pinter's television version '[t]he décor itself wittily alludes to the cool style of interior decoration typical of the Thatcherite 1980s and early 1990s'. 'Pinter's Mise-en-Scène: *Party Time* as Television Drama', *The Pinter Review Nobel Prize/European Theatre Prize*

Writing on these plays before Luckhurst, but nonetheless adhering to a decidedly representational approach to interpretation, Aragay understands that Pinter's post-1983 dramas 'question the postmodernist emphasis on discursivity, reinstate categories such as truth, value and knowledge as legitimate, and draw a line between discourse and reality'.[16] No doubt influenced by Pinter's assertions outside of the theatre, as glossed above, Aragay insists that the later political dramas leave us in 'no doubt as to what reality is – the reality of political oppression, torture and violence – or where truth and value lie – with the tortured and the oppressed'.[17] But Aragay even goes so far as to divest the plays of their dramatic character and life as she argues that the work actually advances 'statements',[18] a claim which deviates quite significantly from the typical observation that Pinter's earlier work was image-centric and distinctly non-discursive (see Intro and Chapter 1). Aragay's perception that the dramas effectively make statements about political reality of course grounds her readings squarely in representation and implies that the aesthetics appeal foremost to the intellectual faculty – statements being advanced for no other reason but to communicate and to be either accepted or rejected by the works' interlocutor, the audience.

The immanence of the molar and the molecular, of truth and the corporeal genesis of truth

In view of this dedication to representation, to content and to the dialogue between the post-1983 dramas and their counterparts outside the theatre in the way of governmental and political technologies,[19] I suggest that we can bring another plateau to extant scholarship by considering that there are no investments at the level of signification and thus representation that are of themselves not of an investment in molecular and thus affective formations. '[E]verywhere there exist the molecular *and* the molar', Deleuze and Guattari reminds us.[20] So if we conceive of Pinter's dramas as invested principally in promoting recognition and even knowledge of certain states of affairs and political realities we can easily neglect the experiential correlative that belongs to Pinter's dramatic handling of realties and political practices; torture and murder being the cornerstones of most of these overtly political plays. While it is easy to

Volume: 2005-2008, ed. by Francis Gillen, with Stephen H. Gale (Tampa: University of Tampa Press, 2008), 168-79 (p. 172).
[16] 'Pinter, Politics and Postmodernism (2)', p. 252.
[17] ibid., p. 252.
[18] ibid.
[19] On this matter, Varun Begley observes: 'Because the anti-authoritarian plays of 1984-1991 – *One for the Road* (1984), *Mountain Language* (1988), *Party Time* (1991), and *The New World Order* (1991) – are set in repressive (though unspecified) states, they invite naïve readings of political content'. 'The Aesthetics of Refusal: Pinter among the Radicals', *Modern Drama*, 45.4 (Winter 2002), 628-45 (pp. 628-29).
[20] *Anti-Oedipus*, pp. 373-74.

understand Pinter's more precisely political dramatic turn from the 1980s onwards, and his claims about it, as presenting us with a theatre of facts which demands a decidedly rational spectatorial audience engagement, it is important to ask whether these dramatic aesthetics have in fact shed the affective dimension which I have argued hitherto to be definitive of Pinter's earlier work in both drama and film. Regardless of Pinter's claims to facts, recognition and knowledge, it is clear that his move in the 1980s away from complicating dramatic irony and audience epistemology continues, however by different means, to involve the engenderment of affects which foreground sensation and render the perceptions thoroughly intermodal. Thus it is not a theatre of facts and truth that we discover, but rather a theatre of the body which invests specific apodictic political realities with significance precisely by animating, through specific and noteworthy dramatic means, the corporeal dimension and eventness of the unequivocal realities to which the plays 'refer', as Pinter puts it. To see these dramas as accurately representing and/or making statements about contentious political realities is, I strongly offer, to lose sight of, firstly, the general fact that 'truth is only the empirical result of sense' and, secondly, the particular fact, as I see it, that Pinter's later political dramas are above all else engaged in exploiting the genesis of the act of thought and the operation of the faculties upon which 'the production of the true' depends.[21] Following this Deleuzian line, the remainder of the chapter examines how Pinter's dramatization of the fact of torture, death, politicking and related states of affairs entails not so much the communication of information or the solicitation of acts of recognition as the production of violence across the spectrum of faculties which itself calls forth the forces in thought sufficient to decentring the self.

Impact and sensation: an 'other' kind of fact

If we entertain the possibility that Pinter's staging of political realities entails not only a representation of states of affairs that impels audience recognition but also, and in large part, the production of sensation as a means to create *presence* where political reality is concerned, then it becomes possible to rethink Pinter's remarks to Hern about his apparently new politico-aesthetic orientation. In that same interview, Pinter argues impassively that '[y]ou can interpret reality in various ways, but there's only one. And if that reality is thousands of people being tortured to death at this very moment and hundreds of thousands of megatons of nuclear bombs standing there waiting to go off at this very moment, then that's it and that's that. It has to be faced.'[22] It is important, I urge, not to let the moralistic inflection of Pinter's appeal to face these realities

[21] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 196, 193, passim.
[22] Pinter, 'A Play and its Politics', p. 21.

overshadow the import of the nature of the realities themselves, the violence inherent to them which inspires the appeal for investment in the first place. Notice how Pinter's characterization of the 'problem' of people being tortured to death and nuclear bombs waiting to go off does not depart from the event by means of reference to the possibility of a solution. Rather, the appeal is justified and invested with import by the use of severe language, a terse dramatization if you will, to render the magnitude of the two states of affairs Pinter offers as examples. The intensive language Pinter uses to describe the one reality that has to be faced suggests his valuation of 'the internal character of the problem as such, the imperative internal element which decides in the first place its truth or falsity and measures its intrinsic genetic power'.[23] It is here that one finds the most noteworthy aspect of Pinter's political dramas: the dramatist's investment in the sense of the situation, these political realities, in advance of their truth value; the two, by no means mutually exclusive, being precisely what constitutes the aesthetic economy of the plays.

For further illustration, it is useful to look to Pinter's previous remarks, as far back as 1966 no less, in the context of the *Paris Review* interviews with Larry Bensky where Pinter engineers a remarkable image of himself bursting through the television screen and applying a flame thrower to the genitalia of a politician.[24] The image intends of course to foreground the extralinguistic over the discursive, to relate how the materiality, force and immediacy of death wrought by political means possesses a 'truth value' that cannot be distorted by political rationalities and pragmatic discourses. In its essential violence, the image can mediate these ideological regimes. As Pinter subsumes the molar that is political discourse into the molecular that is the material consequences of certain political decisions, his fabulation captures and foregrounds a specific singularity from a reality consisting of multiplicities. In this way, the molecular performs a revolutionary gesture that can effectively de-centre the molar. It is not simply that Pinter is pointing to how the reality of violence trumps the very language that functions to displace and even obfuscate that violence. More to the point, the imagery-laden language Pinter enlists functions to animate the corporeal and neural intensities which alone are capable of investing thought processes with the force, movement and corporeal agitation necessary to keep mental activity from performing abstraction. As such, Pinter explores that which he claims to be true specifically by means of producing a problem; which is to say truth

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[23] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 201.

[24] Against all claims that Pinter was formatively apolitical, it is notable that this anecdote is of the same species as that which he offers concerning his visit to the Turkish embassy in Ankara with Arthur Miller in 1985. The anecdote Pinter employs is a ghastly image of an electric current applied to the genitals of his interlocutor, its function to check the US Ambassador to Turkey's stratagem, which as Pinter relates was an appeal for Pinter to 'bear in mind' the broader geopolitical reality: namely 'the Russians [...] just over the border'. 'Arthur Miller's Socks', in *Various Voices*, pp. 65-66.

emerges and becomes coherent in proportion to the sense of the specific political problem Pinter tables by means of a violent image. The violence of the reality he fabulates via the terse and stark image is not an appeal to emotion, not specifically a defamation of the politician figure, but rather an attempt to reinscribe the event to which he refers with the sensory dimension that has been squelched and displaced by the discourse wielded by the politician in his alarming image.

Pinter's use of imagery to harness an affective force that might suffuse the verbal signification of that which is actually happening provides a glimpse of what I contend forms the aesthetic of his decidedly political plays. We can move away from characterizing the political dramas as providers of statements and accurate images of what is happening outside of the theatre if we accept that any spectator's grasp of states of affairs takes place on and within two mutually immanent plateaus, one being their neural registration of the energetic load manifested by linguistic and imagistic expression, and the other the cognitive unification and totalization of these molecular forces through a process of statistical accumulation that obeys the laws of large numbers, an act and function we perform in accordance with extant models of speech and thought.[25] Observations of how Pinter's later plays are easily readable in their apparently straightforward representation of reality – which easily turns to a complaint levelled at the plays' refusal to forestall the hermeneutic impulse[26] which Pinter's former plays have gradually yet surely trained audiences to appreciate and even crave – neglect to acknowledge and explore the meaning and complexity of how difficult the dramas are for spectators to digest upon ingestion. This is an act and process, it is important to remember, that is performed not only by means of the ocular faculty but by the engagement of numerous faculties, if not at times the entire sensorium, which are put into operation and sensory communication with each other, as opposed to being decidedly focused *on* the aesthetic object itself. So perhaps one of the more effective places to begin exploring this characterization of spectatorship vis-à-vis the later plays is with what I argue to be Pinter's transmutation of his unique dramatization of comedy of menace.

The transmutation of the comedy of menace

Speaking of *One for the Road*, Richard Dutton insists that Pinter's first overtly political drama 'represents an even greater break with Pinter's artistic past, with an emphasis on political

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[25] Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, p. 375.

[26] Catherine Rees, 'High Art or Popular Culture: Traumatic Conflicts of Representation and Postmodernism in Pinter's *The Dumb Waiter*, in *Harold Pinter's The Dumb Waiter*, ed. by Mary F. Brewer (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2009), pp. 111-25 (p. 117).

and human rights issues that would have been out of place in his tragicomedies'.[27] Nonetheless, although we are unlikely to find ourselves laughing at these plays' victims, their plight having to endure psychological and physical torture, rape and the torments of all manner of politicking, close scrutiny of the work indicates that comedy, jokes and games perform a significant role in the aesthetico-political economy. Consider Nicolas's apparent delight at tormenting Victor with questions regarding his wife's sexual appetite or, moreover, how *the game* of posing logically unanswerable questions is the lynchpin of Nicolas's interrogation of all three of his captives: Victor, Gila and Nicky. In the first instance, the games and jokes are instrumental to the victimizer in his project of breaking victims down. However, in the second instance – one that involves the audience's being broken down, as it were – humour functions to solicit complex bodily and emotional reactions from the audience; some of which can be identified and qualified with language while others evade description due to their resonance at unconscious and semi-conscious levels within the viscera and across proprioceptive regions. Certainly one of the more potent examples of this can be found in the various quips Nicolas makes regarding the execrable realities for which he is responsible, the dramatic function of such 'jokes' being to darken and magnetize the audience's prostration and revulsion.

The interrogator says to Gila: 'You're of no interest to me. I might even let you out of here in due course. But I should think you might entertain us all a little more before you go. *Blackout*?[28] The aesthetic functioning here is quite surreptitious and indeed devious in that Nicolas, even despite the absence of his own laughter, is advancing a statement whose framing and delivery signal quite clearly an attempt at joke making; while the statement's content and lexical meaning exterminate its own functioning as successful comedy. In threatening to actualize certain comedic virtualities within the language, and thus provoke the affects of laughter, Nicolas's dialogue performs a violence upon the audience, the statement's meaning at once explicit in the overall dramatic context *and* inviting the audience to begin to give visual shape to the realities that are only ever suggested to exist upstairs above the interrogator's office. But then a blackout exacerbates the already visceral goad and plunges spectators into darkness, thus depriving us of our faculty of vision and leaving us to wrestle momentarily with the imaginative effects of the plays' solicitation to give mental shape to what is at stake for Gila, to figure an experience which cannot be adequately detailed in language.

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[27] *Modern Tragicomedy and the British Tradition: Beckett, Pinter, Stoppard, Albee and Storey* (Brighton: Harvester, 1986), p. 5.
[28] *Plays 4*, p. 244.

One finds a similar aesthetic in the final scene in *Mountain Language*. In this context, the humour of the remark is specifically intended for the Sergeant and the Guard's enjoyment; however, the harrowing fact remains that in the play's final scene the Sergeant's assertion regarding the Prisoner who is collapsed and *'shaking on the floor'* is in fact a joke: 'Look at this. You go out of your way to give them a helping hand and they fuck it up'.[29] Pinter uses comedy here to facilitate the violence in the way of affective revulsion that the Sergeant's curtain line is likely to evoke from spectators. And the Sergeant's remark, according to Taylor-Batty,

> has all the force of a punch-line too – reinforced by the blackout. We have a near Pavlovian response to such structured punch-lines – a self-administered expectation of pleasure from neat surprise – and here that response is at odds with our ethical faculties. It's not that we find it funny, but that we recognize that we have been invited to join in a laugh that we simultaneously and instantaneously don't recognize as funny.[30]

Additionally, I would suggest that our recognition that laughter is indeed the most inappropriate response to the events before us is by no means a moral corrective performed upon the audience, for the path to such awareness in the moment of perceptual consumption is indeed liminal and highly unstable in epistemological terms. While audiences are likely to resist the invitation to participate in a culture of joking and humour constructed on such ghastly terms, their having to contend with and negotiate that subtle invitation is most apt to create a low-level corporeal turbulence, one which only further piques perceptual faculties which the scene and interaction send into discord, largely in ways that are operative and palpable, yet in the moment go unmeasured.

This aesthetic finds its logical extension and most economic expression in Pinter's sketch *The New World Order*. After righteously expressing that he and his partner are involved in the all-important project of keeping the world clean for democracy, the one torturer named Des says to the other Lionel that 'I'm going to shake you by the hand', but then estimates that their blindfolded victim will also be doing the same 'in about thirty-five minutes.'[31] The line's symmetry and timing infers a joke, the enjoyment of which is not an option for both hooded victim in the chair on stage and the audience. In this way, the play entails, among other things,

[29] ibid., p. 267. For those in doubt as to the play's comedic aspects or, moreover, the importance of humour in it, consider the following: 'New York director Carey Perloff would report to the conference participants that Pinter did not consider American productions of his plays funny enough, and she shared her own discovery that juxtaposing *The Birthday Party* with *Mountain Language* brought out an unexpected humor in the latter, certainly one of Pinter's harshest plays'. Stanton B. Garner Jr., 'Betrayal', *The Pinter Review: Annual Essays 1991*, ed. by Francis Gillen and Stephen H. Gale (Tampa: University of Tampa Press, 1991), 52-54 (p. 53).
[30] These remarks emerged in conversation with Taylor-Batty and have appeared previously in published form in Basil Chiasson, '(Re)thinking Harold Pinter's Comedy of Menace', in *Harold Pinter's The Dumb Waiter*, ed. by Mary F. Brewer (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2009), pp. 31-54 (p. 43).
[31] *Plays 4*, pp. 277-78.

talking about torture, and therefore making the audience anticipate an event that will never be dramatized. But rather than displace the real of what is to befall the blindfolded human, the final tableau of the sketch manifests this incommunicable violence precisely by making the audience work to make specific connections; the specific way in which humour and revulsion are infolded here forming an affect that can be said to be unique to Pinter's style in this period. Pinter's most odious characters create tension in the audience by broadcasting familiar conventions through a deeply contentious lens, as they punctuate their tyrannical remarks and bristling admissions with wry smiles, ironic quips and even laughs. Even though the comedy in these plays is clearly restricted to the characters' enjoyment, the comic element remains operative and in the service of promoting what might be thought of as a new form of menace, where the reactions it stands to produce are arguably much starker. Each of these dramas respectively stage images of harassment and interrogation whose force and effect not only appear to be the plight of onstage characters, but also intend to act upon and arrest the audience – the process and effect by no means entailing the communication or transference of ideas, images and thought but instead the arousal of thought itself from the disturbance of the perceptual faculties. Pinter's reworking of comedy and menace as such complexifies the extent to which the violence does not express itself on stage but rather circulates in the space between the stage and the audience in an affective surge and flow that break the hegemony of reflexive modes of responding to spectatorial cues as these are delivered in speech and visual media.

Violence's deferment

The lack of overt violence in plays whose political subject matter is *de facto* violent is indeed a curiosity. From *Precisely* to *Celebration*, not one character strikes another as when Ben does Gus in *The Dumb Waiter*,[32] Max does '*Joey in the stomach with all his might*' in *The Homecoming*[33] and Roote does Lush '*in the stomach*' seven times in *The Hothouse*.[34] Nor is torture staged in its raw visual form such as when Ms. Cutts and Gibbs deliver an incapacitating shock to Lamb at the close of that latter play's first act. The order of violence in the post-1983 dramas does away with the sign of performed violence and evolves an aesthetic whereby other orders of violence and trauma predominate. Here violence is at certain times explicitly and others more tacitly performed within the fabric of the dialogue itself, and conjunctively through the dramatic milieus of physical action and imagery. Varun Begley sharpens critical reflection upon the absence of depicted physical violence in Pinter's dramas, introducing the concept of deferral via

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[32] *Plays 1*, p. 146.
[33] *Plays 3*, p. 50.
[34] *Plays 1*, pp. 306-07.

the phrase 'symbolic displacement' and his argument that Pinter's 'emphasis' on this class of postponement 'rather than visibility indicates resistance to a culture saturated with violent imagery'.[35] For Begley, deferral of the sign of actual violence marks the playwright's refusal to buy into the gratuitous and arguably effectless forms of violence that saturate popular culture and suggests, furthermore, how characters like Nicolas in *One for the Road* and the Sergeant and Officer in *Mountain Language* are reflexive devices in so far as they orient themselves towards the business of (political) violence in such a way as to underline its gratuitous and romanticized coding in popular cultural formations.[36] Needless to say, on the basis of this tendency in Pinter's drama, the critic locates Pinter within postmodernist coordinates.

Begley's second premise seems less convincing than the first. If we endeavour to accept the second, I suggest it is *Ashes to Ashes* which more than any other play reflexively comments upon the representation of violence and political atrocity in popular culture, specifically in its myriad allusions to films that seek to narrativize (often in a commercial and 'safe' fashion) the Holocaust and WWII history.[37] Nonetheless, Begley's first premise, his thesis of deferral, is highly persuasive and has spurred others on to make important claims about the handling of political violence in the post-1983 dramas, as well as the manifestation of violence throughout history. For example, in seeking to resolve the thesis's apparent 'paradox', refine it and thus put a more decidedly political point on it, Catherine Rees posits via Jean-François Lyotard that the absence of explicit violence on Pinter's stage reads as an acknowledgement of the impossibility of bearing witness to trauma. Thus plays like *One for the Road, Mountain Language* and *Ashes to Ashes* open up 'new ways of looking at experience' and potentially suggest 'a more ethical approach to history.'[38] Rees artfully retains and reshapes Begley's thesis of deferral in order to respond to and further Grimes's comprehensive handling of *Ashes to Ashes* in his monograph, in which he argues that Pinter's engagement with both current affairs and historical atrocity are thoroughly ambivalent, and thus provide little space for the engenderment of the sort of hope we have over time been trained to desire and expect from political drama and theatre, and indeed political art in general.

However, apart from Grimes and Rees, Begley's thesis is of interest to me not so much for the way it suggests the ineffability of history or a more ethical way of engaging with it. I

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[35] *Harold Pinter and the Twilight of Modernism*, p. 165.

[36] 'To dramatize thuggery is always to confront prior incarnations; Pinter's thugs comment on their predecessors, and the drama subtly engage the conventions by which social violence is coded and represented'. *Harold Pinter and the Twilight*, p. 165.

[37] Begley's understanding that Pinter's plays are interrogating dominant cultural discourse – images and speech – certainly becomes relevant to a play such as *Ashes to Ashes* in its many allusions to and representations of the Holocaust in popular culture.

[38] 'High Art or Popular Culture', p. 116.

locate its value in the manner in which it strongly implies the existence and performance-function of *the processual* in Pinter's later plays. I am not arguing here for what Pinter's deferment of violence says or represents but rather what it does. This is to say how the adjournment, which implies an arrival, of performances of actual violence can cue an anticipating subject qua spectator, its egological stability unbinded within a static process where the imagination busies itself with figuring a violence that is yet to manifest in representation. The suggestion of a physical violence that never arrives but which is at once galvanized by other orders of violence – the discursive and the imagistic – is a dramatic structure that stands to edge spectators into zones of experience which are chaotic and therefore without structure: processuality as an onto-affective *in-between*.

Two familiar examples from *One for the Road* should help to bolster this thesis. The first has to do with the child character Nicky and relations that are external to his appearance in the play and then his disappearance. The dramatization of Nicky's unexplained disappearance from the play does not merely consist of the instance in which it is revealed: that sudden exchange between Nicolas and Victor during the poignant tableaux concluding the play where the father of the potentially murdered or disappeared boy defiantly raises his head to hold Nicolas's gaze,[39] as Billington observes. It begins to evolve, more accurately, in the second scene when Nicky appears for the first, and last, time. Nicky's scene is rendered all the more piquant by Nicolas's construction of his own identity as a heinous interrogator and craven patriot in the play's first scene, and then his performance of avuncular behaviour in the formative stages of his interview with Nicky. In the Ambassador's Theatre 2001 production,[40] Nicolas's (Pinter) taking Nicky (Rory Copus) on his lap is a quiet gesture that transforms an act connoting love into a forceful, egregious sign, the violence of which is only compounded as he engages the boy in the very psychological game he is playing on the adults – 'Do you like your mommy and daddy? *Pause.* Do you like your mommy and daddy? [...] Why? *Pause.* Why?'[41] – and then chides Nicky for spitting at, kicking and attacking their 'country's soldiers'.[42] 'I didn't like those soldiers', the boy responds with the honesty characteristic of his tender age.[43] And Nicolas taunts him: 'They don't like you either, my darling',[44] his response affectively punctuated with a '*Blackout*'.[45]

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[39] *Harold Pinter*, p. 296.
[40] Dir. Robin Lefevre. Perf. Harold Pinter, Lloyd Hutchinson; Indira Varma; Rory Copus. Prod. Michael Colgan. The New Ambassadors Theatre, London, 1 July 2001. Gate Theatre, Dublin production. Filmed dress rehearsal. Broadcast on BBC 2 *Arena*, 26 October 2002. Running time 30 minutes.
[41] *Plays 4*, pp. 235-36.
[42] ibid., p. 236.
[43] ibid.
[44] ibid., p. 237.
[45] ibid.

Here the conditions are established for affective experience and spectators' passing into a zone of ontological processuality as the interrogator performs humane, familial behaviour, then a *volte face* which reterritorializes the inquisitorial posture. But it is the final structure of the blackout which gathers together these affective valences and shifts the drama into a third experiential register, suspending the boy's narrative after the emergent struggle between the two has so strongly implied Nicky's endangerment. In this way, Nicolas's remark and the blackout function in league to perform a sudden violence that does not conclude the scene so much as set a line of low-level anxiety into operation which scores all that follows in the play up to the conclusion. Thus the boy's fate remains a question mark that hangs resonantly over each scene and only explodes in the play's final moment when Nicolas enlists the past tense to brutal effect in response to Victor's question as to the whereabouts of his son. 'Your son? Oh, don't worry about him. He was a little prick', the inquisitor coldly asserts.[46]

The clipped transition via the blackout from Nicky's scene into the next with Gila – arguably the play's most hysterical and continually resonant dramatic image – harnesses and repotentializes the prior scene's affective valency. The eroticized character of the interaction between Nicolas and the boy's mother in this scene engenders violent anticipation of potentially being made to witness the interrogator's performance of that which is unspeakable; the stillness of the bodies and the dialogue's direction at this point making every word stammer. Witness how Nicolas urges Gila to speak of the details of her own rape, but in failing to yield explicit detail the prompt solicits the audience to begin to construct an image of the real in the imagination:

> Nicolas: Where are you now? Do you think you are in a hospital?
>
> *Pause.*
>
> Do you think we have nuns upstairs?
>
> *Pause.*
>
> What do we have upstairs?
>
> Gila: No nuns.
>
> Nicolas: What do we have?
>
> Gila: Men.
>
> Nicolas: Have they been raping you?
>
> *She stares at him,*
>
> How many times?'
>
> *Pause.*

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[46] ibid., p. 247.

How many times have you been raped?

Pause.

How many times?[47]

The abjectness of this scene and the mental act it prompts spectators to perform are no doubt responsible for claims to the play's crudeness. Nonetheless there is sufficient complexity in this double rape which is comprised of the actual rape that has been taking place off stage, therefore unavailable to spectators to imbibe visually, and the psychological rape which Nicolas now performs on Gila in the moment – the violence of the off-stage experience redoubled as the woman is forced to bring into the symbolic order 'that which ought to remain unsymbolizable'.[48] Nicolas's questions and their prompt to engage in imagining the quiddity of the unspeakable event form a single dramatic milieu which folds together with another that is comprised of the stammering image that confronts us in the here and now. Gila's double rape becomes immanent as the taut image of her and Nicolas's interaction petitions the cognitive figuration of that which can hardly be abstracted in the mind. The affective resonance engendered by this image and overall scene furnishes cognition (and ultimately interpretation) with a perceptual fullness and thus bodily engagement.

In the Ambassador's Theatre production, the image of Nicolas caressing and whispering into Gila's ear as he psychologically rapes her achieves a rhythmicity, that is it performs a violent break in the flow of action as it resounds with and redirects the bloc of sensation issued forth just moments before: an affective fissure in the play when the stricken woman screams 'As I was!'[49] in response to Nicolas's nonsensical and repetitive questions about where she met her husband. On the one hand, this act performs a violence that is semiotically legible as both a literal answer to Nicolas's relentless questions and an expression of suffering, of dehumanization. But on the other hand the scream – issued from an immobilized and shelled body – engenders a linguistic remainder that operates on spectators as a distinctly non-discursive affective-performative. Our understanding of the scream as a desperate and potentially defiant response to Nicolas's unrelenting abuse of Gila can only ever supervene upon and thus never fully capture the molecular dispersion the act foments in us, specifically as her scream distils and harnesses all the previous atrocities that inspired its emission and at once delinks the action-reaction circuit by dint of its violent resonation beyond hermeneutic meaning and intellectual capture. We apprehend the sheer violence of the scream as its force redoubles in the wake of

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[47] ibid., pp. 242-43.
[48] K-punk, 'The dark is in my mouth, and I suck it… it's the only thing I have', 11 October 2005 <http://k-punk.abstractdynamics.org/archives/006556.html> [accessed March 2008].
[49] *Plays 4*, p. 239.

both all we have been made to witness and all that has been suggested hitherto; but at the same time this outburst of a certain order of violence invests Gila's imminent 'confession' with the bodily convulsion the fact of her rape deserves. The insinuation of and ultimate revelation of Gila's predicament has little to do with understanding and cognition and more to do with our being introduced into a flow which transcends narrative, action and even temporality. As the visual enactment of the physical abuse is withheld, the play embodies the aura of rape and foregrounds the psychological and verbal registers of the process and event. Rather than a statement intended to convince the audience that rape is used as a tool for political leverage, this scene indicates the extent to which the drama engages and establishes discord between the perceptual faculties as a means to produce an objective violence that might enable a restoration of the immanence between thought and the body. The structure of this event mid-play suggests the extent to which the work operates on us, manifesting a violence within us, even despite our comprehension of what is happening to Gila. While it is doubtless easy enough to articulate the details of this particular political state of affairs, the manner in which the play embodies the rape involves the production of sensation which resonates in excess of that which the plot and narrative can effectively capture and deliver. If the performance of the rape renders it indelible, we shall never forget the manner in which it shatters the action-reaction circuits and leaves our bodies wracked.

Investing in the body: three critics

There are indeed critics who respond to these aesthetics by orienting their analyses towards the audience. As my readings above should underline, the manner in which Pinter's post-1983 political dramas replace the 'levels of explicit reference and debate' one finds in much British drama in the post-war era[50] with a decided appeal to embodied spectatorship has prompted certain critics to locate much of the works' political gesture in extra-discursive factors and non-discursive forces,[51] in how the dramatic discourse and regimes of images perform not merely a representation function but one of impulsion.[52] Thus we see the beginnings of a scholarly exploration of the extremities of the performative dimension of Pinter's dramatic language. Pinter's biographer is one of the foremost to read the overtly political dramas in this way, observing an economy of 'shock' at the heart of the writing and arguing that the

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[50] Grimes, *Harold Pinter's Politics*, p. 222.
[51] Brian Massumi, *A User's Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia: Deviations from Deleuze and Guattari* (Cambridge, MA and London: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1992), p. 31.
[52] ibid., p. 30.

representational economy of the work 'has a jolting effect on the lazy liberal conscience'.[53] Of *Precisely*, for example, Billington observes that '[w]hat Pinter does is to shock us into recognition that the once unthinkable – the idea of nuclear devastation – was back on the agenda' and that 'Pinter is shocking us into an awareness that there are people who rationally accept the idea of a nuclear strike, inevitable retaliation and unprecedented annihilation.[54]

More specifically, Billington relates of *Mountain Language* that 'dramatic punch' is achieved through 'the techniques of irony and inversion',[55] the shock effect a means to the political end of our realizing 'that there is no longer an automatic division between Them and Us; between morally bankrupt tyrannies and supposedly Western democracies'.[56] He continues that '[w]hat [Pinter] is trying to puncture, through shock images is the isolationist smugness which assumes that the Western democracies are, by definition, guiltless',[57] and concludes that '[t]he more we sense that the military are ordinary men doing a routine job, the more shocking the play becomes'.[58] In observing how acts of recognition and realization instantiate shocks, Billington's reading enables us to see how Pinter transmutes the aesthetic gesture of inversion we saw in Chapter 1 into the more recent, expressly politicized context of the post-1983 dramas. As such, the categories of villain and arch political actors that we in the West typically reserve for 'foreign' tyrants and non-democratic nations are (re)applied to political agents whose idiomatic constructions cast them as British – Roger's use of the term 'quite' in *Precisely*[59] – and whose discourse of 'democracy' – Lionel's shedding a happy tear in *The New World Order* for 'keeping the world clean', Des informs him, 'for democracy'[60] – casts them as members and/or representatives of advanced liberal, and therefore Western, states. Billington's discourse is indeed useful for considering how a certain corporeal violence derives from our having made specific cognitive connections vis-à-vis the dramas.

More recently, Charles Grimes has discerned a violence at work in the formal address of the post-1983 political plays.[61] As with Billington's understanding that the works' production of shock and experiential envelopment are a sufficient means to penetrate and alter an audience's putatively recalcitrant consciences, Grimes suggests that political communication in Pinter's theatre transpires in no small part along a physiological axis: 'in his "rigorous," angry and often

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[53] *Harold Pinter*, p. 299.
[54] ibid., p. 291.
[55] ibid., p. 293.
[56] ibid., p. 309.
[57] ibid., p. 310.
[58] ibid., p. 313.
[59] *Plays 4*, p. 215.
[60] ibid., p. 277.
[61] *Harold Pinter's Politics*, p. 33.

brutal political theater Pinter attempts to break through this formidable protective buffer in the receptivity of his audience. Indeed, what he stages often amounts to an assault on his audience.[62] Grimes thus argues that the function of this violent address is to 'bully' audiences; a strategy of 'aggression'[63] the critic then justifies on grounds that, on the one hand, mainstream theatre goers are 'deeply complicit with an unjust status quo' and 'current deployments of power' and are 'unwilling', moreover, 'to confront that complicity'[64] and, on the other hand, on grounds that the Enlightenment project, in its centralization of *a priori* reason, objective truth and morality, has become unworkable in contemporary times; an era intensely fraught with evolved forms of political strife.[65] Rather than posit an economy of shock that functions to enlighten, Grimes posits a moral economy and the engenderment of audience inculpation and guilt. Grimes imports these cognitive and emotive units of experience from the moralistic, arguably didactic, aesthetics of both Ibsen and G.B. Shaw. He asserts:

> Pinter's plays similarly [to Ibsen] attempt to make their audiences contemplate their guilt [...] Pinter follows Bernard Shaw in using political theater to address the audience's need for a new moral self-definition. [...] Pinter's plays have at least an implicit moral appeal. The goal of the later plays is to shock audiences into an altered awareness of their true moral condition by exposing the violence done 'in their name.' [...] The implicit appeal to morality is a legacy of the Shavian model of political theater.[66]

Here Grimes converges with Billington in his linking of Pinter's theatre of the audience body to higher order thinking as an end; morality and guilt being the engines for a change that occurs somewhere along the trajectory from feeling to moral and social knowledge, what Grimes calls 'political self-awareness'.[67]

It is important to note, however, how Grimes's reference to David Ian Rabey's analysis of post-war British political drama and theatre informs his will to locate guilt – as a goad to political engagement, reflection and even action – at the heart of Pinter's political aesthetics, as much as Ibsen and Shaw. Looking briefly to Rabey sheds even more light on the convergence of Grimes and Billington's respective interpretations of Pinter's economy of sensory violence, particularly Rabey's understanding that drama (what he calls 'the most public of art forms') seeks

[62] ibid., p. 31.
[63] ibid., p. 33.
[64] ibid., p. 34.
[65] ibid., p. 35. Chapter 6 explores further Pinter's relationship to reason, the Enlightenment and moral responsibility in the context of his political discourse; an aspect and 'final' stage of Pinter's politics that Grimes's fine book does not address due, ostensibly, to its publication at the approximate time of the lecture.
[66] ibid., p. 27-28, passim.
[67] ibid., p. 219.

to 'unite its audience in a common charge of feeling',[68] an affect whose use value is that it 'works by means of an expansion of consciousness'[69] and whose ethical function is that it encourages spectators to embrace a moral that happens to be in contradiction with what the status quo accepts.[70] Grimes's catholic reference to a book whose subtitle is *Implicating the Audience* is poignant given his portrayal of Pinter as a purveyor of Ibsenian and Shavian morality and guilt (yet sans truth)[71] and, moreover, his repeated use of the word 'complicit' to characterize Pinter's audiences and, relatedly, 'indict' and 'inculpate' to describe the plays' action vis-à-vis those audiences.[72]

Elizabeth Sakellaridou follows suit, establishing her approach as phenomenological and arguing that the political economy of Pinter's post-1983 dramas is based on so-called 'aggro-effects' achieved via 'Beckettian methods', the performance of a 'subterranean effect' upon the audience, the instigation of a 'cognitive' process at the levels of language and image and the solicitation of particular emotional attitudes.[73] As opposed to Billington, Sakellaridou lingers for a time on Pinter's shock economy, and in doing so tilts more in the direction of affective experience. Pinter's later plays become political, she argues, as 'carriers of the senses and emotions',[74] and by means of deploying images that do not signpost specific ideological architectures and thus investments; this claim perhaps indirectly returning us to Godard's prizing

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[68] *British and Irish Political Drama in the Twentieth Century: Implicating the Audience* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986), p. 2.

[69] ibid.

[70] ibid., p. 3.

[71] Even though critics observe a changed relationship to truth in the post-1983 dramas, Grimes opts, understandably so, to not bring Ibsenian truth into the equation since by the time Ibsen's work appears on the stage in the late nineteenth century, truth and its apprehension have for the playwright and audience become *the* subject matter and themes, concomitant to which are 'the problem of disclosure' and the progression from causes and effects (p. 11). In the main Ibsen's plays portray truth as 'sacred and the man who betrays it in his heart will destroy himself and maim the lives of those who love him' but go on to link to it, inseparably so, 'the cardinal virtues or values, of freedom, responsibility, love, innocence, and joy [...] it is the recognition of truth that sets the characters free for growth and responsibility.' (p. 8) Una Ellis-Fermor, 'Introduction', *Ibsen: The Master Builder and Other Plays*, third edition (Middlesex and Baltimore: Penguin, 1958), pp. 7-26.

[72] 'The plays appear to doubt that we can even perceive the enormity of our political complicity. Pinter tries, vigorously and variously, to indict us for the political side we have already taken.' *Harold Pinter's Politics*, p. 35.

[73] 'The Rhetoric of Evasion', pp. 44-46, passim. What I am not addressing here, for lack of space, is Sakellaridou's claim that in employing these so-called 'Beckettian' aggro-effects, 'Pinter achieves the same "aggro-effects" that [Edward] Bond achieves through Brechtian tactics.' (p. 46.) One wonders what Bond – the first to take seriously the dramatic exploration of aggro-effects – would say to Sakellaridou's alignment of Pinter with socialist and Marxist playwrights. Referring to *One for the Road*, Bond asserted the following: 'I've seen my and the previous generation of writers leave the theatre or be driven from it or retreat into silence. Or they abandon their thesis – Pinter now finds that art is to do with politics after all! – and writes a play about torture which is an insult in its banality and irresponsibility. But it could be cated [sic] – entirely to his satisfaction. And that's what you will end with, someone who cannot speak of his age and who will be given literary kudos *precisely* because of that'. 'War Plays', letter to Terry hands, Royal Shakespeare Co., 4 December 1985, *Letters: Volume II*, ed. by Ian Stuart (Luxembourg: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1995), pp. 84-87 (pp. 86-87).

[74] 'The Rhetoric of Evasion', p. 44.

of just an image rather than just images, as discussed in the Introduction and expressed in Chapter 2. Binding up images and emotions, Sakellaridou observes of *One for the Road* in particular that it consists of 'a sensory (visual) presentation of an emotional state rather than a rational statement of an ideological position'.[75] While her opposition to Aragay's discernment of 'statements' in the dramas is clear enough, Sakellaridou's investment in the decidedly non-discursive and sensory economy of the dramatic aesthetics is prevented from investing fully in the audience body and affect as long as she remains committed to the notion that the work *presents* a preformed emotional state *to* spectators. Here we can see how numerous discourses that invest in expressly physiological experience (Billington; Grimes; see also Burkman, Renton and others in previous chapters) converge in their understanding, on the one hand, that emotion is imparted, if it is not signified within representation, and, on the other, that spectators are always already coherent subjectivities. Sakellaridou's argument for emotions that are given and the plays' apparent focus of ideological direction arguably preclude a more productive investment in the subterranean effects she sees being performed by the plays, for it is the latter which permits us, as a conceptual tool, to see how Pinter's dramas solicit audiences to engage in prepersonal and thus asocial forms of spectatorship whereby the egological contours of self have yet to coagulate.

As was rehearsed in the first chapter, emotion is an ideational-experiential zone that is not commensurate with affect. Falling under the umbrella of affect and emerging further along its experiential continuum, emotion remains an interest of phenomenology because of its action within the field of consciousness, and therefore its susceptibility, as an experience, to being read, narrativized and assigned to existing categories and models of thought. But it is precisely in this way that phenomenology can become problematic, the discourse of emotions often troubled by 'unreduced and uncritical presuppositions', a 'fatal surrender to the doxic element of common and good sense, and above all, the fraudulent duplication of the empirical domain by a transcendental field endowed with personal and egological dimensions.'[76] Despite the potential of 'subterranean effects' as a conceptual tool, it is Sakellaridou's embrace, and Billington and Grimes by proxy, of an idealist subject qua theatre spectator that sees her tempted away from the challenge of having to speak to the affective and non-narrativizable, and therefore back to the language of 'presentation', i.e. signification and representation, and back to a conception of spectatorship as a thoroughly conscious act. This predicament explains why Sakellaridou plugs her argument for subterranean effects into a discourse of 'cognitive selection' – an act

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[75] ibid.
[76] Constantin V. Boundas, 'Introduction', *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, p. 4.

performed by spectators – the 'logos',[77] narrative development and the provision of information, and in the end invests in the notion that Pinter's post-1983 dramas have a message-function and can control 'the emotional response of the audience to [that] political message'.[78]

In responding to the three critics' respective yet quite interrelated handling of the corporeal dimension of Pinter's later political dramas, it is important to note how signification's inducement of affective experience at the level of audience is in each case portrayed as simultaneously a preformulated structure of feeling or emotional category and as either an expedient to or derivative of higher order thinking: the solicitation of consciousness, self-awareness and demystification about political realities and the status quo. It seems that each critic's attention to Pinter's dramatic induction of violence within the viscera and sensorium is in the final analysis a critical vector that points to and connects up with a morally-oriented form of cognition and thought as the site of socio-political agency; this stroke effectively creating a Cartesian subject of consciousness whose being manifests precisely in its consciousness of its status as a thinking and perceiving subject. As with most idealists, the (shocked) body for these critics is the necessary path to a morally aware, thinking subject – a unified self that has control over and knows what it thinks and how it feels, even if it has no solution to the problems posed by the dramas. With Billington we find a linear path from the mind to the body, and with Grimes and Sakellaridou we find a linear path from the body to the mind, 'from the shock-image to the formal and conscious concept'[79] – the mind taken every time as the seat of consciousness. Aristotle, Descartes and Kant all come to bear here in their respective adherence to 'the principle that thought begins with something – an object, an idea, a phenomenon – that is given or, better, represented in *experience*', which means that thinking itself is contingent upon the 'articulation of or making explicit what is already given as a representation in experience.[80] This is precisely why these critics bind the shock affect to an extant image of morality, guilt or rational awareness, the sensory load invested with an ideological value, given a conceptual meaning.

While Billington, Sakellaridou and Grimes all characterize the experience of Pinter's dramatic politics as a process or orientation that involves and generally progresses toward consciousness and a centred and coherent subjectivity, I suggest that we look to the plays' production of violence upon the perceptual faculties (which is inclusive of the imagination) as establishing the conditions for the emergence of a spectatorial subject that 'escapes social

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[77] 'The Rhetoric of Evasion', p. 45.
[78] ibid., p. 46.
[79] Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, p. 154.
[80] Due, *Deleuze*, pp. 8-9.

integration',[81] doing so precisely by not being 'defined by self-awareness' and by attaining an immanence 'within its own acts.'[82] The continued resonance of the violence engendered in the facultative discord carries over into thought as it forms in extensity such that the spectatorial body is given to thought. Thus, our critical conception of the mind and body as hierarchized gives way to an imbricated mind and body: mind-body.

I would suggest that in any successful production of Pinter's dramas, we perceive them in a state of 'extension-intensity',[83] a state that does not begin with the play or with the audience but rather in the meeting of and between the 'two' bodies. Pinter's decidedly political dramas do not in the moment of their consumption impel the audience to reflect upon the experience of subjection to power because their affective immediacy induces, sustains and repotentializes onto-genesis and processual flow – the brevity of most of these plays certainly important in this regard – and as such requires and prompts a form of engagement that decentres our capacity to perform in the (mythological) role of a specifically rational and evaluative spectator. The following reflection upon the 1988 premiere of *Mountain Language* at the National Theatre is quite suggestive of this thesis:

> Watching MOUNTAIN LANGUAGE was the most agonising twenty minutes i [sic] have ever spent in a theatre [...] I couldn't speak at the end of your piece. The brutality and fear you created, and then extracted from the actors, gripped me until I could no longer bear the lump in my throat, and I was thankful to cry at the end. I will never forget Eileen Atkins sitting at that table, transmitting suffocating fear and bewilderment using only her left hand. It was almost unbearable.[84]

The spectator's précis of her experience of the play places us ever nearer to what Pinter's dramatic politics are doing, to how they reorient us from pain, violence and death qua political discourse to political reality as material and ontological presence. While a spectator's confrontation with specific political realities tends, as a result of an inheritance from the Enlightenment and its (Kantian) idealism, to solicit investments in focused acts of intellection and perception that isolate the ocular and mental faculties, this response to *Mountain Language* suggests the exaggerated extent to which dramatic media in Pinter's work travel across a spectrum of experience in the form of sensation before transmuting into a sign that disposes itself to being read in terms of symbolic meaning. Viewed thus, acts of perception and

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[81] ibid., p. 4.
[82] ibid., p. 10.
[83] ibid., p. 15-16.
[84] Phillipa Lubbock, 1 page typed letter, 4 November 1988, British Library, Pinter Archive, Modern Manuscripts Collection, Political Correspondence Box Add MS 88880/6/56, fol. 'Omnibus 88 and Mountain Lang'.

consumption in Pinter's political theatre begin with the arrest of thought and continually establish conditions that are propitious to any spectator's renegotiation of their own subjectivity.

Against conceptions of political theatre predicated upon intellectual enlightenment, ideological inflection and indeed the solicitation of a free-standing faculty of reason, the spectator's response to Pinter's 1988 play suggests that the 'brutal, short and ugly' drama, as Pinter himself describes it,[85] impels spectators to perform an *operative* form of thought. This is to say thought that 'is materially self-referential as opposed to reflective' and as such it 'absorbs possibility without extensively thinking it out, or extrapolating from where it is'; thought 'infolds without extending', it 'chooses according to principles unsubordinated to the established regularities of cause-effect' as an action which is '[n]ot an extending out of matter into thought; not a doubling of perception by thought' but rather 'a folding of thought into matter as such'.[86] The spectator's description is noteworthy for how it circumvents textual interpretation, and employs a language that emphasizes not content but dramatic expression and transmission as it characterizes the play's field of action: its circulation of power, its operations in terms what it can achieve and make a body do (specifically in the case of this individual). Note also how the description's report of a temporary loss of speech is indeed congruent with *Mountain Language's* subject matter and the fate of the mountain people at the hands of their oppressors. Here, in the language of agony, brutality, fear, suffocation and bewilderment and what amounts in experiential terms to the 'almost unbearable', one finds the non-structural condition of a molecular functioning that is affective experience,[87] and indeed the process of becoming that emerges with the intensification and sustenance of this order of experience.

The spectator's response to certain aspects of the play and to its dramatic movement and trajectory more broadly intimates an objective violence; this having nothing to do with *our* sympathy and empathy for those subjected to power on stage, but to do instead with a range of experience that loosens subjectivity, which contests selfhood. The violent, chaotic and therefore arguably untameable action *Mountain Language* performs, from the tensors within language and images and through them into sensation beyond the linguistic, is not a guilt-machine, as Grimes would have it (via Ibsen, Shaw and Rabey). I submit, rather, that we are confronted here with something other than the definition, prescription or even imposition of feeling structures, those

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[85] *Art, Truth and Politics: The Nobel Lecture*, in *Various Voices*, pp. 285-300 (p. 288).
[86] Massumi. *Parables for the Virtual*, p. 110.
[87] Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, p. 362.

which occasion the familiar and arguably (politically) unproductive emotions of guilt or even admiration, such as others posit,[88] within the audience mind-body.

Conclusion: shock-thought and the immanence of mind and body

Affect and the becoming it facilitates trouble those humanist readings which see Pinter's post-1983 drama as both structured by and provoking in audiences categorizable emotions such as guilt, sympathy, empathy or veneration to the effect of generating fascination and active engagement with the specific political realities fabulated on stage. In giving 'emotional "fullness" or "passion" back to the intellectual process',[89] and in enabling the subject to think thought with a force sufficient to promote a thinking of the whole as subject, rather than the subject (qua I/me) as whole,[90] the plays' affective economy presents us with a politics that is both antecedent and an alternative to critical arguments for specific political expedients and outcomes in the way of: guilt and complicity that are prefabricated and prescriptive, and thus emotively circumscribed (didactic) 'structures of *feeling*'[91] which always already belong to the dramas, and the distinctly socialistic argument for the facilitation of some form of enlightenment such as political consciousness, altered conscience, the solicitation of political reasoning, historical awareness or even the impulsion to political action.

I argue by contrast that the dramatic production of affective flows whose physiological and sensory intensities open spectators onto a plane of experience, one comprised of zones of processuality that potentialize thought, impels theatre spectators to think in a manner that is seated decidedly within the body and sensation; the imbrication of mind and body (mind-body) rather than mind/body or even the mind *per se* impels spectators to think away from extant axiomatic (and thus hegemonic) architectures of cognition and images of thought. The spectator's reflections on that evening's performance of *Mountain Language*, emphasizing its immediate and unmediated effects on and within her, check much of the analyses written about Pinter's work as these interpretations typically reinscribe the Cartesian subjectivity which the

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[88] I am obliquely referring to the impulse within the literature to read Pinter's representation of dehumanization as suggestive of human resilience. In the context of the post-1983 political dramas take Linda Renton, for example, who ekes out a productive hermeneutics in what is ostensibly debased by locating a 'jouissance' in Jimmy's overtly abject condition at the end of the play. She argues that Jimmy's monologue is testament to the indomitability of human life, particularly the psychic life; her claim being that the jingoistic characters represented at Gavin's party are unable in the final analysis to fully extinguish Jimmy, despite having pushed him, like so many other of Pinter's post-1983 victims of power, to the edge of life and dignity. See *Pinter and the Object of Desire*, p. 124.

[89] Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, p. 154.

[90] ibid., p. 153.

[91] I am importing this phrase from Marc E. Shaw's analysis of Pinter's earlier plays, specifically *The Dumb Waiter*. In line with many of the critics I have adduced hitherto, Shaw understands the plays to be imparting preformed units of feeling. 'Unpacking the *Pinteresque* in *The Dumb Waiter* and Beyond', in *Harold Pinter's The Dumb Waiter*, ed. by Mary F. Brewer (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2009), pp. 211-29 (p. 214).

spectator's reflections suggests to be swept away, specifically via the drama's solicitation of a style of embodied spectatorship that renders the experiential and the cognitive immanent. What gets lost in the critical will to impose theories after the experience of the event is how these dramas make palpable that '[t]here is as much thought in the body as there is shock and violence in the brain', and that '[t]here is an equal amount of feeling in both of them.'[92]

Against common claims that the meanings of Pinter's post-1983 political dramas are straightforward, I posit that their nuance and aesthetic value lay in the production of a species of experience which cannot be easily digested and which defies the prefabricated emotional categories and trajectories that one finds in mainstream theatre. In providing a dramatic cluster of speech and images whose singular violence prevents them from being consumed and digested in easy and familiar ways, the various semiotic regimes that respectively constitute Pinter's political plays subsume the cognitive within affective experience. Thus the space between immediate experience and conscious, concretized thought is widened in the production of a feedback loop whereby molecular intensities perform so as to endow thought with movement and fold thought back into experience such that new affects are produced. Indeed analyses focused strictly on representation and which construe meaning in terms of signification will see Pinter's later political plays as more easy to contended with; but I would argue that in inverse proportion to such coherence and ease the plays only become more difficult where sensation is concerned. Looking further to the potential of affect as this order of experience leads to processes of becoming when spectators enter into assemblage with these political plays is, I offer, precisely the means by which we might push beyond claims that Pinter's post-1983 work is predominantly a theatre of the facts about torture and political abuse, one which advances statements, solicits a form of engagement that is chiefly cognitive, a theatre directed at audience enlightenment, and as such one devoid of any artifice and politically inarticulate.

Furthermore, the absenting of the overt eruption of physical violence on Pinter's stage invites us to contend with the possibility that the performance of visible torture potentially has, as a semiotic system, less political promise than does the transduction of the same political reality and its violences within the fabric of language, primarily through insinuation and anxiety as they are produced in dramatic discourse comprised of dialogue, subjugated and static bodies on the stage and the *mise en scène*. Following this line of argument, then, means that it is not enough to draw a comparison between reality and Pinter's theatre, to compare the relationship between the torture going on behind closed political doors in reality *and* the genus of torture one

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[92] Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, p. 198.

finds aestheticized in Pinter's plays. Aesthetic composition in the context of the post-1983 dramas involves not the reproduction or (re)invention of the dramas' political others as they exist outside of the theatre so much as a harnessing of forces[93] that stands to create a new orientation within the world in terms of thought and experience. Thus it is not specifically in the overtly political content and the representation of political realities, agents and actions of Pinter's dramas that I locate a politics, but in the forces which issue forth from the other side of these signs as they occupy the same plane as that of representation and signifiance, while forming various different plateaus in that occupation. While there is undeniably a politics in Pinter's dramatic signification of politics via theme, subject matter and content, there is also a different yet related politics in the Deleuzian 'in-between' that I argue can transpire when audiences respond to these plays' solicitation of a bodily form of spectatorship as they form an assemblage with each drama. The discreet character of this politics is indeed its life in movement and sensation and its resistance as such to being characterized in language. But even though the becoming-in and -with the plays to which Pinter's later political aesthetics disposes us remains a challenge to both thought and language, it is precisely from language (the totality of dramatic mechanisms) that this becoming and indeed problematic arise. Pinter's political intervention post-1983 is to introduce spectators into onto-genetic process and asymbolic experience through the insinuation and deferment of actual violence, the order of which becomes violent precisely in its resistance to being, if not inability to be, fully digested and compartmentalized in the encounter. And this is the line of flight Pinter traces from beneath the surface of an apparently unartful and easily read political subject matter.

As has been argued here and in previous chapters, the singularity of Pinter's politics are predicated upon the genesis of sensation and express themselves in the embodiment of states of affairs, the capture of the being of sense of those states, the interruption and mediation of extant subjectivities and images of thought and the sustenance of thought that is processual, as opposed to a politics that are predetermined and coded by the direct, if not conscious, application of a defined and pronounced meaning, symbolism, message and therefore ideology.[94] It is important to reprise this dimension of the overall thesis as it moves us into the following chapter and its analysis of the political poetry, a genre which seems to have folded together even more decidedly Pinter's political orientation and investment in an economy of affect as an artist.

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[93] Ronald Bogue, 'The Aesthetics of Force', in *Deleuze: A Critical Reader*, ed. by Paul Patton (Oxford and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1996), pp. 257-69 (pp. 267-68).

[94] Following Hollis Merritt, Grimes notes: Pinter's 'politics have no reference to specific political groups or ideologies – as he says, he doesn't write out of "ideological desire"'. *Harold Pinter's Politics*, p. 26.

Chapter Five

The Poetry: Political Violence, War and Death, or the Poetic Capture and Reinscription of the Being of Sense

'[T]he mediatisation of violence and suffering creates a form of inauthentic social experience: witnessing at a distance, a kind of voyeurism in which nothing is acutely at stake for the observer'—Arthur Kleinman[1]

'It is significant that on the death of Graham Greene in April 1991 Pinter praised him for his ability to look beyond political rhetoric at the reality of 'a tortured naked body'—Michael Billington[2]

'Death has been degutted'—Harold Pinter[3]

Despite the widespread understanding that Pinter is foremost a dramatist, the author's substantial body of poetry indicates his investment in this medium. In response to Mel Gussow's assertion that '[s]ome people think you were an actor on tour who sat down and wrote *The Room* and became a playwright. The truth is that you were writing before', Pinter offers: 'Oh yes. As Jake says in *Moonlight*, I was writing poems before I could read, before I was born. I was writing, I should think, at the age of 12 or 13.'[4] But what is perhaps more important than the experience and time invested in this medium is that Pinter construes the importance of poetry, both his own and 'any poem', on the basis of emotion, 'emotionally' as he puts it to Gussow in a prior discussion.[5] While scholarship has engaged with Pinter's poetry, few have attended in a any serious way to the political poems Pinter began writing around 1991, just less than a decade after he had set off in the apparently new direction of the post-1983 political dramas, discussed in the previous chapter.

Amidst all the obituaries and responses to Pinter's passing late in 2008, Christopher Hamilton-Emery brought the political poetry and the plays into brief harmony as a means to contest the customary foregrounding of the dramatic work, and Pinter as playwright:

> As we remember Harold Pinter in the week after his death, his poetry has been largely overlooked. It's perhaps seen as a secondary impulse – a common enough argument when poets discuss playwrights taking a vacation in their art. But Pinter's poetry carries with it the authenticity and mystery which permeate his plays. There's a fair bit of dread, too [...] I think he got better as a poet as he aged and, sadly, as he became ill. I suspect that poetry's directness simply worked better for Pinter's deeply-felt convictions about

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[1] 'The Violences of Everyday Life: The Multiple Forms and Dynamics of Social Violence'. in *Violence and Subjectivity*, ed. by Veena Das, Arthur Kleinman, Mamphela Ramphele and Pamela Reynolds (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), pp. 226-41 (p. 232).
[2] 'American Football', *Haroldpinter.org*, ed. by Ros Fielden <http://haroldpinter.org/poetry/poetry_football.shtml> [accessed 5 September 2010].
[3] Pinter qtd. in Mel Gussow, *Conversations*, p. 122.
[4] ibid., p. 104.
[5] ibid., p. 27.

our country's [Britain's] recent wars (wars he felt were clear atrocities) and of course the dangerous and possibly monstrous effects of US foreign policy.[6]

This chapter takes its departure from these remarks as they raise the fact and problem of a paucity of analysis where the political poetry is concerned. What follows seeks to evolve discussion about that poetry and to bring it into the foreground from the margins, where it usually appears as an added dimension to examinations of Pinter's plays. This chapter looks at several of the poems written between 1991 and 2006 and argues for the centrality of an economy of sensation that is at once in line with the media discussed hitherto (the early dramas, screenplays and films and the post-1983 political plays) yet singular to the medium of poetry and political genre to which Pinter turned in the 1990s. Of principal concern, then, is how the production of various affects is central to Pinter's poeticization of the voices of both victims and victimizers, the abuse of political power and the threat of politically orchestrated violence and war.

The chapter proceeds in five stages: 1) a brief discussion of Pinter's collection *War* 2) an alignment of Pinter and Wilfred Owen on the basis of a shared ethics, one predicated upon an attempt to redefine the genre of war poetry in accordance with the subject matter in its contemporary form 3) a brief reading of four poems in *War*: 'Meeting', 'The Bombs', 'Weather Forecast' and 'Death' 4) an extensive reading and contextualization of Pinter's most controversial poem, 'American Football (A Reflection upon the Gulf War)' and, finally, 5) an examination and interrogation of reactions to Pinter's poetry. Additionally, because Pinter initially disseminated many of these poems via the mainstream media, attention to the media-contingent life of the works pervades much of the chapter. In analyzing the political poetry in terms of its affective economy and circulation in media contexts we are confronted, as in previous chapters, with the problem of subjectivity, yet now in a different space and context. Thus, considerations of subjectivity and the argument that Pinter's aesthetics can introduce those who engage with it into processes of becoming widen in this penultimate chapter to accommodate and explore not only the subjectivities of those confronted by the poetry, but also the subjectivities constructed within and by the media, and the various rationalities, ideologies and discourses to which the work gives voice. Concomitantly at stake, however, is Pinter's own subjectivity as a poet writing in response to political issues. In the broadest sense, then, engaging with the political poems offers new perspectives from which to consider Pinter's concern over the boundaries between and shared territories of the artist and the citizen.

[6] 'Pinter's poetry got under the skin', *Guardian*, 30 December 2008 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/booksblog/2008/dec/30/harold-pinter-poetry> [accessed January 2009].

Pinter and the Great War poets

While originally circulating within various contexts, Pinter's political poetry eventually coalesced into a collection entitled *War*, a response to the US-led war on Iraq following the 9/11 attacks on New York City and Arlington (Virginia). Acknowledging the contemporary relevance of *War* within a landscape of ongoing political violence and atrocity, the Wilfred Owen Association awarded Pinter the Wilfred Owen Prize for war poetry roughly a year after the collection was published in June 2003. While this is quite an achievement for a writer who is unarguably better known for his work as a playwright and a screenwriter, the award speaks volumes about Pinter's prominence and distinction as a contemporary voice in opposition to war and its human toll. There is little doubt about the vast difference between Pinter's political poems and those of Wilfred Owen, and by proxy even the strident and more violent work of Siegfried Sassoon and other poets writing in direct response to the First World War. In the main, Pinter's verse is 'of a much larger canvas' than Owen's.[7] There is also 'nothing mitigating' about it, for example 'like love or country and so on';[8] nor is there the sort of 'rhapsodizing upon the moments of transcendence, beauty, friendship, laughter and even joy' one occasionally finds in Owen, this being a product of the soldier-poet's shared experiences 'with his comrades in the heat of bloody battle'.[9]

Given that Pinter was a conscientious objector to the Cold War, and a severe critic of military action in more recent decades, his poetics obviate such an expression. Nonetheless, one does find in many of Pinter's poems a folding together of elements to be found in Owen's and Sassoon's, in particular a strange and even antithetical intermingling of Owen's 'insinuation and obliquity' and the musical effects integral to the poetry's meaning – a poetics which benefits from being read aloud – and Sassoon's willingness to take a political position,[10] his 'angry contempt for home attitudes' to war and the cataloguing of unrelieved horror, which produces a bludgeoning effect.[11] But it is the Wilfred Owen Association's announcement that Pinter's 'war poetry' can be said 'to be continuing Owen's tradition'[12] that foregrounds a specific congruence between Pinter and Owen that can take us beyond a simple and perhaps futile comparison of the soldier poet's and the Nobel laureate's poetry in representational terms.

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[7] Haya Harareet Clayton, word processed letter, 12 June 2003, Pinter Archive, Poetry Correspondence Box Add MS 88880/6/31, fol. 'War'.

[8] ibid.

[9] Owen Knowles, 'Introduction', *The Poems of Wilfred Owen*, intro., bib. and notes by Owen Knowles (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth, 1994), pp. 5-20 (p. 9).

[10] ibid., p. 12.

[11] ibid., p. 15.

[12] Michael Grayer, qtd. in 'Wilfred Owen award to Harold Pinter' <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/3534608.stm> [accessed 30 January 2007].

To continue in Owen's tradition is not simply to write poems against war but to demonstrate an affinity with the characteristics and functions Owen saw as befitting of war poetry. In his awareness 'that modern warfare is so "unspeakable" that it threatens to beggar conventional language, existing mythology and any surviving vestiges of patriotic warrior poetry', Owen was 'the first in a long line of twentieth-century imaginative artists to realise that cataclysmic war entails a radical renegotiation of the means and ends of art itself'.[13] Owen's formation of an ethics of poetry whereby the sublimity of the poet's subject matter ('cataclysmic war') was not only dictated by formal considerations but was hostile to language itself can be seen to have impacted on Pinter's own ethics and style as a poet. Hence the playwright's claim regarding his own earlier work that '[y]ou can fall on your arse very easily in attempting to express in, if you like, "lyrical" terms what is actually happening to people'[14] takes on a significant meaning in the context of the poems comprising *War*.

Pinter's mindfulness of how writing in accordance with certain modes or even traditions can potentially undermine the politics of conveying, above all, what is actually happening to people is a position, indeed an ethics, that transcendentally moors him to Owen – who in his famous Preface declares his own lack of concern with capital P 'Poetry'.[15] Owen's terse reflections in that Preface intimate a personal struggle to reconcile poetics and politics, to find a new and sufficient way to express their immanence. As Owen Knowles relates, the soldier poet's project of reconciling a sublime content and an appropriately matched expression of form was 'the cruelly swift unlearning process that [...] Owen had had to undergo. The realisation of what poetry could no longer achieve was essential to the process of defining the altered responsibilities and duties it must take on'.[16] Owen's developing lack of concern for capital P Poetry, and his calculation that aesthetic changes were in order if the medium itself was to be brought into accordance with the radical character of its then unique subject matter (WWI), are pertinent to this study as it resonates with the shift in style from Pinter's earlier poetics between 1950 and the 70s. The earlier verse, 'mostly strenuous, word-drunk, alliterative stuff', according to Billington, and its frequent clusters 'of dense and often impenetrable images',[17] segued to an increased lyricism in the late 1970s and early 80s, and eventually to the terse and forbidding poetics beginning in the 1990s with the political poems.

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[13] Knowles, 'Introduction', pp. 6-7.
[14] Pinter qtd. in Gussow, *Conversations*, p. 28.
[15] 'Above all', Owen writes, 'I am not concerned with Poetry'. 'Preface', *The Poems of Wilfred Owen*, p. 101.
[16] 'Introduction', *The Poems of Wilfred Owen*, p. 9.
[17] *Harold Pinter*, p. 29.

'Meeting', 'The Bombs', 'Weather Forecast' and 'Death'

Pinter's long-running 'obsession with the gulf between language and fact',[18] a concern to look seriously at what is actually happening as opposed to what imperious and prominent voices are saying about what is happening, attains a heightened expression in the political poems. All the poems engineer arresting images through spare and abrupt language. Like an anarchic poetic eurhythmics that teaches us to commune with sensation and movement, the works' 'pared-down and sometimes banal phrasing' seems intended to 'reach beyond the accidents and emergencies of common speech into something else.'[19] Published in the *Guardian* along with 'Cancer Cells' on 29 August 2002, 'Meeting' details an elegiac landscape, the poem a 'powerful, almost cinematic image of the dead':[20]

> There is a soft heartbeat
> As the dead embrace
> Those who are long dead
> And those of the new dead
> Walking towards them
> They cry and they kiss
> As they meet again
> For the first and last time.[21]

The tenderness of the interaction permits a certain lyricism to begin to take shape as the dead form a community, finding comfort, understanding, shelter and peace within this dystopian landscape. However, this aesthetic vector never reaches completion as the objective voice which details the 'meeting' discreetly reiterates three times the occasion for the performance of this most humane and gentle behaviour: 'the dead', 'the new dead', 'the long dead' and finally 'they'. The objective perspective offered to readers/listeners renders the figures in the landscape directly palpable, unmediated and wholly devoid of the speaker's bathos and nostalgia for his or her subject matter. The stillness of the scene and the delicate physical contact tilt at the lyrical, but the repetition of 'dead' and the funereal connotations of the ethereal figures' crying and kissing lift the image out of a lyricism that would otherwise offer pleasure, transmogrifying it instead into an embodiment of the remorseless factuality of politically orchestrated mortality, the context insinuated only fleetingly by the phrase 'new dead'. Here Pinter's classical investment in consequences obviates scenic description and replaces his frequent preference for dramatizing

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[18] Billington, 'American Football', *Haroldpinter.org*.
[19] Hamilton-Emery, 'Pinter's poetry got under the skin'.
[20] Peggy Butcher at Faber and Faber writes to Pinter: 'Your new poem – Meeting – is very moving and its powerful, almost cinematic image of the dead becomes more and more intense with multiple readings.' Hand-written card, September 2002, Pinter Archive, Poetry Correspondence Box Add MS 88880/6/31, fol. 'Meeting'.
[21] *Various Voices*, p. 274.

the kind of pragmatic discourses which justify, by means of discursive occlusion, the real of a person's or a people's subjection to power (qua *pouvoir*). In this way, the poem's foregrounding of ghostly bodies interacting in a mournful state – their dominant action being movement towards each other which culminates in a 'kiss'; their only speech a 'cry' – is significant for how it attends to and pronounces the singular properties of the victims' 'lived' plight.[22]

Following the same logic of the political dramas, the poem's investment in experience typically abnegates historical reference and specificity, the result being a landscape of atrocity that has little to do with erecting a monument or tribute to those subjected to political violence. In remarks no less pertinent to the present discussion, Susan Sontag reflects as to how photographic images can subsume narrative such that they solicit a 'different' act of remembering. Here we find a political intervention in so far as the image's action conjures pictures that can move its beholders in new and unfamiliar ways, as opposed to prompting basic acts of recall.[23] It is important to note that the production of a non-narratological image does not promote an *understanding* of the reality of war – which is, according to Sontag, often the task narratives propose to undertake and solicit. The operation involves, rather, the *absorption* or *accommodation* of a disturbance or a distressing event:

> Let the atrocious images haunt us. Even if they are only tokens, and cannot possibly encompass most of the reality to which they refer, they still perform a vital function. The images say: This is what human beings are capable of doing – may volunteer to do, enthusiastically, self-righteously. Don't forget. This is not quite the same as asking people to remember a particularly monstrous bout of evil. ('Never forget.') Perhaps too much value is assigned to memory, not enough to thinking.[24]

In the spirit of Deleuze and Guattari's critique of reflexive acts of memory, Sontag implies that to remember is to re-turn and re-play out *already established* modes of behaviour, patterns of thinking and being: a pre-formed subjectivity. Conversely, in mobilizing a monumental shock to thought, and thus exploding clichés, Sontag's ideal photographic image becomes political as it replaces the act of remembrance qua reminder with a Bergsonian-Proustian act of memory whose action is creative with a view to difference production. The 'haunting' Sontag mentions is a productive political act in that it envelops the spectator in a process whose solicitation to accommodate the excess of atrocity gives rise to change in the way of different and new 'passional' and emotional linkages or connections to the realities captured and embodied by the

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[22] As Pinter stated of his early poetry: 'If I write about a lamp, I apply myself the demands of that lamp. If I write about a flower, I apply myself to the demands of that flower. In most cases, the flower has singular properties as opposed to the lamp'. Esslin, *The Peopled Wound*, p. 227.
[23] *Regarding the Pain of Others* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2003), p. 89.
[24] ibid., p. 115.

image. Thus the image does not engender the kind of memory which returns the imagination to the past outside of the self but rather performs an act of fabulation, what Deleuze and Guattari call a 'monument' in their customary fashion of inverting conventional meanings and ideas.

The monument, for Deleuze and Guattari, is 'a bloc of present sensations' whose action is not a memory directed toward the past but instead a 'fabulation' that consumes us in the present.[25] This is to say a 'bloc' of sensation, prompted by aesthetic gestures, whose force and movement within and across the folds of the body decentres the subject, removes its ground, through the production of presence and immediacy and the continual amplification of them. The subject in question does not project itself into or onto the past so much as surrender to the past event's violent unbinding of the constructed image and conscious sense of self in the present. What Sontag describes nuances the difference between remembrance as an act which enables *being* and fabulation as an act which harnesses *becomings*, the latter introducing the 'audiences' into a flow of multi-sensory experiential genesis where the force of mobile and indeterminate thought traces new circuits and patterns within the folds of the mind-body. To be haunted is to be overthrown by affect, and therefore to be thinking operatively, as opposed to instrumentally.[26]

Another of Pinter's poems, 'The Bombs', simultaneously adumbrates a dystopian scene of nuclear fallout and resonates with the real of past instances of atomic destruction, those such as Hiroshima and Nagasaki or even the more recent NATO bombing in the Balkans and the American release of payloads in various regions of the Middle East. As with 'Meeting', the withholding of historical detail and geographical specificity conjoins us with the material landscape and the character of the specific outcome as an event:

> There are no more words to be said
> All we have left are the bombs
> Which burst out of our head
> All that is left are the bombs
> Which suck out the last of our blood
> All we have left are the bombs
> Which polish the skulls of the dead[27]

Alternating between the 'All we have left' refrain and the terse yet graphic physical descriptions, this call-and-response technique is familiar and serves Pinter well in other poems such as 'American Football' (1991), 'Death' (1997) and 'Laughter' (2007). Here, it is as if the poem sets

[25] *What is Philosophy?*, trans. by Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), pp. 167-68.
[26] See Chapters 2 and 4 for a delineation of operative versus instrumental thinking in the context of Pinter's dramatic aesthetics.
[27] *Various Voices*, p. 277.

itself the task of moving away from language, the rawboned and abating verse speeding towards utter dissolution. Repetition in this instance does not function to produce involved elaboration but rather to whet the three ghastly, fortuitous images – *our* (collectively) bursting head, the sucking out of blood and the dead skulls – such that *description* is eclipsed by the inherent movement and force of the language. Meaning gives way to the intimation of sheer experience.

A kind of nihilistic nursery rhyme, the rhythm of each verse is identical, save for the third line, which in its early placement in the poem effectively trips and confounds the reader or listener; amidst the dizziness already established by the poem's structural circularity, a low-level hum stimulates proprioceptive activity, perhaps even movement within the viscera. The circularity, redundancy and turbulent metrical and rhythmic patterns mark the poem's efforts to break language down with a view to transcending it, as if to move beyond speech to an order of direct experience, the entire process a scrupulous gesture for a poem striving to insinuate the violence inherent to an act of murder. In tokenizing the moment of the warhead's impact and striving to stage the event and immediacy of physiological rupture and partitioning, the poem elides past and future tenses, effectively creating a singularity of experience where readers are absorbed into a concrete, static and protracted instant.[28]

In 'Weather Forecast', the sixth poem in *War*, the anonymous and eerily phlegmatic voice of a newscaster narrates the end of existence:

> The day will get off to a cloudy start,
> It will be quite chilly
> But as the day progresses
> The sun will come out
> And the afternoon will be dry and warm.
> In the evening the moon will shine
> And be quite bright.
> There will be, it has to be said,
> A brisk wind
> But it will die out by midnight.
> Nothing further will happen.
> This is the last forecast.[29]

As an image, this poem is more complex than 'The Bombs' in that it splits into, on the one hand, a news anchor performing his or her duties and, on the other, imminent apocalypse. Though the poem's laconic tone and utter absence of urgency is perhaps its most noteworthy

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[28] Cf. Billington's claim in an interview with Donald Freed: 'Now, Pinter being Pinter does not elevate that into a general statement. He never makes his plays general statements, but deals with concrete and specific situations, and allows us to draw the conclusions'. 'Author of *The Life and Work of Harold Pinter*', *The Pinter Review: Collected Essays 1997-1998* (Tampa: University of Tampa Press, 1998), 123-39 (p. 130).

[29] *Various Voices*, p. 279.

feature, a differing is apt to result in two ways: First, by means of context – the stock and thus familiar meteorological descriptions become horrific against the stakes they entail. And second, through our having to negotiate the discomfiting schism between the speaker's emotionally divested voice and the awful realities that voice foretells, realities into which we are insinuated. As the newsreader relates the arrival of the ultimate atrocity in a perfectly casual and composed tone, as if this were any other weather forecast, the poem refuses to circumscribe and deliver a suitable or even singular emotional response, and the poetics become predominantly tactile.

The description of the weather conditions subsumes the narrative life within an economy of images that might resonate with readers/listeners so as to engender an embodied form of engagement and action vis-à-vis the poetics. The poem's percepts – its rhythms; speeds (the rising brisk wind returning us to slowness and then finally stasis); tonalities (phlegmatic); colours (sunshine and moonlight) – create a momentum that becomes operatively violent in light of its progression without human reaction and thus intervention. But it is precisely the mounting weight of that lacuna and its concomitant violence that invites a response. As a sign, then, the poem's reasonably apprehensible reference to the nuclear agenda in Britain and the US carries within it an affective-performative that catalyzes a sensory dimension within the images produced by the speaker's language in its specific utterance. As with 'The Bombs' this poem circumvents complex and familiar poetic devices in favour of a language that is austere and imagistically concise. Originally published in the *Guardian* in the 'Features'/'Culture' section[30] as 'the first bombs fell' on Iraq,[31] 'Weather Forecast' insinuates readers into its wrought and 'massive emotional space', a landscape which has been observed to give rise to a muted yet compulsive urgency.[32] The poem does not seek to construct itself as social observation but as social experience. Described as 'the most uncluttered of cries – without commentary',[33] even characterized as 'an anatomy of a play',[34] the brevity of the poem does nothing to diminish its visual richness and palpability.

Holding in mind Pinter's investment in the tension between language and action prompts us to see these muscular and quietly violent sketches as an oblique response to the pragmatic discourse of politicians and, relatedly, the mainstream media's framing of political realities, both of which frequently displace the sense of the realities which Pinter's poetics in turn

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[30] Also published on 22 March 2003 in *Aftonbladet*, the largest daily newspaper in the Nordic countries.

[31] M.C. Gardner, 'Harold Pinter's *War*: A Book Review' <http://www.anotheramerica.org/harold_pinter%27s_war.htm> [accessed 20 April 2010].

[32] David Leveaux, word processed letter, 1 July 2003, Pinter Archive. Poetry Correspondence Box Add MS 88880/6/31, fol. 'War.

[33] ibid.

[34] Donald Freed, faxed hand-written letter, 20 March 2003, Pinter Archive, Poetry Correspondence Box Add MS 88880/6/29, fol. 'Weather Forecast'.

strive to capture and render of moment for readers. Pinter's aesthetic attempt to charge linguistic description with a vibrating current of sensation, and thus reintroduce a force into language that refers to various political realities, marks a dovetailing of the author's poetry and his activism. The species of language to which he turns in either of these highly politicized practices is laden with images and deals with concrete and specific situations. The poems are indeed informed by the political idealism for which Pinter has been both maligned and lauded; an idealism which has manifested itself in his public defamation and critique of politically inspired calamity (see Chapter 6). The terseness of the poems, their immediacy and even putative aesthetic transgressions represent an affront to rationalizing discourses that appeal to specious utilitarian arguments and entrenched, even dogmatic, notions of what is politically realistic and possible given how the world 'really is'.

Perhaps more than any other poem in *War*, 'Death' does not return readers to the past in order to commemorate the dead, but renders death a monstrous problem that cannot, in the event of its manifestation, be displaced[35]:

Where was the dead body found?
Who found the dead body?
Was the dead body dead when found?
How was the dead body found?
[…] Was the body dead when abandoned?
Was the body abandoned?
By whom had it been abandoned?
[…] Did you wash the dead body?
Did you close both its eyes?
Did you bury the body?
Did you leave it abandoned?
Did you kiss the dead body?[36]

Here, the endless deployment of interrogative questions performs a stunning effect whose static field arguably defends against the will to engage in reflexive scansion and interpretation. The body takes on a life through the dogged petitioning of the questions such that its presence becomes unmitigated. It is curious that in order to invest the actuality of death with immediacy, the poem does not, as with those already discussed, aestheticize tonal landscapes. Instead it returns to language and speech, its aesthetic ballast a serialization of questions that have no apparent answer and which therefore put forward a problem. But just as the answers to the questions are elided, so is the identity of the speaker; the verses delivered up by a voice which is

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[35] 'Death' was written on the occasion of the passing of Pinter's father but subsequently appeared in Pinter's collection *War*, the recontextualization thereby recoding the verse into an overtly political work. For a further example of this recoding see Chapter 6, which examines Pinter's recitation of the poem in his Nobel lecture.
[36] *Various Voices*, p. 282.

anonymous and therefore cannot be located within the coordinates of power which some of the other poems delineate, as we will see shortly. While the speaker's voice performs from an objective position, the questions it petitions demand an immediate and embodied investment in the body 'represented' in the poem; the speaker's questions focusing on our relationship to the body more so than working to develop an explicit image of it. Even still, the speaker's repetitive coupling of the words 'body' and 'dead' buffet along and transcode the content of the questions – the dead body's status, how it was approached, treated and so on – into suggestive, partial images such that readers are prompted to work to gather together the suggestive visual threads and labour to construct an image of the body, concomitant to which is an attendance upon the style and performance of the language.

The circularity of the poem establishes the conditions for sustaining readers' becomings as the last verse-question does not imply finality or conclusion but only returns to the beginning; the last question echoing the first and thereby continuing the cycle of speculation and investigation seemingly without end. Movement and percussiveness are the principal features here as a modular question disperses through the stanzas. The increase in momentum and slight, rapid alterations through repetition amount to a haptic verse style, the poem's keeling of content and form noted by artist George M. Tokaya who describes 'Death' as 'a tautology comparable to the absurdity of war and cruelty'.[37] Here we see how the incessant deployment of questions seeks to repotentialize and sustain the sensation accrued through formal construction; the violence performed upon readers kept up as they remain unable to provide the information the speaker demands and are thereby forced to confront the factuality and presentness of the body. As such, Pinter's poetics appear as a site of confrontation which does not signal or circumscribe specific responses and emotions, while unequivocally appealing to the body and soliciting an affective and passional engagement with the tableau.

The mainstream media and media circulation

The resonance of political violence and atrocity Pinter strives to capture and harness in absorbing landscapes and the performance of language takes on significant meaning if one looks to the fact that Pinter selected the mainstream media as a specific venue for publication of the work. And this only expedites the blurring of his identities as artist and public citizen, even despite the efforts of both the critics and Pinter himself to make a distinction.[38] Guy Debord's

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[37] 'Poetry in Art', *Haroldpinter.org*, ed. by Ros Fielden, 2000 <http://www.haroldpinter.org/poetry/poetry_inart.shtml> [accessed May 2007].

[38] Pinter is deeply implicated in the critical tendency to sunder the artist and the citizen, his remarks to Mel Gussow in 1988 only adding force to an investment in his two identities and roles that had already been

assessment is that the mass media are the 'most glaring superficial manifestation' of the spectacle,[39] and as such the spectacle's 'mode of being concrete is precisely abstraction',[40] such that it 'corresponds to a concrete manufacture of alienation'.[41] In this light, Pinter's poetry can be regarded a counter-discourse whose function is to reorient readers to political reality through a reinscription of the sense of the material consequences of political action. Given Pinter's concern in recent decades with the public's relationship to various political realities – civilian death, torture, hyper militarization – his targeting of newspaper consumers arguably constitutes an attempt to shape the reading experience, and thus the consumption and apprehension of reality. Holding in mind the character and function of Pinter's poems as discussed hitherto, this logic plays out such that a reader who is predominately exposed to political discourses 'dealing largely with competing influences on policy, the processes in which they play their parts, and arguments about their relative merits'[42] will perhaps be struck by the overall contrast of the non-narrative, image-centric and affective economy of Pinter's poems.

So for example in the context of discourse surrounding the US administration's agenda in the Middle East, specifically the recent military invasion of Afghanistan and the overt preparations to once again invade Saddam Hussein's Iraq, the poems Pinter disseminated in the mainstream media would have provided a counter-'narrative' to extant for-and-against oriented discourses, but one whose significance emerges not so much in its provision of an alternative as in its engenderment of immediacy and eventness. The poetry, then, seeks to actualize the material realities which do in fact exist but are displaced and rendered virtual in media and political discourses that select and foreground certain moments from the multiplicities which comprise conflict in the Middle East; the singularities which Pinter's poetry extracts from those multiplicities being the 'excrement, vomit, urine, blood, mutilation, horror, deprivation, poverty' that exist 'underneath' the rhetoric.[43] Pinter's affective poems do not simply offer a contrast to the tacit conjectures of which media frames consist. Rather, by conjuring and galvanizing specific dimensions of political conflict they intervene into extant processes of mediatization, particularly those which model subjectivities and cue audience individuations that are affectively flattened and univocal, or which centralize rationalities in support of war. At the level of the

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solicited by the author's numerous and varied involvements as an activist: 'I understand your interest in me as a playwright. But I'm more interested in myself as a citizen.' *Conversations*, p. 71.
[39] *The Society of The Spectacle*, 1967, transcription/html mark up by Greg Adargo <http://marxists.org/reference/archive/debord/society.htm> (section #24) [accessed June 2009].
[40] ibid., section #30.
[41] ibid., section #32.
[42] Murray Edelman, *From Art to Politics: How Artistic Creations Shape Political Conceptions* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 38.
[43] Pinter in Gussow, *Conversations*, p. 73.

reader this marks the potential formation of new circuits for experiencing and thinking, a deviation from the hierarchies formed and reinforced through repeated investments in familiar and clichéd media styles, formats, narratives and even mythologies. While media content and format change slowly — if at all, save for the introduction and removal of stories — aesthetic moments within the overall discourse of a newspaper present opportunities for prompting a readership to invest differently in and to reassemble with discursive and narrative trends. This, then, is not to read *about* events transpiring 'over there' in the Middle East or at home, but rather to slip into a moment, however brief, of embodied readership, spectatorship and thought about the real of political violence that always lurks beneath the language of power, a real which mainstream coverage ritually elides or simply mediatizes in ways that do not readily establish the conditions for the new, and therefore for thought and experience that are destabilizing and differential.

To heed the images of Pinter's poems and thus linger on the outcomes of war, rather than the rhetoric that surrounds and often shrouds them, is to suspend, if only for a moment, the frames and organizing categories one is daily provided with by media. The disposition and positioning of the poems addressed hitherto within a wider set of media discourses concerning the Iraq invasion invite readers to see through the pragmatic form of discussion to the pragmatic *meaning* of art practice itself, which, according to Simon O'Sullivan, 'might involve the position of an [art] object in such a way that it disrupts the situation that surrounds it. It is in this sense that art can have a disproportionately large effect on its "context" [...] We might call this [...] a strategy of anti-connectivity, of deviation, disjunction and disruption',[44] specifically of the quotidian appraisal of a given reality. Art's primary role as described here is to interrupt the habitual links readers make between thought and language. In the context of Pinter's poems this is to solicit a reading of political discourse and events that hastens the forging of a relationship to (our awareness of) the outcomes of war; where the language of politicians on the campaign trail or of political hawks, say, tends to loiter at the level of attempts to engender either support for or opposition to specific political ideologies and agendas.[45] Drawing readers into a landscape invested in the minutia and sense of lived events and states of affairs, the appearance of the poetics as a violent moment within the larger discursive network of mediatizations of political reality would have stood to decentre the habitual and thus hegemonic (taken-for-granted) media frames: the basic cognitive structures that guide the perception and representation of reality,

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[44] *Art Encounters*, p. 26.
[45] Edelman. *From Art to Politics*, p. 38.

those parts of reality which get noticed.[46] Functioning as such, the poems that comprise *War* would potentially have functioned to restore, or reinscribe, some of *the elements of* a given political reality which the tacitly coercive force of media narratives and discourse can often direct a reader's attention away from.

'American Football'

Without doubt Pinter's most known and controversial poem is the one that proved the most difficult for him to get published – all British mainstream press to which he appealed stonewalling him. 'American Football (A Reflection upon the Gulf War)' is a fleeting yet highly jingoistic outburst, written in response to the American-led invasion of Iraq in 1991. In contrast to most of the terse, minimalist and omniscient-voiced poems Pinter went on to compose, this initial work stages amplitude, excess and overt violence; its title, subtitle and stanzas working in conjunction to ostensibly indict a particular political agent and regime, as the primary title indexes, against the backdrop of a specific political event, indexed by the subtitle. Here is the poem in full:

> Hallelujah!
> It Works.
> We blew the shit out of them.
>
> We blew the shit right back up their own ass
> And out their fucking ears.
>
> It works.
> We blew the shit out of them.
> They suffocated in their own shit!
>
> Hallelujah.
> Praise the Lord for all good things.
>
> We blew them into fucking shit.
> They are eating it.
>
> Praise the Lord for all good things.
>
> We blew their balls into shards of dust,
> Into shards of fucking dust.
>
> We did it.
>
> Now I want you to come over here and kiss me on the
> mouth.[47]

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[46] Thomas König, 'Frame Analysis: A Primer', *New Methods for the Analysis of Media Content*, Loughborough Department of Social Sciences <http://www.restore.ac.uk/lboro/resources/links/frames_primer.php> [accessed 15 September 2010].

[47] *Various Voices*, p. 280.

At first glance, this 'rough shout'[48] and ostensibly anti-American poem departs from its companions in *War* in the extent to which it foregrounds the discursive register. As a voice that speaks as if from the centre of power and employs personal pronouns and exclamatory punctuation, the poetics stand apart from all others as an inherently dramatic performance; this being a feature which renders it apposite to Pinter's post-1983 dramas and their many odious characters[49] and which is doubtless responsible for its having been performed on a number of occasions where selections of Pinter's work are enacted.[50]

While the obscene language takes centre stage, as it were, its overdetermination actually functions as an operator that places other milieus into specific relation. Upon repeated readings, the billingsgate actually begins to transcend its clichéd linguistic status and facilitates the discourse of We vs. them. This plateau of 'American Football' performs to make 'others' of the speaker's victims, whom the subtitle implies are Iraqi. As the speaker incorporates and refrains that familiar discourse of power that takes the form of a capital W 'We' versus a lower case t 'them' and is performed five times, the binaristic construction expresses the speaker's hatred of the other. The voice's admixture of scatology and We-them binaries dramatizes how the reduction of the other to naught through physical violence is typically bolstered by the violent otherizing of one's victims within and through language, making plain how such 'victories' are indeed Pyrrhic. The speaker's reduction of his human target to that which is debased within language – that which is blown into fucking shit and shards of fucking dust – performs the same dramatic gesture we see in *One for the Road*, *The New World Order*, *Celebration* and *Press Conference*, specifically as that discourse illustrates how 'the persecution of victims often involves processes of devaluing or dehumanizing them and language, again, plays no small part in this process.'[51]

[48] Dominique DeVillepin, *Legion d'Honneur for Harold Pinter*, France in the United Kingdom: French Embassy in the United Kingdom, ed. by Boris Tran <http://www.ambafrance-uk.org/Legion-d-honneur-for-Harold-Pinter.html> [accessed May 2007].

[49] The poem's speaker is easily placed along the continuum of Pinter's fascination with and critique of political actors such as Nicolas in *One for the Road*, the various authority figures in *Mountain Language* and *The New World Order*, and indeed the jingoistic and ideologically fervent characters in *Party Time*. The connection between 'American Football' and *Party Time* is not lost on Grimes, who compares the speaker to Dusty's husband Terry on the basis of his sexualization of violence when he threatens his wife as a means to silence her enquiries as to Jimmy's whereabouts. *Harold Pinter's Politics*, pp. 227-28, n. 3.

[50] Pinter has enacted this poem himself on several occasions, including his appearance on *The South Bank Show* with Melvyn Bragg, 29 November 1998. It has also been performed during staged readings of the author's work: for example at the Royal Court, London on 20 October 2005, performed by British poet Tony Harrison as part of an event to commemorate the revised version of *Various Voices*; at University of Leeds, 13 April 2007, as part of the ceremony in which Pinter was awarded an honorary doctorate; and at the National Theatre, London, as part of the 'Pinter Celebration', directed by Ian Rickson and presented 7 June 2009, an evening of Pinter's plays, prose and poetry staged on the heels of Pinter's passing late in 2008.

[51] Mark Batty, *Harold Pinter*, p. 119.

Regarded thus, the repetition of the We-them binary is not a poetic transgression in the way of verbal and imagistic redundancy, but rather a performance of a discourse instrumental to achieving political leverage and mobilizing populaces in support of the deployment of violence on other nations in times of conflict. The poem's subsumption of this discourse into an image of such thorough and nihilistic material destruction and waste links the real of political violence and death to political rationalities as they manifest in and through language. Jean Baudrillard's analysis of the American Administration's style of discursive engagement in Iraq in 1991 indeed emanates from this plateau of the rough and clattering poetics: 'To master the universal symbols of otherness and difference', he observes of the Bush Sr. regime, 'is to master the world [...] Those who conceptualize difference are anthropologically superior – naturally, because it is they who invented anthropology. And they have all the rights, because rights, too, are their invention. Those who do not conceptualize difference, who do not play the game of difference, must be exterminated.'[52]

The 'religification' and eroticization of violence

The transitivity of the obscenities in 'American Football' also gathers up and interlinks the otherizing discourse and the performance of a specifically religious posture. The salvos 'Praise the Lord for all good things' and 'Hallelujah' are ostensibly an appeal for providential sanctification of the violence, but at the same time they perform an emptying of the signifier 'the Lord' so that the discourse of religion and God can effectively function to 'bludgeon people into submission'[53] where resistance to military activity abroad is concerned.[54] In the way that the poem's production of violence seeks to capture and reinscribe the real of death into the image of the Gulf War and poem's fabric, the refraining of religious salvos in the speaker's monologue is an act of borrowing, or even artful theft, that recaptures, reclaims and reconnects the subject 'to the tremendously complicated realities' which the antagonist's discourse 'attempts to simplify, betray, and either diminish or dissolve'[55] in its celebratory tone.

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[52] *The Transparency of Evil: Essays on Extreme Phenomena*, trans. by James Benedict (London and New York: Verso, 1990), p. 133. Baudrillard does nuance the discourse of otherness in suggesting that its Janus head is, on the one hand, a desire to control and even exterminate and, on the other, a claim to understand, liberate, coddle and recognize (ibid., p. 125). And I would argue that Pinter too follows this line as his political aesthetic develops, for example in the poem 'Order' (12 September 1996, in *Various Voices*, p. 189) and in *Party Time* where terms such as 'peace' and 'order' are intermingled and conflated with constraint, control and violence as a political policy.
[53] ibid., p. 136.
[54] See Chapter 6 for a continuation and expansion of this discussion in the context of Pinter's political discourse, particularly in his Nobel lecture, *Art, Truth and Politics*.
[55] Saïd, *Humanism*, p. 132.

Admittedly, the poem is easily construed as an attack on American religiosity and one of its most popular sports. However, it is Pinter's unique production of a sign that collapses and intermingles sex and political violence that arguably pushes the poem's conflation of specific clichés beyond the expected and familiar and into the figural realm. The poem's eroticization of violence and performance of an othering discourse under an American banner permit the speaker's voice to be attached to several nodal points in the network comprising American power: a pilot unleashing his payload, a soldier at the ground level,[56] a hawkish politician, a technocrat who celebrates the *apparent* accuracy of the assault – this latter subjectivity suggested in the refraining of 'It works!' – and/or a fundamentalist preacher. Important here is the manner in which the speaker's burst of adrenaline in the moment of what appears to be military duty transforms the feelings of racial and cultural superiority and the affects of violence and the interspecies destruction he experiences into those which are decidedly sexual.

As a collage of implied voices that ultimately become sexually aroused in the exercise of violence and power, the poem not only betrays the political discourses and power posturing which emerge in Pinter's dramas from 1983 to 2002, it problematizes the overcoding of desire itself in the Gulf War event with sexual and erotic affects. The zenith of this phenomenon, as Baudrillard noted at the time, was the release of excessive and relentless payloads by American pilots onto Iraqi targets, and the manner in which it was conducted something of '*an orgiastic performance*'.[57] In its abruptness, the speaker's demand for the kiss as both reward for and a further mode of celebrating his evil deeds is not a lapse in logic or a *non sequitur* in view of the poem as a whole. The injunction is rather a strategic production of surprise and tension for readers that does not simply serve the poem's subject matter and keel content into form (in a

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[56] Susan Hollis Merritt shrewdly proposed these specific voices as a possible reading during a question and answer period following my delivery of this chapter in its formative stages at the 2007 MLA in Chicago, 29 December 2007.

[57] *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*, second edition, trans. and intro. by Paul Patton (Sydney: Power, 2004), p. 53. Baudrillard asserts the 'megalomaniac light show' and 'the orgy of bombardment' that comprised the American military's performance of the event. In full Baudrillard relates: 'The pilots no longer even have any targets The Iraqis no longer even have enough decoys to cater for the incessant raids. The same target must be bombed five times. Mockery. The British artillery unleashed for twenty four hours. Long since there was nothing left to destroy [...] The best part is that there was no longer anyone there, the Iraqis had already left. Absurdity' (ibid.). That Baudrillard's response to and diagnosis of the Gulf War event resonates in Pinter's poem is perhaps more than coincidence given that Pinter did in fact posses the French thinker's Gulf War book, which Mark Taylor-Batty has confirmed in conversation with me, having seen the text on Pinter's office book shelf. And by no means are the resonances of the Gulf War text limited to 'American Football', for it is beyond doubt that Baudrillard's infamous and widely misunderstood claim that the 1991 Gulf War 'did not take place' inspires Pinter's claim in both his essay 'It Never Happened' (the *Guardian*, 4 December 1996) and *Art, Truth and Politics* that it is as if the American administration's manipulation and intervention into the affairs of a vast litany of foreign nations in the post-war era 'never happened. Nothing ever happened.' See 'It Never Happened' in *Various Voices* pp. 234-37 and *Art, Truth and Politics* p. 293 in *Various Voices*. Also, see chapter 6 for an expanded discussion of this resonance and of the lecture more generally.

manner reminiscent of how the football metaphor is used to present the Gulf War invasion), but more accurately excavates Henry Kissinger's infamous claim that there is nothing more seductive than power and transmutes it into the 1991 context.[58]

Pinter's obscenities redux

Beyond the transitive operation the obscenities perform to link the religification and eroticization of violence, this genre of language becomes a political discourse in so far as it functions as both a fact and a truth claim. This is of course made explicit in Pinter's compelling anecdote regarding his dialogue with an editor for the *Observer* during a quite arduous journey to have the poem published:

> Look, the *Observer*, as a serious newspaper, has in fact published quite recently an account of what the US tanks actually did in the desert. The tanks had bulldozers, and during the ground attack they were used as sweepers. They buried, as far as we know, an untold number of Iraqis alive. This was reported by your newspaper as a fact and it was a horrific and obscene fact. My poem actually says, 'They suffocated in their own shit.' It is obscene but it is referring to obscene facts.[59]

It is indeed fascinating to see Pinter battling at the level of discourse to get into circulation his own specific regime of truth regarding the Gulf War event. And the justification he offers the editor suggests how the primary function and order of meaning the obscenities take on is not to critique the American figure but to forge a relationship between readers of the poem (which is to say, ideally, readers of the *Observer*) and certain political realities that were inherent to the Gulf War event. In one breath Pinter indicates how the poem effectively renders profanity a truth claim – his debased poetics infold content and form, which is to say the violence of the real event in 1991[60] implies a violent poetic language[61] – and as such the violent and offensive work comes to rival the *Observer's* coverage of ground-level events in Iraq.

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[58] In contrast to my reading, Marylin Mell suggests that '[t]his gesture, this rapid descent from a barrage of bombs to a sweet kiss, intimates how easily violence lapses into a need for tenderness', while Penelope Prentice reads the kiss as 'a shocking slant-reference for love'. Mell, 'Review' of *Various Voices: Prose, Poetry, Politics 1948-2005, Cercles: revue pluridisciplinaire du monde Anglophone* <http://www.cercles.com/review/r29/pinter.html> [accessed 10 September 2010]; and Prentice, *The Pinter Ethic*, p. 282.

[59] 'Blowing Up the Media', in *Various Voices*, pp. 221-25 (p. 223).

[60] Regarding the socio-political condition which arguably requires a language to match its disposition, Baudrillard claims of the twentieth century that the West's 'one generic scenario' is 'that of catastrophe'. *The Transparency of Evil*, p. 37. Cf. Nancy Scheper-Hughes's more local observation that the West is increasingly moving from 'highly organized form[s] of state violence [...] carried out to obtain total and unconditional consent towards 'a repugnant resurgence of the political uses of graphic, physical torture. In the new logic of the hypermodern state, crude violence is apparently once again free to reveal itself for what it is'. 'Sacred Wounds: Making Sense of Violence', in *Theatre and Violence: A Publication of the Southeastern Theatre Conference, Theatre Symposium*, Vol. 7 (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1999), pp. 7-30 (pp. 10-11).

[61] Roland Barthes, *Le Bruissement de la Langue: Essaies Critiques IV* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1984), p. 180.

At this point, it pays critical dividends to remind ourselves of Pinter's inclination as a playwright from *Landscape* (1967) onwards and into the post-theatre censorship era to find in obscenities a means to reinvest language with new meanings, and indeed to find new functions for old, familiar and seemingly tired words and phrases. Ruby Cohn's ruminations on Pinter's handling of profanity in his post-1960s drama is of great conceptual assistance. Pinter's 'obscenities', she offers,

> sometimes function literally, but they also shimmer in a wider spectrum of meanings [...] vituperation is not necessarily obscene in Pinter's plays, but it is always beautifully rhythmed [...] Sound and sense conspire in Pinter's enigmatic wit [...] The sheer economy of phrasing is noteworthy; delivered explosively, words are short and sparse, recycled through obsessive repetition. A seeming lexical poverty nevertheless yields rare flavour as cliché is seasoned with incongruous jargon, and vituperation soars aromatically [...] Their shaping sounds, layers of lexicon, and contextual savor are not always appreciated.[62]

Considering this in the context of Pinter's political poem, note how in modulating the expletives 'fuck' and 'shit' 'American Football' takes obscenities that are habitually regarded an impotent form of language and re-contextualizes them within syntactical arrangements – 'blew the shit right back up their own ass/And out their fucking ears', 'They suffocated in their own shit!', and 'They are eating it' – so as to tap the outwardly degraded language's uncanny potential as a sign system. Full of such possibility, this order of language, as performed in the poem, constitutes a form of linguistic 'disassociation' whereby the application of base phrases that describe base realities effectively challenges existing discursive and conceptual meanings, thus offering up (its own) new ones.[63]

Where *Landscape* is concerned, Cohn characterizes the dramatic dynamics of Pinter's aestheticization of obscenities as modulations,[64] which is to say the aesthetic involves a shuttling of words through lexical chains such that various 'meanings' are at every stage produced. But the critic's approach enables us to see in the context of 'American Football' how, through a process of modulation, the profanities signify both the utterances of the powerful and the lived reality of those subjected to power. Thus an artful bifurcation of the signifiers takes place whereby the poem's performance of the speaker's offensive rodomontade engenders and underlines the plight of his victims. The poem opens up a nihilistic vacuum where both speaker and the Iraqi

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[62] *Anglo-American Interplay in Recent Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 71, 77, 84, 59, 61, passim.

[63] Jeff Lewis, *Language Wars: The Role of Media and Culture in Global Terror and Political Violence* (London: Pluto, 2005), p. 20.

[64] *Anglo-American Interplay*, p. 72. Cohn establishes the concept vis-à-vis David Mamet's plays, and then goes on elsewhere to apply it to Pinter's work from *Landscape* (1967) to *Moonlight* (1993).

casualties circulate as affective objects. The primary semiotic gesture begins in the establishment and performance of the American figure, but then it achieves, through lexical construction and the convulsive rhythms inherent to the text, enough independence to constitute a new assemblage; what was previously 'a constituted function in the territorial assemblage has become the constituting element of another assemblage, the element or passage to another assemblage.'[65] This is to say that the billingsgate, as a code, catalyzes the other discursive milieus that are introduced into the poem: the otherizing discourse, the sexualization of political violence and the 'religification' of political violence.

While the repulsive detailing of human annihilation, excrement and body fluids travelling in reverse and thus unnaturally through intestines might well repel readers or listeners, consider how the signs can be seen to fissure and offer an invitation to commune with the dead. The overbearing presence of the victims emerges precisely by means of the speaker's 'poetic' absenting of them, which is to say the waning or absence of recognizable characterization is replaced with his detailing of their fate by means of synechdochic outbursts: the victims are 'shit', 'fucking shit', 'dust' and so on. Thus the profanity does not function primarily to characterize the American speaker, as it would appear at first blush. All the bluster and spectacle deployed in part by the poem's signs suggests what Baudrillard has observed of American military operations in general, which is that the 'very scale of the efforts made to exterminate the Other is testimony to the Other's indestructibility, and by extension to the indestructible totality of Otherness [...] On the one hand, the Other is always-already dead; on the other hand, the Other is indestructible. This is the Great Game'.[66] The speaker's dramatic report of having already performed violence upon Iraq is reminiscent of Pinter's aesthetic tendency to dramatize violent events such that characters drag them up from the past where they exist and bring them to life on stage through language performed in the theatrical present. In this way, the performance of a past, a history, that cannot be experienced but through the speaker's discourse functions as an operator, a vector, or an 'assemblage converter'[67] whose aim is not to remember the dead so much as invest our thinking about the dead with force, immediacy and resonance. Through a process of inversion, the more the Other is destroyed in language the less the Other can remain absent – and the more affectively painful the Other's return.

Hence the speaker's simultaneous performance of the role of victimizer and his capacity to articulate the treatment and fate of his victims. One finds an analogue of this aesthetic in the

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[65] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 357.
[66] *The Transparency of Evil*, p. 146.
[67] *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 358.

Marquis de Sade's writing, whose 'excessive and abundant [...] language *is paradoxical because it is essentially that of a victim*. Only the victim can describe torture; the torturer necessarily uses the hypocritical language of established order and power.'[68] The irony of course presents itself in the suggestion that a figure in some way affiliated with the American Administration under Bush the elder would speak about the Gulf War invasion in a language free of euphemisms and glittering generalities, a language that accommodates the victims by being articulate about their plight and subjection to the unilateral exercise of power.[69] If we take Pinter seriously, the truth value of the speaker's obscene diction and lexical constructions at once renders the speaker a writer of history – his narrative an ironic indictment of his own actions, and more generally of the exercise of US foreign policy – and an elegy for those subject to the speaker's rodomontade.[70]

CNN: the occlusion of catastrophe

Pinter's specific interest in the victory parades he witnessed on television at the time, a reaction to and consequence of the event and its mediatization, underlines the dramatic shift taking place in how the 'game' of war was beginning to be covered – and thus created – in much reportage.[71] In working this very seam, Murray Edelman posits that a compelling but misleading set of linguistic categories and the production of virtual spectacle managed with a fair degree of scope to not only occlude the catastrophe of the real in Iraq but to radically restructure the political agenda and restore public support for conservative and militaristic policies.[72] The combination of how the war was conducted and its hyper-mediatization effectively blurred the boundary between current events and entertainment realities, making it possible for spectators to

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[68] *Masochism* (New York: Zone, 1989), p. 17, author's emphasis.

[69] Pinter would of course go on to explore this aesthetic in later works such as *Press Conference*, and even use such means to target Bush the younger in the later stages of his Nobel lecture: where he volunteers for the job of the American President's speech writer, but then finds himself surreptitiously entering into the role of President, the leader thus becoming the subject of critical scrutiny and ironization. Thus from 1991 to 2005 we see Pinter bifurcating signs as a means to politicize, to produce multiple voices, those of the victimizer and his victims. See Chapters 1 and 2 for a discussion of this aesthetic in the context of the plays and films.

[70] Cf. Ruby Cohn's assertion that '[e]xceptionally, the clichés of Pinter's *Moonlight* become a colloquial requiem'. *Anglo-American Interplay*, p. 69.

[71] Pinter relates how the poem 'sprang from the triumphalism, the *machismo*, the victory parades, that were very much in evidence at the time.' 'Blowing Up the Media', p. 221.

[72] *From Art to Politics*, p. 114. Reflecting on the mainstream media representation in the run up to the 2003 invasion of Iraq, Bill Moyers asserts that '[a]s we saw in the run-up to the invasion of Iraq, the plantation mentality that governs Washington turned the press corps into sitting ducks for the war party, for government, and neoconservative propaganda and manipulation. There were notable exceptions, Knight Ridder's bureau, for example, but on the whole, all high-ranking officials had to do was say it, and the press repeated it until it became gospel.' 'Speech at the National Conference for Media Reform' <http://www.freepress.net/news/ 2035727April2007/> [accessed 18 January 2007]. Relatedly, Herbert J. Gans argues that '[i]f people have opinions about a coup d'etat in a small Asian republic, these have probably been affected by the news media.' (p. 77) In an endnote he adds: 'On such stories as on other foreign news, the news media often stay close to the government's foreign policy.' *Democracy and the News* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 148.

lurch quite effortlessly – perhaps even half consciously – between a live war transpiring on one channel and a live game of gridiron broadcast on another.

Even further, the Gulf War was not simply there to be digested along with the spectacle of live sport, a mere channel change away; it actually consisted in great part of a cross-fertilization of sporting-event discourses and visual formatting. CNN is of course the benchmark example here, the Gulf War enabling this American station, as practically a mirror reflection of the US military, to assert its identity most vigorously and achieve hegemony beyond its own borders. The news provider's formatting and content were comprehensive such that they bundled together many of the more striking elements of current affairs and entertainment. Audiences in the West were brought information round the clock from the front lines via embedded journalists, a cast of news anchors whose remarkably uniform physical appeal was in fact a signifier that competed with the import of the content and/or folded in with its exposition qua pageantry and visual representations of a violence so 'real' – yet devoid of any material consequence – it could be taken as unreal (i.e. some form of digital or cinematic emulation). With all its visual and rhetorical trimmings, the Gulf War appeared both amidst and as an admixture of innumerable related and unrelated images. Montaged as such, the boundary between various realities was easily blurred, while the corollary was of course a blurring in how audiences ultimately received these realities.[73]

Against this backdrop, the unpublished portions of the correspondence between Pinter and the *Observer's* editor are exemplary, the latter attempting to persuade Pinter that

> [t]he difference is that I now know for sure, as opposed to guesswork, that a large number of readers would indeed be angry enough to give up the paper, especially as your poem contains many more expletives than the Granta ad. It also asserts them in a powerful anti-American context which many (though by no means all) readers would also dislike, *especially now, when the Americans (at long last) seem to be doing the right thing in the Middle East.*[74]

On the one hand we can observe the extent to which the retention of a readership colonizes the editor's decision making process in the matter; while on the other more pertinent hand we must note how the editor of what is ostensibly a liberal newspaper appears subject to the ascendant

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[73] On this matter, Gans offers that '[j]udging by the polls, many people are unaware of the exact boundaries between the news and the entertainment media and can therefore combine them into the general media scapegoat.' *Democracy and the News*, p. 87.

[74] Donald Trelford, typed letter on *Observer* letterhead, 6 November 1991, my emphasis. In response, Pinter wrote: 'I appreciate all the thought you've given to the matter of my poem. Your decision not to publish it, however, I find sadly eloquent'. Faxed hand-written letter, 7 November 1991. Both letters in Pinter Archive, Poetry Correspondence Box Add MS 88880/6/29.

spin and media whitewashing of the Gulf War.[75] By contrast, the following remarks suggest that 'American Football' did to some extent perform a mediating function:

> In his poem 'American Football: A Reflection Upon The Gulf War', Pinter comments on the circus-like atmosphere surrounding the original Gulf War (and all modern televised wars). For me it really hits home when i [sic] think about how frustrating and confusing it was to watch the sanitized/televised version of our 'victory' in the war, while at the same time being painfully aware of the death, destruction and disease we were spreading on the ground.[76]

As Pinter's verse works the very seam these remarks pressurize, its production of poeticized facts about the Gulf War which pick up expressive force in sensation creates difference as flight from the repetition in opinion offered by the mainstream media in its customary deferral to historical wisdom and journalistic platitudes.[77]

As a response to this phenomenon, the speaker's 'savage' discourse in 'American Football' effectively 'blew the euphemisms off the rhetoric that followed Operation Desert Storm', as Michael Pennington put it in his obituary for Pinter that appeared in the *Independent*.[78] As a speech act, the poem effectively cut through the spectacle, displacement and various phrases – ubiquitous at the time and employed in subsequent conflicts – that were intended to engender the kind of emotions and investments in this reality that would not likely effect differential forms of experience and thought. The phrases which come quickest to mind are those designed to convince media consumers that the war was bloodless: 'smart bombs', 'low intensity conflict', 'collateral damage', and 'clean' and 'minimalist war'.[79] It is precisely these

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[75] Well-supported arguments for the media's role in the promotion and justification of the Gulf War can be found in Edward S. Herman, 'The Media's Role in U.S. Foreign Policy', *Journal of International Affairs* 47.1 (Summer 1993), 24-45; and Jonathan Mermin, *Debating War and Peace: Media Coverage of U.S. Intervention in the Post-Vietnam Era* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999). In relation to the most recent (2003) Iraq War, see David Dadge, *The War in Iraq and Why the Media Failed Us* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2006).

[76] 'American Football – Hot Dogs – Apple Pie – Chevrolet', *The Occasional Occasion*, 13 October 2005 <http://occasional-occasion.blogspot.com/2005/10/american-football-hot-dogs-apple-pie.html> [accessed 16 July 2009].

[77] Edelman, *From Art to Politics*, p. 59.

[78] 'Harold Pinter: Nobel Prize-winning playwright and poet who dominated British theatre for four decades', *Independent*, 'Obituaries', 26 December 2008 <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/harold-pinter-nobel-prizewinning-playwright-and-poet-who-dominated-british-theatre-for-four-decades-1211444.html> [accessed 26 December 2008].

[79] Bill Moyers provides a more recent example in his observation of the aftermath of the 2003 invasion of Iraq, an occupation in the guise of reconstruction, diplomacy and the engenderment of freedom and democracy: 'They have even managed to turn the escalation of a failed war into a "surge," as if it were a current of electricity through a wire, instead of blood spurting from the ruptured vein of a soldier'. 'Speech at the National Conference for Media Reform'. And finally, a contemporary example of such language usage is American president Barack Obama's circulation of the phrase 'smart power' as a means to reframe the ongoing struggles in Afghanistan and Iraq and to focus on the diffusion of conflict in certain places while other geopolitical irruptions take place in regions such as Pakistan and Sommalia. In 2009, Euronews reported: 'In a swipe at the previous administration, newly confirmed Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said it was time to use smart power. "The president is committed to making diplomacy and development the partners in our foreign policy

obfuscations and elisions that are able to numb readers to the moral ambiguity, decadence and 'ressentiment', a hostility towards life, bound up in the exercise of political policy's more violent and nihilistic aspects, but which are also able, more importantly, to squelch and abstract the sense of being which catalyzes thought and prevents its abstraction. So the various violences produced in the poem's visual economy bring another media frame to the reader experience with which one might regard and engage with events whose intensity and force in extensity, higher order thinking, can decompose when 'encrusted with the information which represents them'.[80] Thus the poem can be seen to perform as an affective speech act, one that is potentially capable of vivifying and altering a situation in the way of giving 'sense or orientation to our world', and in so doing inspire 'us to produce further differences and further worlds.'[81]

'God Bless America'

Folding together the milieus of religion and political violence, 'God Bless America' (2003) locates readers/listeners at the margins of the conflict as it enacts a world in which the American military's global ambition and near-global reach are both sanctioned by an exclusively Christian deity:

> Here they go again,
> The Yanks in their armoured parade
> Chanting their ballads of joy
> As they gallop across the big world
> Praising America's God.
> [...] And all the dead air is alive
> With the smell of America's God.[82]

The poem's branding of God as American in the final line illustrates how the elite of that nation, both government and military, have exclusive access to providence; they do not worship but instead control or have in some way appropriated God as a tool for political and military leverage, if they have not entered into the role of God themselves.

But the poem's other more interesting aesthetic plateaus fold together the spectacle of the US military's performance of power and the ground-level consequences. Its lexical chain

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along with defence. We must be smarter about how we exercise our power," she said.' Clinton qtd. in 'Obama Aiming to Use Smart Power', *Euronews*, 23 January 2009 <http://www.euronews.net/2009/01/23/obama-aiming-to-use-smart-power/> [accessed July 2010].

[80] Paul Patton observes: 'As consumers of mass media we never experience the bare material event but only the informational coating which renders it "sticky and unintelligible" like the oil-soaked sea bird'; meanwhile we are provided the impression of nearness, that we are confronted with 'the tangible par excellence'. 'Introduction', *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*, p. 10.

[81] Claire Colebrook, 'Introduction', *The Deleuze Dictionary*. p. 3.

[82] *Various Voices*. p. 276. 'God Bless America' first published in the *Guardian*, G2. on 22 January 2003; in *the Daily Mirror* and *Curo Päische ideen* the next day; and in *Nueveo Amanecer* on 12 April that same year.

begins with the spectacle and performance of power: 'The yanks in their armoured parade/ Chanting their ballads of joy/ As they gallop across the big world/ Praising America's God' — but quickly spills into the material realities: 'The gutters are clogged with the dead/ The ones who couldn't join in'. The following cluster of lines gives way to an awful landscape that foregrounds the nameless beings upon whom the powerful Americans inflict violence, devastation and death, the gutters clogged with the decimated bodies of those 'who couldn't join in', who refused to sing along — the 'couldn't' emphasizing their exclusion from any potential choice or empowerment — and who have lost their voices and have 'forgotten the tune'. Following this, the dystopian landscape and parade of death are mapped out in such a way that the reader is ultimately subsumed within the apocalyptic scene. At line 11, the victim(s) upon whom the violence has hitherto been performed begins to double, via the pronoun 'your', as the reader's own experience:

> Your head rolls onto the sand
> Your head is a pool in the dirt
> Your head is a stain in the dust
> Your eyes have gone out of your nose
> Sniffs only the pong of the dead
> And all the dead air is alive
> With the smell of America's God.

Not unlike the function of obscenities as operators in 'American Football', pronouns in this poem perform transitively to the effect of constituting a new assemblage. In their specific aestheticization, these parts of speech shuttle readers from a seemingly distanced, objective perspective in proximity to the anonymous speaker to a position as object within the violent landscape, which the speaker continues to detail objectively and at the margins of the performance of American military power. This passage from one declension to another is substantive to the poem's politics for it moves readers from the verbal description of political violence to material confrontation with and experience of it.

From a decidedly representational standpoint, the first line, 'Here they go again', at once observes a militaristic trend and inflects that observation with an emotion easily readable as exasperation and disapproval and which can be attached to both the victims of the violence and the watching world. But the transduction of the same pronoun throughout the poem effectively 'others' the Americans' behaviour, contesting it through the production of a position in opposition to the scene: 'Here *they* go again [...] *their* armoured parade/ Chanting *their* ballads of joy/ As *they* gallop across the big world'.[83] These poetics certainly provide a counter-discourse

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[83] *Various Voices*, p. 256.

and image to those which at the time of the Gulf War gave the impression that both the Western world and even most Iraqis welcomed the American invasion. The styling of the pronoun 'they' constructs a voice that observes and relates the actions of those (ab)using power from its position at the margins. And the pronominal usage effectively inverts the We-them discourse one finds in 'American Football' so that it is, quite ironically, those responsible for the destruction in the poem that are, in the end, otherized. At the same time, the poem confronts emergent simulacra of war with the kind of force that gets lost in these mediatized signs' adulteration of the real of violence and death.[84]

'God Bless America' does not attempt to speak 'for' the other vis-à-vis America's exercise of an oppressive and violent foreign policy, but instead produces a differing by establishing the conditions for an affective becoming-other. And by no means do these conditions insist upon the provision of a perspective that is authentic to the experiences of those who are made others, and indeed punished, on the basis of occidental criteria of evaluation, for the difference they betray. Rather, it is an embodied orientation to the material violence to which the other is subjected which might loosen the contours of a Western liberal subjectivity, specifically one modelled and consolidated through the daily inundation of media discourses and sign systems which sustain the alterity of all those 'refusing to sing', as the poem goes.

The politics of aesthetics: detractions and criticisms

In light of these unorthodox poetics, it is unsurprising that Pinter's work and reputation as a contemporary war poet have summoned a number of adverse reactions. Negative responses to the poems typically take issue with their foul language and an apparent lapse in poetic decorum and aesthetic sophistication. Criticism of this order most frequently stems from an axiomatic critical stance stipulating that a poet must render her or his subject matter eloquently and beautifully and, furthermore, that the poet's voice must not resonate within the poem in the form of subjective opinion. Rex Murphy of the *Globe and Mail*, one of Canada's two national newspapers, serves to exemplify my second argument regarding the opinions and assumptions informing productive critical evaluation. Admitting to having never read a Pinter play, Murphy responded to the Nobel committee's choice of Pinter for that year's prize by critiquing Pinter's collection *War*:

> It is worth noting that before winning the Nobel this week, Mr. Pinter [...] won the Wilfred Owen award, which is I think unfortunate. For Wilfred Owen was a real poet [...] Owen, unlike Mr. Pinter, struggles upward toward his subject. One may almost see him craving to find the unique set of words, the singular rhythms and images, which

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[84] Patton, 'Introduction', *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*, pp. 7-8.

alone can attempt to communicate the desolation, horror and pity of his vast subject. [...] The difference, I think, is clear and simple. Mr. Pinter is performing politics. Wilfred Owen is writing poetry.[85]

Murphy's appraisal of Pinter's rough and violent poetics is particularly important because even while the journalist acknowledges war and political violence to be legitimate subject matter for poetry, indicated in his prizing of Owen's verse, he nonetheless subjects Pinter's work to an 'imperative of decorum, or the tyrannical bienséance', as this image of thought surely comes down to Murphy from the seventeenth-century moderns and, in heightened form, the Enlightenment.[86] What this means is that the critic's balancing of Pinter's verse against Owen's is narrowed in its criteria, his evaluation rooted in a demanding and refined idea of eloquence, formal beauty and, above all, taste.

Even within Pinter scholarship one finds this attitude to the political poetry. In his essay 'Pinter as Celebrity', Harry Derbyshire invokes 'American Football' to corroborate his thesis regarding Pinter's public identity as a site of discursive and conceptual conflict. Observing the poem's 'controversial subject matter, [and] Anglo-American culpability for wartime atrocities in 1991', Derbyshire adduces a few examples of voices in support and opposition to the Gulf War poem, and characterizes it himself as '[a]nother instance of Pinter's literary style eclipsing the point which he is attempting to make'.[87] '[W]hatever its artistic merit,' he concludes, 'a poem which contains the lines, "We blew the shit right back up their own ass/And out their fucking ears" clearly places itself at risk of suppression on the grounds of obscene language. Because it is couched in a poetic form, Pinter's critique is inevitably open to objections of a non-ideological nature'.[88] On the one hand, Derbyshire's belief that 'non-ideological' objections in fact exist is curious if we consider that any form of judgment and interpretation is always already inflected and driven by molar ideas and investments that bear the trace of a politics in so far as they exist in a relationship of mutual presupposition to political fields of action in a putatively discrete public sphere.[89] On the other hand, his remarks seem to embrace the notion that obscene language and poetry do not reconcile 'naturally' or easily. Both propositions can be said to derive

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[85] 'The IgNobel versifications of Harold Pinter', *Globe and Mail*, Comment, A29, 15 October 2005.

[86] Matei Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity: Modernism, Avant-garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Postmodernism*, eighth edition (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987), p. 30.

[87] 'Pinter as Celebrity', in *The Cambridge Companion to Harold Pinter*, ed. by Peter Raby (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 230-45 (p. 233).

[88] ibid.

[89] On the linkage between the micro and the macro political, domestic fields of action and the so-called public sphere, consider Pinter's response to Gussow's assertion that Pinter's screenplay *Turtle Diary* 'has no political message': 'No, *Turtle Diary* is about lonely people. But there's a link between all these concerns in the end. Don't you think?' *Conversations*, pp. 72-73.

from the assumption – an image of thought and indeed rampant Enlightenment trend – concerning poetry's apparent stylistic privilege over *and* different social function from prose.

Via Mikhail Bakhtin, Mary Klages observes that '[p]oetry, despite [Philip] Sidney's claim to the contrary, has always functioned almost exclusively on an aesthetic level. Poetry is like a painting that hangs on the wall; prose is like a piece of kitchen machinery'.[90] The acclaimed Scottish poet Don Paterson provides further evidence of this underlying assumption about poetry's privileged status as he avers, in response to Pinter's verse, that '[t]o take a risk in a poem is not to write a big sweary outburst about how crap the war in Iraq is, even if you are the world's greatest living playwright. *Because anyone can do that.*'[91] There are a number of similar reactions to the poem that are circulating on the Internet, many of which defer to the commonplace axiom that even a child could produce this kind of verse.[92] Two specific assumptions which inform this critique are worthy of consideration and are addressed below.

The first, I would suggest, pertains specifically to the use of obscene and debased language in the poems. The mere presence and circulation of obscenities is sufficient to edge many readers hastily from their encounter with this sort of shocking debasement to their sedimented opinions about its role and function in the context of aesthetic works, concomitant to which is the place of foul and offensive words within language in general. Take, for example, David Lan's character Willy in *Painting a Wall* (1974) as he betrays a specific politics of language in his expression of a common enough position regarding profanity. Although "[t]hey's just words that come out', he – like so many of us – is adamant – that

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[90] 'Mikhail Bakhtin' <http://www.colorado.edu/English/courses/ENGL2012Klages/bakhtin.html> [accessed 19 April 2010]. Additionally Klages states: 'Poetry is meant to be an art form, to be (and to create) something beautiful; fiction, on the other hand, is a kind of rhetoric, a literary form meant to persuade or to present an argument, not to produce an aesthetic effect. These definitions come largely from historical trends: the novel does come from the prose traditions of persuasion. Poetry is not without its didactic function, certainly: as many critics from Sir Philip Sidney on have noted, the purpose of art is "to delight and to instruct." But generally poetry has been associated with the aesthetic function ("delight") and novels with the didactic function ("instruct").' (ibid.)

[91] Paterson qtd. in Charlotte Higgins, 'Pinter bows out as playwright', *Guardian*, Arts and Entertainment, 20 October 2004 <http://www.guardian.co.uk.uk_news/story/0,1339731,00.html> [accessed January 2007], my emphasis.

[92] The following sources are a few examples which circulate on the Internet: 'Harold Pinter "American Football – A Reflection on the Gulf War"', *Stupid and Contagious* <http://stupidd.blogspot.com/2008/12/harold-pinter-american-football.html> [accessed April 2009]; David Aaronovitch, 'Saddam has the last word', *Guardian*, 27 July 2004 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2004/jul/27/news.davidaaronovitch> [accessed April 2009]; Pat Holt, 'American Football' post and discussion, archived columns, *Holt Uncensored*, 8 November 2006 <http://www.holtuncensored.com/members/column397.html> (#397) [accessed April 2009]; Daniel Finkelstein, 'Warning: what you are about to read is f****** poetic'. *Times*, 9 March 2005 <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/columnists/daniel_finkelstein/article422346.ece> [accessed April 2009]. Also, for a critique of 'American Football' in hardcopy see Tim Kendall, *Modern English War Poetry* (Oxford and New York: Oxford, 2006), p. 242, and p. 661 for Pinter's war poetry in general.

they don't mean nothing so when they's out they's like bars around me – bars that keeps me doing the same things – thinking the same things – not letting me out to grow – to learn new words.... I can't go and talk to anyone cause all I can say is fuck and shit. That's not enough.[93]

The chief assumption and message here is that this order of language is clichéd to the effect of preventing effective action and thought. As such, swearing is not only unoriginal, it constrains a productive existence. Willy's assumption about this genre of language is important to reflecting on its appearance and, ultimately, its function in 'American Football', for doing so enables us to interrogate the criticism and in the run of this chapter to engage more productively with the poetics than has been done.

The first problem with the defence against obscenities, and relatedly the rejection of Pinter's various aesthetic poverties, is that the evaluative principle trumps attention to the performance and function of language within its specific context of utterance. Pinter's obscenities are therefore understood to have some kind of free-standing application and meaning which transcend style, usage and context. Consider, however, that expletives are no different than any other linguistic structure in that they are not autonomous from the circumstances of their utterance and entry into dialogue and performance with other words in a specific linguistic chain or discursive network. On this ground, I will claim that Paterson's and Derbyshire's criticisms of 'American Football' do not see the trees through the forest of their assumptions and principled understanding of decorous versus indecorous words. To be sure, this is an expression of an elitist sentiment[94] whose adherence to preformed opinion obviates the aesthetic complexity and function of the poetry. This is indeed one of the problems 'American Football' calls forth in its function as a work of art, the manner in which it intervenes in the world.

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[93] Cohn, *Anglo-American Interplay*, p. 70, qtd. in David Ian Birch, *The Language of Drama* (New York: St. Martin's, 1991), p. 52. Birch offers: '[Willy] is oppressed by the language of others and he is searching for a language to liberate himself from oppression which condemns him to inarticulacy.' (ibid., p. 53)

[94] In November 2004, Todd Swift, poetry editor of *100 Poets Against The War*, wrote in the *Guardian*: 'When all of the UK is celebrating John Peel for having had such an open mind and a visionary ear that encouraged emerging new talent, editor and poet Don Paterson is fighting a rearguard action against just such eclecticism (Pinter's Poetry? anyone can do it, October 30). Paterson has chosen the lofty pulpit of the TS Eliot lecture to argue for three terribly small-minded positions that can only damage poetry at the start of the 21st century: 1) to oppose Harold Pinter's – and by extension, most – anti-war poems for their simplicity; 2) to call for "the total eradication of amateur poets"; and 3) to attack "postmoderns", who he sees as damaging poetry. Paterson is wrong because he is so intent on limiting what a poem can and should be. In fact, it is when poetry (or music) is evolving and dynamically open to a rich variety of different voices, that it thrives best. Political poetry has always been one part of poetry's role, and Pinter's work, although urgently blunt, is in that tradition.' 'Poets at war over Pinter and politics', *Guardian*, 2 November 2004 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/theguardian/2004/nov/02/guardianletters1> [accessed April 2007].

The second assumption embedded in Paterson's response to Pinter's style and diction involves, more generally, notions of what poetry should and should not be, which expresses an inclination to fit a model to a poem rather than strive to assess the extent to which the poem is functioning in accordance with its own inclinations and its subject matter. As an objection 'of a non-ideological nature', Paterson's rejection of Pinter's poetics advances another related assumption: that the split between aesthetics and politics is possible and discernible, which is to suggest that politics expresses itself predominantly in the poetry's content. Indeed the poem's refusal or failure to conform to each critic's notion of what makes acceptable and authentic poetry seems to trigger a heated engagement in the politics of poetry, and therefore to forestall any discussion of the work's political referent: the 1991 Gulf War.

Paul de Man is most helpful on this matter in his rumination that

> [e]ven in its most naïve form, that of evaluation, the critical act is concerned with conformity to origin or specificity: when we say of art that it is good or bad, we are in fact judging a certain degree of conformity to an original intent called artistic. We imply that bad art is barely art at all; good art, on the contrary, comes close to our preconceived and implicit notion of *what art ought to be*.'[95]

These insights permit us to apprehend in the context of Pinter the extent to which '[t]he aesthetic evaluation of works of art may often be based on implicit political values'.[96] Even further still, de Man's insight enables us to see how those aspects of Pinter's war poems that critics find objectionable can quite productively be seen as a poetics that challenges our everyday attitudes, habits and assumptions regarding poetry. In the spirit of Pinter's vanguard and controversial stage aesthetics, such a poetics effectively deprive us of the comfort, beauty, agreement, familiarity – the dulcet poetics central to Horace's formulation *utile dulci* – that we have come to crave after years of conditioning and the formation of habitual modes of engaging with all manner of art.

What seems to go unacknowledged is that the poetry's apparent aesthetic transgressions are not the mark of a poet whose anger and political investment have confounded his aesthetic sensibilities. The case I would suggest is rather 'a furious dismissal' on Pinter's part 'of the bourgeois demand that poetry be simply beautiful and spiritual', a dismissal that captures 'the spirit of the likes of Picasso's *Guernica* or Neruda's poem 'I'm Explaining a Few Things''[97] – the

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[95] 'Criticism and Crisis', in *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism*, second edition (London: Methuen, 1983), pp. 3-19 (p. 8), my emphasis.
[96] Janet Wolff, *Aesthetics and the Sociology of Art*, ed. by T.B. Bottomore and M.J. Mulkay (London: Allen & Unwin, 1983), p. 66.
[97] Simon Korner, 'I'm Explaining a Few Things', *21st Century Socialism*, 15 May 2007 <http://21stcentury socialism.com/article/im_explaining_a_few_things_01482.ht> [accessed July 2010].

latter, it must be noted, Pinter folded into his Nobel lecture, in which he claimed that 'nowhere in contemporary poetry have I read such a powerful visceral description of the bombing of civilians'.[98] On the one hand, the putative aesthetic transgressions of Pinter's Gulf War poem and those which followed it can be said to perform a violence on notions of what poetry should be to the effect of forcing us 'to pay attention and to think about our own expectations of art'.[99] Yet on the other hand, the poetics' aesthetic transgressions are violent gestures that function to produce immediacy and presence where political reality is concerned. This refusal to adhere to the very decorous structures we recognize and invest in reflexively can be construed as a means to reframe the political realities captured in the poem in a way that might enable Pinter's audiences to reorient themselves to the political policies, actions and discourses that contribute to making an event such as the Gulf War possible, but also to the violence and death that were germane to that conflict, and have been to a number of subsequent ones. An interrogation of the inherited values and assumptions that inform our immediate application of interpretive paradigms (which is to say ascendant images of thought) to Pinter's poems can enable us to see how there can be aesthetic merit in that which is ostensibly ugly.[100] But more specifically, this enables us to apprehend how the aesthetic production of ugliness and the affective experience engendered in our negotiation of it marks an expression of both content-as-force and of form-as-force that constitutes a politics of de- and re-subjectification, of becoming-other, vis-à-vis war, the interminable condition that it has increasingly become in the post-Cold war era.

Conclusion

In contrast to a war such as Vietnam, and the manner in which the event exercised 'some of the keenest literary sensibilities in America (Norman Mailer, Mary McCarthy, Susan Sontag)',[101] the evolution of war in recent decades under the increased neoliberal commitment to a thoroughly marketized mass media has begun to shape Western-led military conflicts into consumer products. In combination, various actors within politics, the media and even Hollywood have managed to a great extent to alter the general public's orientation to calamity, resignifying war, if only partially, as entertainment and therefore rendering it digestible and a kind of spectator sport.[102] Hence the importance of the investment of Pinter's poetry in the

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[98] *Art, Truth and Politics*, pp. 297-98. See Chapter 6 for analysis of the lecture.
[99] De Man, 'Criticism and Crisis', p. 69.
[100] ibid.
[101] Pankaj Mishra, 'In search of monsters to destroy', *Guardian*, Saturday Review <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2008/oct/04/unitedstates.militaris> [accessed October 2008].
[102] Jürgen Habermas observes: 'Under the pressure of shareholders who thirst for higher revenues, it is the intrusion of the functional imperatives of the market economy into the "internal logic" of the production and presentation of messages that leads to the covert displacement of one category of communication by another:

corporeal body and the works' appeal to sensory registers which preclude appeals to recognizable emotion, and therefore the clichéd thought patterns which derive from circumscribed and individuating structures of feeling. If the poetry seems, as M.C. Gardner observes, to be 'reaching beyond to something else', I would suggest that we construe that 'something' as experience that exists 'in excess of signification', something monstrous or even sublime about the imagery 'that cannot be reduced to organic representation'.[103] But it is precisely movement 'within' these coordinates that is at stake in the poetry's reinscription and revivification of the real of violence and death that are typically placed at a distance or even occluded, chiefly through the axiomatic performance of hegemonic mediatizations and the reliance upon naturalized and clichéd ascendant discourses which do not produce thought, but rather sediment images of thought. If affects are legitimately hostile to the swift and reflex invocation of opinions and common sense, then the poetry's salient economy of sensation makes Pinter's poetics an interesting and arguably felicitous political intervention into fields of action that are pervaded by a species of thought that is colonized by already formed rationalities and mental architectures.

Further, it is striking to note how the forum in which Pinter circulates his poems mediates between the realities they fabulate and the discourses that construct (or not) those realities for readers, and is also, by varying degrees, a disseminator of the very discourses against which Pinter's poetry kicks. Hence, the media has more than once become the object of Pinter's intense criticism, such as when it has appeared to be disseminating status quo ideologies, primarily those of government and big business, and especially when it has facilitated or even conducted attacks on Pinter himself in his contestation of these very things. John Lahr speaks to this and relays Pinter's acerbic response:

> Pinter has found himself both lambasted and lampooned. But, since the conferring of the Nobel, and since the fiasco of the current Iraq war has borne out some of Pinter's dire warnings, the tabloid teasing has diminished, though not Pinter's attitude toward it. 'Fuck the press,' he told me, leaning slowly forward. 'That is exactly what I felt then, even more so what I feel now.' He paused. 'They can just go fuck themselves,' he said.[104]

Issues of political discourse become assimilated into and absorbed by the modes and contents of entertainment. Besides personalization, the dramatization of events, the simplification of complex matters, and the vivid polarization of conflicts promote civic privatism and a mood of antipolitics.' 'Political Communication in Media Society: Does Democracy Still Enjoy an Epistemic Dimension? The Impact of Normative Theory Empirical Research', in *Communication Theory*, 16 (2006), 411-26 (p. 422).

[103] Olkowski, *Gilles Deleuze and the Ruin*, p. 70.

[104] 'Demolition Man: Harold Pinter and "The Homecoming"', *New Yorker*, 24 December 2007 <http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2007/12/24/071224fa_fact_lahr> [accessed 5 January 2008], pp. 1-6 (p. 6).

Pinter's relationship with media was indeed from the beginning largely a fraught one. While the media has attacked his identity and his work, in the first instance, and then decades later his political project, at the same time it has both disseminated critical support of Pinter's work as an artist and enabled him to occasionally make his political voice heard. But in particular the mainstream media has occasionally provided a forum for the political poetry, which is to say more precisely and in line with this thesis that it has to some extent facilitated the poetry's capacity to intervene into and potentially redirect the flow of subjectivizing forces which orthodox, even boilerplate political discourse and non-interrogative reporting set in operation. In this way then, Pinter conducts his poetic contestation of specific orders of political discourse and their material referents within the very space in which that discourse is produced. This endows the political poetry with a 'mass' rather than a 'unique' existence, an ontological and sociological positioning which, unlike the theatre that accommodates Pinter's plays, permits 'the reproduction [the poem] to reach the recipient [the media consumer] in his or her own situation', as Benjamin would say,[105] as a discursive moment in a larger constellation of political expressions, yet those which only selectively function to politicize and to invest news events with presence, immediacy and eventness.

Pinter's circulation of his political poems within a medium that is wide-reaching in terms of demographics and that is itself heterogeneous as a particular discursive field is a gesture that intensifies the reconciliation of Pinter's identities as artist and citizen, specifically in that this action renders Pinter an actor who arises from civil society and derives 'public influence from the "social" and "cultural capital" [he has] accumulated in terms of visibility, prominence, reputation, or moral status.'[106] Spanning nearly two decades from 1991 to roughly 2007, the political poetry does not merely follow the trajectory of Pinter's activism, it dialogues and assembles with that discourse, its repeated dissemination in various media contexts collapsing the ideological line often drawn between art and public discourse and expressing quite saliently the author's increasing preoccupation with the inextricable relationship of art and politics; a preoccupation which seems to culminate in Pinter's Nobel lecture, which is the centrepiece of the next chapter.

Given the above, and despite the relative analytical quietism on this front within Pinter scholarship, I suggest we need not regard the political poetry as a project that supervenes on Pinter's career as a playwright and which represents the author's evolution from a playwright to

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[105] 'The Work of Art in the Age of Its Reproducibility', in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings Volume 3, 1935-1938*, ed. by Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings, trans. by Edmund Jephcott, Howard Eiland and others (Cambridge, MA and London: Belknap/Harvard University Press, 2002), pp. 101-33 (p. 104).
[106] Habermas, 'Political Communication in Media Society', pp. 418-19.

a political poet and activist. Rather, this body of poems invites us to think Pinter's work as pointing simultaneously in two directions: the poetics containing and giving force to the activist and at once drawing breath from and harnessing the forces of the playwright's sensibility, in an aesthetic culture Pinter cultivated over the course of many decades. Most of the little that has been written by Pinter scholars about the political poetry, and by proxy Pinter's activism, seems primarily invested in the expression of Pinter's identity and his morally-charged derision of the exercise of force and violence under the false banner of morality. Yet while this is an integral dimension of the poet-activist, such discourse continues on within representation and leaves little to be said about how Pinter's sensibility as an artist gives force and expression to his political interventions and his style in the role of what he calls the 'citizen'.

Thus far, on the basis of an aesthetic engenderment of that which cannot be reduced to organic representation, and as such that which becomes monstrous or sublime in its existence in excess of signification, we can identify the through line that connects Pinter's early dramas, work for film, post-1993 dramas, political poetry and, as we are about to see, the citizen's discourse. While Murphy faults Pinter for 'performing politics' rather than writing poetry, as Owen did, I would submit that Pinter's poetics are not antithetical to the soldier poet's in that, following Owen's call for a war poetry that 'warns',[107] they transmute this gesture into the registers of the body via an economy of sensation, intensity, movement and affect whose embodiment of the sense of political violence and atrocity effectively constitutes Pinter's own Owenian warning. Warning on these terms, then, constitutes an obviation of memory and celebratory commemoration of those who were taken by war and its violences for the production of affective experience whose animation of processual 'states' of becoming fundamentally undermines the assumption of coherent subject positions which can then accept, support or favour violence of any kind. From this vantage point, Murphy's indictment that Pinter is 'performing politics' is in effect true, for it is precisely in the poetry's performance, and the performance of all work surveyed hitherto, of power as *puissance* that it can capture thought in its attraction and fastening to extant opinion and common sense in extensity and return it to the charged body – the only site where things can be thought otherwise and difference can be actualized from its virtual existence. Having surveyed Pinter's art and in this chapter reached the beginning of the overt collapse of Pinter's identities as artist and citizen, the final chapter explores Pinter's performance of this order of politics in the context of his activism, a field of

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[107] 'All a poet can do today is warn', Owen writes. 'Preface', p. 101.

action where we find the Nobel laureate to be no less concerned as he is in writing poetry with the fact and problem that 'death has been degutted', as the third epigraph to this chapter reads.

Chapter Six

The Artist-Citizen

The discussions in previous chapters of Pinter's work as a politicized dramatist and poet naturally flow into this final chapter, which examines Pinter's political activism. At base, Pinter's activist discourse is parsed with a view to ascertaining the extent to which it can be said to possess an economy of affect, how many of his claims and the language he employs seek to capture the sense of the various political realities he tables for interrogation. Not long after the emergence of Pinter's Nobel lecture, Michael Billington claimed that the radical nature of *Art, Truth and Politics* has not yet been fully grasped. Pinter's biographer offers this on the basis of how Pinter's engagement with art and politics in the lecture proceeds 'from different premises: that art is driven by the search for a truth which remains elusive while politics, as currently practiced, is driven by the creation of palpable fictions even though there is a bedrock of truth'.[1] Indeed Pinter's discourse as what he himself calls a 'citizen of the world' adheres to the latter premise, and is thus invested in a belief that political reality can be spoken about with precision and accuracy, spoken about by means of apodictic propositions and reference to what can be called the correspondence model of truth. As such, Pinter's language in the role of citizen becomes nothing less than an indictment and active shaming of the appropriation and exercise of power by Western forces and political figures, special attention given to the American administration. The first stage of this chapter, then, is primarily devoted to probing further than has been done into Pinter's discourse as a citizen, and the morality and ethics from which it derives and takes shape.

But while this register of the citizen's politics is compelling and has dominated what meagre scholarly analysis there is of *Art, Truth and Politics*, as well as Pinter's political speeches in general, I would suggest that apprehending the 'radical nature' Billington rightly posits necessarily involves looking through the issue of truth to the manner in which Pinter relies on aesthetics as a means to produce, what I will call following the Deleuzian line, truth as an *event*. The more one attends to the lecture, the more it reveals how the citizen does retain most of the artist's dramatic foci: language, action, identity, the past and memory, manipulation, coercion, control, governmentality and violence. But it is precisely an analysis of how Pinter engages these familiar issues that reveals that the citizen's discourse consists of multi-modal 'texts' which function by diverse means to engender affective experience. Hence I offer the importance of

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[1] *Harold Pinter*, pp. 422-23.

looking through Pinter's identity as a citizen and his investment in stable truth and to the way he employs language from that subject position. Doing so permits us to extend the argument for an economy of affect in Pinter's writing for theatre, film and poetry to the field of action that is his activism and extra-dramatic politics. Scrutinizing how Pinter discursively constructs truths in order to prompt his audience to new and significant investments in the political realities to which those truths refer enables a glimpse of how the citizen relies upon the artist's sensibilities. Thus we are presented with a number of striking convergences between Pinter's two ostensibly separate identities. Ultimately, examining Pinter's political discourse with a view to both affect and the immanence of the artist and the citizen sustains the argument across this thesis that Pinter's writing and overall vision present us with an aesthetics as politics.

'As a citizen I must ask...': Pinter's identity and morality

Pinter's instantiation of his two selves and their concomitant truths in the opening of *Art, Truth and Politics*, a rhetorical move he had already been performing for some years, has become the touchstone of most all discussion and analysis of the author's politics and activism:

> In 1958 I wrote the following: 'There are no hard distinctions between what is real and what is unreal, nor between what is true and what is false. A thing is not necessarily either true or false; it can be both true and false.' I believe that these assertions still make sense and do still apply to the exploration of reality through art. So as a writer I stand by them but as a citizen I cannot. As a citizen I must ask: What is true? What is false?[2]

Regarding the first premise on the lack of distinction between what is real and unreal, Pinter's re-sounding of a claim he made as a much younger man[3] enables him to straddle the past and the present, and thus nod to the occasion of being awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature for penning dramas that uncover 'the precipice under everyday prattle and forces entry into oppression's closed rooms',[4] as the Nobel committee put it so capitally, and for his services to literature in general. At the same time, however, the juxtaposition of his identity as an artist with his 'other' political self enables Pinter to begin to establish the conditions for the political critique he will shortly wage, a structural feature which makes the lecture appear quite linear and to be chiefly a platform for him to express his political views. As Pinter transitions relatively briskly from a few reflections on his early plays to the subject of political theatre, doing so by way of references to *Mountain Language* and *Ashes to Ashes* (1996) which effectively link these

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[2] *Art, Truth and Politics*, p. 285.
[3] See 'Introduction', *Plays 1*, p. ix.
[4] The Swedish Academy, 'The Nobel Prize in Literature 2005 – Press Release', *Nobelprize.org: The Official Web Site of the Nobel Prize*, 30 August 2010 <http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/2005/press.html> [accessed 1 September 2010].

overtly political dramas to contemporary political reality, the issue of the Nobel laureate's foregrounding of moral commitment over intellectual nuance is ostensibly settled.

Pinter's rejection as a citizen of a form of truth that is mutable and multiform in order to embrace an apodictic species of truth in the form of propositions that refer to facts and states of affairs that are without ambiguity is a nodal point in his discourse that has prompted scholars to construe the citizen on the basis of identity and representation. Susan Hollis Merritt, for example, reads Pinter's activism and in particular *Art, Truth and Politics* in terms of what Pinter stands for; anti-globalization, anti-militarism, truth and freedom being the operative ideals and ideological positionings.[5] Charles Grimes, furthermore, is inspired by earlier performances of the rhetorical move Pinter makes in the 'prologue' of the Nobel as he points out that we are confronted with 'the philosophical distinction or contradiction between Pinter then and now', the writer of non-committed dramas to the writer of overtly political plays and political speeches, and that as a citizen the 'contemporary importance of separating fact from untruth illustrates [...] a privileging of [Pinter's] moral commitment to politics over intellectual devotion to epistemological nuance.'[6] Pinter's optioning of a discourse of truth is of course paramount to his political critique for it facilitates his capacity to level value judgments and even to condemn the political realities that are of central concern to him as an activist.

Discourse seems the appropriate term here given that as a citizen Pinter employs language '*as social practice*' and '*within a specific field*', all with a view to contesting the 'mechanical reproduction of other social practices'[7] he deems to be contentious in their threat to human freedoms. As a social practice, then, Pinter's language 'both *constitutes* the social world and is *constituted* by other social practices',[8] not least of which are all the realities that comprise Pinter's life as both artist and political activist. Thus the double movement of Pinter's political speeches and his Nobel lecture is that this discourse is '*both* a form of action [...] through which [he] can change the world *and* a form of action which is socially and historically situated and in a dialectical relationship with other aspects of the social.'[9] But in the context of Pinter's politics, discourse more specifically entails examining spoken and written language with a view to their

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[5] '(Anti-)Global Pinter', in *The Pinter Review: Nobel Prize/European Theatre Prize Volume: 2005-2008*, ed. by Francis Gillen, with Stephen H. Gale (Tampa: University of Tampa Press, 2008), 140-67. See also, Vivienne Jabri, 'Pinter, Radical Critique, and Politics', *Borderlands e-journal*, 2.2 (2003) <http://www.borderlands ejournal.adelaide.edu.au/vol2no2_2003/jabri_pinter.htm> [accessed 10 October 2010]; Iona Heath, 'The Nobel Prize in Literature 2005', *The British Journal of General Practice*, 1.55 (December 2005) <http://www.ncbi. nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1570514/> (p. 980) [accessed July 2007].
[6] *Harold Pinter's Politics*, p. 15.
[7] Louise Phillips and Marianne W. Jørgensen, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method* (London: Sage, 2002), p. 67, 19, passim.
[8] ibid., p. 61.
[9] ibid., p. 62.

'socially-constructed meaning systems that could have been different',[10] and entails at the same time speaking of both language use in political contexts and the actualization of circumstances and events by political actors in such a way that *gives meaning to experiences from a particular perspective.*[11]

Considering how the inflections of condemnation and even disgust in Pinter's language as a citizen depart so dramatically from anything he wrote for the stage, screen and even his political poetry, it is unsurprising that 'the moral basis of Pinter's political engagement' has come to be the foremost point of address where the activism is concerned.[12] Pinter's provocative and morally freighted questions are germane to a number of speeches and essays that appeared prior to *Art, Truth and Politics* in 2005. In 'It Never Happened' (the *Guardian*, 4 December 1996), the themes of solidarity, truth, action as embodiment of truth and the opposition to American power all coalesce to cascade over the reader: 'How can any country,' he asks referring to the United States, 'in the light of such blanket condemnation of its policies and actions, not pause to take a little thought, not subject itself to even the mildest and most tentative critical scrutiny?'[13] Pinter pits a classical morality, which springs from a belief in the 'enjoyment and abundance of life',[14] against political agents that he understands to be guilty of making an empty signifier of morality itself. Pinter's own morality appears to increase in direct proportion to the extent that those he critiques instrumentalize the language of morality within a larger project that is more accurately *realpolitik.*[15]

However, the importance of how Pinter's questions reflect his own judgment and commentary is matched, if not surpassed, by the central action of this language, what I would suggest is the solicitation of analytically speculative investments from his audience. The following litany provides a glimpse of several of the interrogative questions that accrue over the course of the Nobel lecture:

> Hundreds of thousands of deaths took place throughout these countries. Did they take place? And are they in all cases attributable to US foreign policy?
>
> [...] Do we think about the inhabitants of Guantanamo Bay? What does the media say about them?

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[10] ibid., p. 21.

[11] ibid., p. 67. Qtd. in Norman Fairclough, 'Critical Discourse Analysis and the Marketization of Public Discourse: The Universities', *Discourse and Society*, 4.2 (April 1993), 133-68 (p. 138).

[12] Ronald Knowles, 'Harold Pinter, Citizen', *The Pinter Review: Annual Essays 1989* (Tampa: University of Tampa Press, 1989), 24-33 (p. 26).

[13] *Various Voices*, pp. 234-37 (p. 234).

[14] Terry Eagleton, *After Theory* (New York: Basic Books, 2003), p. 141.

[15] The concept is here intended not so much in its original and late 19th-century German usage as in subsequent predominantly American applications, which connote politics conducted with a view to securing power and hegemony through the expedients of Potemkin ideals, morals and principles.

[…] What has the British Foreign Secretary said about this? Nothing. What has the British Prime Minister said about this? Nothing. Why not?

[…] Why were [the Sandinistas] killed? They were killed because they believed a better life was possible and should be achieved.

[…] What has happened to our moral sensibility? Did we ever have any? What do these words mean? Do they refer to a term very rarely employed these days – conscience? A conscience to do not only with our own acts but to do with our shared responsibility in the acts of others? Is all this dead?[16]

Indeed these questions offer the overt response that the post-1983 political dramas are said to elide in their dramatization of a power that is crushing and absolute.[17]

The discourse of shame

While Pinter's many political detractions are evaluative, judgmental and inflected with morality, his discourse is particularly noteworthy for the way it performs a shaming function; shame by definition being a painful emotion that arises 'from the consciousness of something dishonoring, ridiculous, or indecorous in one's own conduct or circumstances'.[18] 'Many thousands, if not millions, of people in the United States itself are demonstrably sickened, shamed and angered by their government's actions', he declares at one stage of the Nobel.[19] But just as Pinter's several detractions reveal at their surface the citizen's disapproval and even disgust with that which he critiques, a great deal of these shaming assertions give rise to indelible images whose colonizing of the imagination pronounce and animate the affective dimension of the claims and the language in general:

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[16] *Art, Truth and Politics*, p. 293, 294, 292, 294, passim.

[17] Grimes argues: 'this silence [Stanley's in *The Birthday Party*] is both absolute and complex; it also represents the necessity of a futile resistance to all analogous brutalities. Virtually all of Pinter's political works end in some variant of this painful, double-edged silence'. *Harold Pinter's Politics*, p. 49.

[18] 'Shame', *Oxford English Dictionary*, second edition, University of Leeds database <http://0-dictionary.oed.com.wam.leeds.ac.uk/cgi/entry/50221768?query_type=word&queryword=shame&first=1&max_to_show=10&sort_type=alpha&result_place=1&search_id=CFoq-14YzAH 4166&hilite=50221768> [accessed 1 September 2010]. The following are several meanings for shame that enable us to see the action of this particular discourse of Pinter's: As a Noun: '1c. sense of shame: the consciousness of this emotion, guilty feeling; also, the right perception of what is improper or disgraceful'; '3. a. Disgrace, ignominy, loss of esteem or reputation'; '3e. Infliction of disgrace, injurious language or conduct'; '5. a. A fact or circumstance which brings disgrace or discredit (to a person, etc.); matter for severe reproach or reprobation'; '6 b. colloq. A thing which is shockingly ugly or indecent, or of disgracefully bad quality'. As a Verb: '4d. to tell (say, speak) the truth and shame the devil: to tell the truth boldly in defiance of temptation to the contrary'; '5. To inflict or bring disgrace upon; to disgrace, dishonour; to be a cause of disgrace to'; '7b To drive (one) out of, into (a state, course of action, etc.) through shame or fear of shame' (ibid.).

[19] *Art, Truth and Politics*, p. 298. Even weeks after delivering the lecture, in an interview with Al Jazeera Television Pinter was conscious to re-assert this claim, offering that 'when I did my Nobel speech, I received, well I have to say thousands of emails and letters and so on […] many of them from the United States, from people who are actually really ashamed […] of what their government was doing in, as it were, their name. So I'm well aware that there are lots of Americans who don't share their government's views'. 'Al-Jazeera interviews Harold Pinter Part 2', *YouTube*, uploaded by gwood3, 16 November 2006 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pv8jKWCzCzw> [accessed December 2006].

Look a Guantanamo Bay. Hundreds of people detained without charge [...] They have been consigned to a no man's land from which indeed they may never return. At present many are on hunger strike, being force-fed, including British residents. No niceties in these force-feeding procedures. No sedative or anaesthetic. Just a tube stuck up your nose and into your throat. You vomit blood. This is torture.[20]

In his production of violent images such as this one we find Pinter's continued investment, even as a citizen, in an economy of sensation.

Pinter's morally-charged discourse of shame and his substantive investment in existential plenitude appear more complex and immanent if one considers the extent to which these discursive moments typically defer to a violent, unsettling image he has previously constructed or is in process of doing. Pinter's discourse of shame, more specifically, begins to reveal the force of his efforts to capture the sense of the subjection, human suffering and death caused by political violence and reinvest our thinking about political reality with these affects. In so forcibly posing questions that have no immediate and easy answer and in crafting indelible images such this tableau detailing the quiddity of force-feeding procedures, the impetus is to redirect these particular states of affairs and socio-political problems towards new and different meanings, effects and emotions; whereas their mediatization in much mainstream press tends to produce flat, affectless narratives and images that can and have promoted superficial readings, and therefore quick and partial consumption and engagement.

'Consequentialism' not 'deontology'

It is important to nuance how these discourses of Pinter's do not stem from or promote an unwavering attachment to (moral) principles *per se*, principles which would constitute what can be called a 'deontology'. What Pinter's ostensible morality confronts us with, I would argue, is in fact a 'consequentialism'. While a deontology constitutes an ethics that enquires into moral duty and the rightness of actions, its logic the principles of duty or obligation, a consequentialism stems from a belief that the rightness or wrongness of actions is determined by the goodness or badness of their consequences.[21] As such, Pinter's morally-inflected discourse of shame is a linguistic expedient that serves to satisfy a more substantive, intrinsic desire in the form of a concern for existential stability and plenitude. More to the point still, this means a concern for the human's will to realize and increase its vitality and life power.[22]

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[20] *Art, Truth and Politics*, p. 294.

[21] *The Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought*, p. 216.

[22] Among others, Billington and Yael Zarhy-Levo have respectively observed this. The former understands that 'Pinter's political anger is driven by something more than moral disgust with the rhetoric of power. Behind the anger lies a belief in the validity of every single human life'. *Harold Pinter*, p. 396; and the latter obverses that '[f]ollowing *A Kind of Alaska* [1982] Pinter is presented as a rather engaged playwright who offers human

Pinter's several references to the Sandinistas in the Nobel Lecture underline this consequentialism. Focusing on Nicaragua of the late 1970s and 80s he asserts:

> The Sandinistas weren't perfect. They possessed their fair share of arrogance and their political philosophy contained a number of contradictory elements. But they were intelligent, rational and civilised. They set out to establish a stable, decent, pluralistic society. The death penalty was abolished. Hundreds of thousands of poverty-stricken peasants were brought back from the dead. Over 100,000 families were given title to land. Two thousand schools were built. A quite remarkable literacy campaign reduced illiteracy in the country to less than one seventh. Free education was established and a free health service. Infant mortality was reduced by a third. Polio was eradicated.
>
> The United States denounced these achievements as Marxist/Leninist subversion. In the view of the US government, a dangerous example was being set. If Nicaragua was allowed to establish basic norms of social and economic justice, if it was allowed to raise the standards of health care and education and achieve social unity and national self respect, neighbouring countries would ask the same questions and do the same things. There was of course at the time fierce resistance to the status quo in El Salvador.[23]

These passages affirm that Pinter's investment in the language of moral rectitude, dignity and truth is wholly ancillary to his investment in one's capacity to capture and husband a productive existence. At base, Pinter's evaluation of the political players and the actions of theirs he critiques has less to do with adherence to a principle or idea of rightness and wrongness than with the extent to which the actions he judges are unproductive to human existence and existential mobility.

On this basis I suggest that rather than a morality we can think Pinter's activist discourse as an ethics which derives from something more deep-seated than morality, the latter constituted by extrinsic desires and ideology and the former constituted by intrinsic affects which strive towards expression and the satisfaction of vital forces and energies. Looking beneath the integuments of apparently moral statements to Pinter's consequentialism reveals that he does not invest in generalities such as good versus evil, which then get anthropomorphized into God and the Devil etc., nor does he invest in the political philosophy and ideology of the Nicaraguans he defends, but rather in the fact that politics have decreased the capacities of (specific groups of) humans to act and to realize life on their own terms.[24]

Looking to Pinter's consequentialism and prizing of human freedoms enables us to see how his many detractions and discourse of shame feed back into formative moments in the

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concern'. 'Pinter and the Critics', in *The Cambridge Companion to Harold Pinter*, ed. by Peter Raby (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 212-29 (p. 219).

[23] *Art, Truth and Politics*, p. 291.

[24] One potential contradiction presents itself in the single promotional reference to socialism Pinter makes in 'Caribbean Cold War', in *Various Voices*, pp. 229-32 (p. 231-32). Curiously, however, this is not a trend in his activism and cannot, I contend, be considered central to his discourse and overall project.

lecture where he is most obviously reflecting on drama. For example, with great emphasis on his characters' right to autonomy and self-determination Pinter insists:

> The characters must be allowed to breathe their own air. The author cannot confine and constrict them to satisfy his own taste or disposition or prejudice. He must be prepared to approach them from a variety of angles, from a full and uninhibited range of perspectives, take them by surprise, perhaps, occasionally, but nevertheless give them the freedom to go which way they will.[25]

The words 'confine', 'constrict' and 'prejudice' connote the exercise of restrictive, compulsive and even oppressive power (*pouvoir*), which are then offset by antithetical words and phrases such as 'from a variety of angles', 'a full and uninhibited range of perspectives' and 'the freedom to go which way they will'; the dialectic working towards producing a landscape of uninhibited movement, autonomy and human freedom. The surface level of Pinter's discourse gives way to deeper meanings in that his detailing of the writing process and character-author relationship has as much to do with human freedoms and good governance (as performed by the author) as it does drama. Both the author's sensitivity to human freedoms and his characters' enjoyment of them are an antithetical expression of how the Reagan administration, as indicated above, indirectly confounded Nicaragua's will to autonomous social organization and a productive existence.

As the lecture unravels, we find Pinter widening his indictment of the Reagan administration's activity and attitude to the movement and autonomy of others to encompass more recent American and British administrations. The précis of post-war Western foreign policy he proceeds with, comprised of both shockingly vivid images and alarming statistics, operates such that many of his formative reflections on drama begin to resonate in hindsight with added, political meaning. As such, these claims about drama charge and provide momentum to Pinter's overt politicization of a host of political events and states of affairs. To observe how Pinter's formative remarks on drama are always already political in that they carry within them a virtual discourse that his subsequent remarks and construction of images actualize is to begin to apprehend that much of the affective force Pinter engenders derives from the relations set up between these discourses and images; this being an inter-resonance that is responsible for the affects the lecture as a whole repotentializes and serializes.

Perhaps Pinter's most artful enlistment of his dramas as a means to set the terms of his political critique is to do with his definition of what constitutes the truth. Following upon his prompt distinction between his identities and truths in the early stages of the Nobel, Pinter

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[25] *Art, Truth and Politics*, p. 287.

adduces the opening scenes of *The Homecoming* and then briefly *Old Times*, framing the image he constructs in such a way that emphasizes the importance of bearing witness to states of affairs qua human interactions – the image arguably as much if not more about Pinter's own act of empirical observation than about drama and writing plays:

> In the play that became *The Homecoming* I saw a man enter a stark room and ask his question of a younger man sitting on an ugly sofa reading a racing paper. I somehow suspected that A was a father and that B was his son, but I had no proof. This was however confirmed a short time later when B (later to become Lenny) says to A (later to become Max), 'Dad, do you mind if I change the subject? I want to ask you something. The dinner we had before, what was the name of it? What do you call it? Why don't you buy a dog? You're a dog cook. Honest. You think you're cooking for a lot of dogs.' So since B calls A 'Dad' it seemed to me reasonable to assume that they were father and son. A was also clearly the cook and his cooking did not seem to be held in high regard. Did this mean that there was no mother? I didn't know. But, as I told myself at the time, our beginnings never know our ends.[26]

Here we behold a double movement whereby the artist's disquisition on drama consists of establishing what can be deduced based on balancing that which can be seen, and therefore construed as given, and that which exists in the fabric of language. As such, Pinter's quizzical image and anecdote are ostensibly less a celebration of many truths in drama than an instructive performance of rigorous observation and evaluation – the playwright's careful empirical experience and digestion of the dramatic landscape in his imagination certainly akin to the citizen's survey of the landscape of events comprising post-war Western foreign policy.

Even Pinter's curt reply to his own question of what his plays are 'about' is congruent with his steadily developing investment in the *consequences* of politicking and his attribution to them of the maximal truth value. Appropriately, he follows up the substantive image of himself surveilling his own characters in the opening scene of *The Homecoming* with the sober confession that 'I cannot say. Nor can I ever sum up my plays, except to say that this is what happened. That is what they said. That is what they did.'[27] By no means flippant and evasive, the remark suggests how the meaning of the dramatic work is constituted on the basis of that which is before us, immediately apparent and happening now. Pinter's deflection of the question back onto the plays themselves, as opposed to endeavouring to explain them out of their performance context, as go-between if you will, is significant for it implies that summative remarks are subject to both a slippage of meaning and a loss of the eventness that gives his work its meaning.[28] But

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[26] ibid., p. 286.
[27] ibid., p. 285. This statement appears in its original format in a speech Pinter gave in 1970 in Hamburg, West Germany, on the occasion of being awarded the German Shakespeare Prize. See 'Introduction' to *Harold Pinter: Plays 3* and/or *Various Voices*, pp. 48-52 (p. 52).
[28] 'I don't get much pleasure out of talking about my work [...] I never know what I could

as Pinter's refusal to mediate between the work and its audience tacitly promotes a firsthand engagement with dramatic reality – a habitation of the fact rather than the idea, as is the refrain throughout several of his works[29] – the political implications of his discourse resonate large as he forthwith offers a definition of what the truth actually is.

In the wake of these reflections on drama that betray an investment in empirical observation and human freedoms, Pinter claims that truth is not delivered up in ascendant narratives and official discourse but rather 'is to do with how the United States [administration] understands its role in the world and how it chooses to embody it.'[30] From here Pinter commits himself to explicating by diverse means that it is 'practical activity' and not 'verbal affirmations' that reveals both one's "'real' conception of the world" and the (situational) truth of lived events';[31] his every step in what follows obliquely returning us to both key struggles in his dramas[32] and to his sustained argument as a citizen that 'we must assess a governing power not by what it says it is, or by what it says it intends, but by what it *does*'.[33] Averring that 'it is obligatory upon us to subject [the post-war] period to at least some kind of even limited scrutiny, Pinter begins to establish a working definition of the truth by initiating a pithy survey of American and British foreign policy:

> The United States now occupies 702 military installations throughout the world in 132 countries, with the honourable exception of Sweden, of course. [...] The United States possesses 8,000 active and operational nuclear warheads. Two thousand are on hair trigger alert, ready to be launched with 15 minutes warning. It is developing new systems of nuclear force, known as bunker busters. The British, ever cooperative, are intending to replace their own nuclear missile, Trident.[34]

This foregrounding of states of affairs shrinks as much as possible the margin for counter-argument and the application of pragmatic justifications for what is presented here. Any pragmatic discourse that might be advanced to justify this glaring will to militarism, national 'protectionism' and a decidedly offensive, rather than legitimately defensive, approach to

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possibly say about it that would be of any real value or interest.' Pinter in Gussow, *Conversations*, p. 57.

[29] 'Spooner in *No Man's Land*', for example, 'distinguishes himself from weaker men who "inhabit the idea and not the fact"'. Sidney Homan, *Pinter's Odd Man Out*, p. 44. See also previous references in Chapter 2 to operating on rather than in life.

[30] *Art, Truth and Politics*, p. 289.

[31] Joseph V. Femia, *Gramsci's Political Thought: Hegemony, Consciousness, and the Revolutionary Process* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1981), p. 46.

[32] We can hardly ignore how the citizen's investment in this field of action and dialectic returns us to key moments of confrontation in his dramas such as: Lenny's discovery in *The Homecoming* of the animosity his brother Teddy feels towards him, indexed by the latter's eating the former's cheese roll (*Plays 3*, pp. 71-72), or Bert Hudd's savaging of Riley in *The Room* (*Plays 1*, p. 110), an action which grounds our understanding of the drama against the character's relatively confusing silence and hardly comprehensible monologue just prior to the act of violence and shocking conclusion to the play.

[33] 'Eroding the Language of Freedom', in *Various Voices*, pp. 208-09 (p. 208), author's emphasis.

[34] *Art, Truth and Politics*, p. 298.

political strategy is trumped by the admixture of statistics and context Pinter provides, doing so with a minimalism and economy of delivery not altogether different than the economy one finds in his writing for other media.

Continuing, Pinter simultaneously moves from the present to the past and introduces additional cast members in the way of victims into this theatre of military operations:

> The United States supported and in many cases engendered every right wing military dictatorship in the world after the end of the Second World War. I refer to Indonesia, Greece, Uruguay, Brazil, Paraguay, Haiti, Turkey, the Philippines, Guatemala, El Salvador, and, of course, Chile.[35]

This précis and juxtaposition of contemporary statistics and decades' worth of what are clearly politically contentious events engenders a certain magnitude and intensity where these man-made realities are concerned. Pinter's consolidation and blunt delivery of facts and events that are typically difficult to register in their diffuseness is more than a rationally persuasive discourse, for the sheer revelation of these states of affairs is likely to cause alarm in the disclosure. Even though Pinter's distinction just moments ago between his two identities may have prompted his audience to read this claim as being voiced by the artist, the surface of his report on drama is soon breached by our incipient apprehension vis-à-vis this précis of Western militarization, hegemony and even machination that it is not just the artist but principally the public intellectual whose function is 'to say that *that* is what is before us'.[36] Much more so than talking about drama or the creative process, it appears that the ethics of observation and engagement with one's world was more so the action Pinter had been promoting erstwhile in the lecture. While Pinter does not actually invoke the word truth in his early reflections on drama in *Art, Truth and Politics*, he seems to be defining truth, obliquely and with a view to the remainder of the lecture, by locating its meaning specifically in action that can be apprehended empirically, and therefore verified as a fact. But at the same time, the manner in which he positions himself as a patient and rigorous witness begins to construct a political subjectivity and style of engagement with the world he will ultimately devolve to his audience as an ethical project.

Aesthetics and the image

Apprehending Pinter's consequentialism permits a better appreciation of how his political critique depends upon and is fired by aesthetic tactics, how aesthetics effectively function as a politics, only dramatizing the intensity of the affective dimension of the citizen's engenderment of the sense of the (ab)use of political power. After working at establishing

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[35] ibid., p. 293.
[36] Saïd, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, p. 143.

specific states of affairs for which the American administration are responsible and bound up in, Pinter turns to a critique and reflexive analysis of language, 'as used by politicians':[37]

> Listen to all American presidents on television say the words, 'the American people', as in the sentence, 'I say to the American people it is time to pray and to defend the rights of the American people and I ask the American people to trust their president in the action he is about to take on behalf of the American people.' It's a scintillating stratagem. Language is actually employed to keep thought at bay. The words 'the American people' provide a truly voluptuous cushion of reassurance. You don't need to think. Just lie back on the cushion. The cushion may be suffocating your intelligence and your critical faculties but it's very comfortable.[38]

This passage most obviously entails an analysis of language function, the use of repetition intended to inspire reflexivity on the part of Pinter's audience. However, it is curious for how it is delivered through quasi-dramatic means as Pinter performs a series of free indirect discourses; his sensibility as an artist beginning at this early stage in the lecture to give force to his political intervention.

Pinter's performance of the voice of his opponent takes a page from his plays in so far as the 'psychological motive' of characters' action 'often manifests itself in an antithetical body of verbal content',[39] and more generally how the plays pronounce fields of action within which agents attempt to give shape to the behaviours and psychological states of others. Indeed more complex than it might seem at first blush, the performance's ironizing of the American figure is underwritten by a reflexive analysis and critique of language use that constitutes an imperative to think, specifically in the face of an order of language whose function is to 'justify, disguise, or mystify its workings while also preventing objections or challenges to it.'[40] Ever the dramatist and actor, Pinter's repetition to lulling effect of 'the American people' foregrounds how appeals to nationality, American exceptionalism, cultural pride, history, tradition, and cultural values more generally 'bulk large' in the mobilization of public support for politicians and also for the political actions they undertake.[41] Further, his interruption of his character's (the politician's) beguiling yet tranquilizing phrase with the visual image of an asphyxiated intelligence makes plain how 'the American people' is in fact a discursive 'myth' in the order of ambiguous yet suggestive terms such as 'the West', 'society', 'civilization', 'us', 'them' and so on. That is, within the fabric of language, 'the American people' pretends to be linguistically articulate and only

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[37] *Art, Truth and Politics*, p. 288.
[38] ibid., p. 293.
[39] Chittaranjan Misra, *Harold Pinter, The Dramatist* (New Delhi: Creative, 1992), p. 105.
[40] Saïd, *Humanism*, p. 135.
[41] David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 40.

appears to exist as a totality and have stable meaning. But in using such language (akin to words like 'the people' or 'the country') in this style, Pinter's performance reinforces how the American figure demarcates a totality by ascribing an objective content to the discourse, while in reality 'the totality remains an imaginary entity'.[42] Revealed in the final analysis is how both appeals to nationality and myths facilitate the organization of consent – that which gets consented to by no means in the interests of those acquiescing.

Pinter's use of the pillow metaphor, his performance and then his own interruption of the voice as it speaks from the centre of power vivifies how 'the production of meaning is a key instrument for the stabilisation of power relations', and moreover how it is only through such production that power relations can 'become naturalised and so much part of common-sense that they cannot be questioned'.[43] While Grimes rightly characterizes Pinter's activist discourse as 'oppositional speech', and argues that it is this which 'divides Pinter's playwriting from his public actions',[44] we can take things further by noting how that oppositional gesture in this context consists of an oblique analysis of political discourse; but one whose promotion of reflexivity and criticality also invites a close consideration of the kind of language Pinter himself wields in his indictment of those he critiques. By drawing attention to language use in the manner he does in this overtly politicized context, Pinter at once instantiates the importance of intellection and critical speculation *and* establishes the conditions for obviating appeals to emotion; the latter gesture a means to engender the kind of affects that might produce new emotions regarding the subject matter at hand, and therefore inspire Pinter's audience to enter into new and different orientations to the political realities he interrogates, doing so frequently enough, as in the above instance, by means of fabulation.

Pinter moves from the general that is 'language, as used by politicians' to the particular, confronting the hegemonic character of the American administration's political discourse vis-à-vis George W. Bush's invasion of Iraq in 2003. In order to do so he collides the performance of political action and its material consequences with the official discourse that preceded and then distorted what was actually happening at the ground-level, language which of course enabled official justification and some degree of public support for the military action. Fingering how two particular words have been designated empty signifiers as a result of Western politicking, Pinter asserts that '[w]e have brought torture, cluster bombs, depleted uranium, innumerable acts of random murder, misery, degradation and death to the Iraqi people and call it "bringing

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[42] Phillips and Jørgensen, *Discourse Analysis*, p. 39.
[43] ibid.
[44] *Harold Pinter's Politics*, p. 32.

freedom and democracy to the Middle East".[45] The words 'freedom' and 'democracy' only begin to purport when they are combined in a 'chain of equivalence', which is to say a relational and productive process whereby other already coherent signs endow the key signifiers (in this case 'freedom' and 'democracy') with semantic and conceptual marrow.[46] Since the signifier 'democracy' only becomes the sign democracy 'through its combination with other carriers of meaning such as "free elections" and "freedom of speech"', for example, Pinter's insertion of the signifier into a chain of equivalence comprised of conceptually antithetical signifieds – material realities that cannot be connected to any notion of democracy – has the effect of tearing the words from the discourse of Western elites and reterritorializing them within the abject realities they deserve in their current circulation and state. In this specific politicization, Pinter does not simply close the gap between the verbal and courses of action, he produces an event precisely in the manner he assembles both realities to perform that closure; the event to which I refer being 'a disruption, violence or dislocation of thinking'[47] that establishes the conditions for new cognitive directions and new investments.

As Pinter places a specifically physical manifestation of violence in dialogue with violence as performed on language, this affective-performative functions to recode his audience's internalization of specific theses (i.e. us vs. them; good vs. evil etc.), and related opinions about what freedom and democracy have come to mean between the West and Middle Eastern countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan. Interestingly, Pinter's intervention in this context is not altogether different than his own character Ruth in *The Homecoming* as she 'undercuts the dominant cultural order by exposing the constructed, discursive nature of language', as Mireia Aragay observes in her characterization of Pinter's earlier plays as 'postmodern'.[48] However, the realities Pinter carefully selects in order to construct the chain of equivalence he does, and indeed the inter-resonance he creates between these specific political consequences, produce a disturbing image that pronounces the affective dimension of his 'discourse analysis'.[49] As such, the image of trauma and death does violence to the political

[45] *Art, Truth and Politics*, p. 295. Cf. 'We have brought torture, cluster bombs, depleted uranium, innumerable acts of random murder, misery and degradation to the Iraqi people and call it "bringing freedom and democracy to the Middle East". But as we all know, we have not been welcomed with the predicted flowers.' 'Wilfred Owen Award for Poetry: Acceptance Speech, 18 March 2005', in *Various Voices*, pp. 267-68 (pp. 267-68). While this version, the 'Wilfred Owen Award', contains the striking image of the flowers, note how the Nobel version contains the subtle yet powerful insertion of the word 'death' at the end of the long and bristling chain of equivalency Pinter produces.

[46] Phillips and Jørgensen, *Discourse Analysis*, p. 50.

[47] Colebrook, 'Introduction', *The Deleuze Dictionary*, p. 4.

[48] 'Pinter, Politics and Postmodernism (2)', p. 249.

[49] 'The dissolution of hegemonic discourses is also a fitting description of the practice of discourse analysis itself.' Philips and Jørgensen, *Discourse Analysis*, p. 48. This is a summation of one of Ernesto Laclau's

hawks who themselves do violence to and erode the English language, as Pinter would say, in their invocation of purr words to justify and even obfuscate actions that do not seem in any way oriented towards or invested in the mechanisms, function and dynamics of democracy. While the disturbing images Pinter engineers are shocking and affective, it is the violent resonance he sets up between these repulsive consequences and official political discourse that is the site where the most affective force and movement get engendered across the lecture.

In one of the more salient moments, Pinter relates of having been present as 'a member of a delegation speaking on behalf of Nicaragua' at a meeting 'at the US embassy in London in the late 1980s'; the purpose of which was to discuss the US Congress's quandary over 'whether to give more money to the Contras in their campaign against the state of Nicaragua.'[50] Pinter's dramatization of this scenario establishes a dialectic whereby the first-hand experience of a Nicaraguan protagonist associated with the victims of US-funded violence is dialogued with a pragmatic American figure who is, as an American ambassador, periphrastically involved in the ground-level states of affairs the protagonist details, in shocking images no less. Oscillating between an omniscient positioning and rendering the dialogue of the Nicaraguan and then the US diplomat, Pinter first assumes the role of Father Metcalf who pleads for respite from subjection to the Reagan administration-backed Contra regime by means of describing, in his own experience, what had already taken place:

> 'Sir, I am in charge of a parish in the north of Nicaragua. My parishioners built a school, a health centre, a cultural centre. We have lived in peace. A few months ago a Contra force attacked the parish. They destroyed everything: the school, the health centre, the cultural centre. They raped nurses and teachers, slaughtered doctors, in the most brutal manner. They behaved like savages. Please demand that the US government withdraw its support from this shocking terrorist activity.'[51]

The image is indeed harrowing for the way it turns the imagination against itself, Pinter's strategic contextualization and then his delivery of the words rape and slaughter evoking the real of the violence which resulted from the Contra's military strategics.

An analysis of Pinter's many drafts of this instance in the lecture reveals the Nobel laureate's investment in the visual minutia of this anecdote as an affective and efficacious political discourse. 'They destroyed everything', Pinter initially wrote, 'schools, health centre, raped women, slaughtered doctors, in some cases leaving their genitals stuffed in their mouths.

positions, articulated in 'Power and Representation', in *Politics, Theory and Contemporary Culture*, ed. by Mark Poster (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), pp. 277-96.

[50] *Art, Truth and Politics*, p. 290.

[51] ibid.

They are savages. Please ask your congress not to give money to these savages.'[52] The details of violence are nauseating in their admixture of suggestion and explicitness. However, as this portion of the speech is drafted its details are refined in a way that suggests a concern on Pinter's part to ensure the facts remain undiluted or distorted – and therefore as concussive as can be. Indeed when the overall anecdote is inlaid with this detail, the visceral image ensures that our mental imaging of what is at stake is a process that resounds with passion; it therefore remaining difficult for what Father Metcalf conveys to be abstracted in cognition.

Even though on its own the image is sufficient to set the body vibrating fully in thought, and thus make thought itself stammer, it approaches hysteria as Pinter establishes a resonance between the arresting scene Metcalf describes and the US ambassador's response, as Pinter enacts the latter: 'Father,' he said, 'let me tell you something. In war, innocent people always suffer.' In the tableau, the hawk's linguistic strategy is rapidly colonized by the material reality such that the perceptual and cognitive faculties are sent into discord, the affect produced in-between the two images hostile to easy and immediate digestion and intellectual reconciliation as it effectively forms a new block of sensation, one whose violent movement through the body and imagination does not facilitate instantaneous association and narrativization. When Seitz is furthermore confronted with a) the suggestion that '"innocent people" were the victims of a gruesome atrocity subsidised by your government', b) the observation that '[i]f Congress allows the Contras more money further atrocities of this kind will take place' and c) the question '[i]s your government not therefore guilty of supporting acts of murder and destruction upon the citizens of a sovereign state?', his response is merely to invoke a clichéd phrase which serves as nothing more than a strategy of evasion: 'I don't agree that the facts as presented support your assertions'.[53] Two affective plateaus are engendered by Pinter's dialectical image: on the one hand, our negotiation of the real of political violence as Pinter-Metcalf's language sets it in operation in the imagination; and on the other hand the shock quite likely to manifest from Seitz's application of a language born of a perceived pragmatism and necessity to a series of events the real of whose violence rejects bromides and instrumental reasoning.

Truth-as-event

This anecdote is instructive for how it intimates that it is not simply Pinter's insistence on the veracity of his précis and narrative of post-war Western foreign policy that effects a differing, but the discursive manner, the style, in which he sets these claims in operation with a

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[52] Nobel Lecture draft, Pinter Archive, Nobel Lecture Box Add 88880/11/1, yellow legal pad #1, 19 unnumbered pages (pp. 10-11).
[53] *Art, Truth and Politics*, p. 291.

view to engendering belief. Thus it is not truth that Pinter produces in his political speeches and in particular *Art, Truth and Politics* but what can be called a truth-event. James Williams relates:

> We create truth in complex constructions of propositions and sensations that express the conditions for the genesis of the development of events. Truth then would not be a property of single propositions in a book or in a paper. It would be a property of a series of them through a work as it captured and changed our relation to the events expressed in the work. [...] It is not so much that simple propositions have no relation to truth at all. It is rather that truth is a matter of degrees. The more a work, or a proposition in a work, expresses about reality and the inter-relation of all things, and the more a work creates with that inter-relation in order to be able to express it, the more truth it will carry. This carrying is itself a matter of the transference of significance and intensity in the event, rather than a representation of it. Thus, to say something is true is not to say something verifiable in some way, but to say something that vivifies and alters a situation.[54]

Attending to how our apprehension of truth is dependent upon the way language vivifies and alters a situation provides a sense of the affective register within which Pinter's construction of the truth operates, the extent to which it does indexed by the Sandinista-Contra anecdote and Pinter's fabulation of the situation. This definition of truth as an event underlines the extant to which Pinter's multi-modal and variously aestheticized discourse in *Art, Truth and Politics* effectively express the inter-relations between things, create with that interrelation and do so in a manner which strives to transfer the significance and intensity in the event. Indeed Pinter's focus on the subject of drama early in the lecture and then his gradual transitioning into politics are integral to his production of truth-as-event; the two milieus inter-resonating the more squarely he moves into a critique of Western power, post-war foreign policy and increasingly the Bush and Blair administrations. But the gesture is repeated with difference as Pinter turns more decidedly to aesthetics in the latter stages of the Nobel, this direction a means to further animate the myriad claims and observations he has made throughout the lecture.

Reterritorializing Tony Blair and mediating the mainstream media

Pinter's pronouncement of the interrelation of things via numerous methods of fabulation and aestheticization reminds us of Joanne Klein's characterization of Pinter as 'an incisive maker of pictures'.[55] Given how central images are to political life – always orienting us both towards and away from political issues and realities – it is fitting that Pinter's progression through *Art, Truth and Politics* sees him turning increasingly to shocking and affective images as a tool for discursive and political leverage. For Pinter, images are precisely the means by which the

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[54] 'Truth', in *The Deleuze Dictionary*, ed. by Adrian Parr (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), pp. 289-91 (p. 289).
[55] *Making Pictures*, p. 197.

states of affairs to which he refers can be made to encompass the expression that linguistic signification and discourse does not always, or readily, represent.[56] In an anecdote which itself demonstrates how the fragmentation of media reportage and images can mute the violence of political events and sunder causes from effects, Pinter employs the device of apposition to point to and implicate two apparently unrelated news stories:

> Early in the invasion [i.e. of Iraq in 2003] there was a photograph published on the front page of British newspapers of Tony Blair kissing the cheek of a little Iraqi boy. 'A grateful child,' said the caption. A few days later there was a story and photograph, on an inside page, of another four-year-old boy with no arms. His family had been blown up by a missile. He was the only survivor. 'When do I get my arms back?' he asked. The story was dropped. Well, Tony Blair wasn't holding him in his arms, nor the body of any other mutilated child, nor the body of any bloody corpse. Blood is dirty. It dirties your shirt and tie when you're making a sincere speech on television.[57]

Notice how Pinter's intervention is not only focused on the politician but also accommodates the mainstream media, which we must recall from the previous chapter is a principal field of action Pinter invested in as an activist and political poet. The less prominent (and seemingly unrelated) coverage and image of the armless child is collided with the image of Blair – who is ultimately covered in blood as he cradles the mutilated child – in a way that underlines the existential relationship between politician and Iraqi civilian, doing so to the effect of undermining the 'plain folks' propaganda device that Blair's photo op clearly is. But at the same time, the image underlines the immanence of the mainstream press and politicians in the mediatization of reality.[58]

By rendering the mechanisms of television and media a backdrop to this assemblage of the Prime Minister in an utterly Christian posture and the armless Iraqi boy, Pinter's image interrogates the mainstream media's construction of reality. The unsettling tableau frames (a specific aspect of) the Iraq War in a manner that is wholly different from divers mainstream media representations at the time, and those which of course still circulate today.[59] The performance's insinuation that the child, an 'other', has become Blair's victim captures and reinstates a specific causal physics that one rarely finds in the mainstream and partisan press. But

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[56] Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, third edition, trans. by Mark Lester with Charles Stivale, ed. by Constantin V. Boundas (London and New York: Continuum, 2004), p. 165.

[57] *Art, Truth and Politics*, p. 296.

[58] For arguments that posit patterns of interdependence between politics and media, doing so via theories of instrumentalization, dependency or symbiosis, see Thomas Meyer, with Lew Hinchman, *Media Democracy: How the Media Colonize Politics* (Cambridge: Polity, 2002).

[59] Steven Rendall and Tara Broughel found that the presentation on television networks of pro-war voices far exceeded those against the war: eighty-one percent of Fox's sources were pro-war, as were seventy-seven percent of CBS sources and sixty-five percent of NBC sources. 'Amplifying Officials, Squelching Dissent: FAIR Study Finds Democracy Poorly Served by War Coverage', *Extra!*, (May/June 2003) <http://www.fair.org/index.php?page=1145> [accessed October 2009].

while this is a curious gesture on Pinter's part given how well known he is for plays that elide cause and effect and forego the former for a focus on the latter, it is worth noting that his political sensibility as an activist has developed much later in a political climate where 'it is the causes themselves that are tending to disappear,' as Baudrillard observes, 'tending to become indecipherable, and giving way to an intensification of processes operating in a void'.[60] Through a process of capture and reinscription, Pinter's discourse at this stage prevents the sense of violence and human toll in Iraq from passing across the 'lining or hem'[61] of ascendant portrayals and framings of Blair which render him a benign figure.

Pinter's aestheticization of Blair is a poignant indictment of the manner in which the now former Prime Minster's identity and role vis-à-vis Iraq were constructed in the mainstream press. Pinter's image overturns Blair's implementation of Christian postures and his renowned 'capacity to, as it were, "anchor" the public politician in the "normal person"', as Norman Fairclough observes,[62] his frequent use of terms such as 'decency', 'common sense', and 'compassion' a strategic means to 'reassert constantly his normal, decent, likable personality'.[63] Pinter's linking of two stories that were spatially sundered performs a violence upon the identity which Blair and his public relations team had assiduously worked to fabricate and stabilize; the effect, therefore a relegation of Blair to the office of political villain, murderer, and megalomaniac – an office which is so often in the West reserved for what Paul Patton ironically calls the ubiquitous 'wily Arab opponent'.[64]

In terms of how the performance functions to engender affect, we can again think in terms of style when considering Pinter's juxtaposition and aestheticization of the two images. The hysterical image Pinter engineers derives from his making the image of the child cannibalize that of Blair. Pinter's foregrounding and underlining through imagistic concision of the relations between Blair's political decision making and its material consequences performs a violence upon the leader's dominant mediatization, upon the discursive construction of a specific reality that enables death to be placed at a distance, and thus remain an idea and an operation within a void. The process is an alchemic one the transpiration of which captures the sense of the event – both the ground level violence of the invasion and the violence politicians continually perform when they use language that obfuscates (and displaces) this material reality. Hence, Pinter's use of the image is inflected and becomes ponderous with the sense that so often remains extrinsic

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[60] *The Transparency of Evil*, p. 31.
[61] Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, p. 165.
[62] *New Labour, New Language?* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 7.
[63] ibid., 'Preface', p. vii.
[64] Paul Patton, 'Introduction', *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*, p. 6.

to simple linguistic representation,[65] particularly in the form of clichéd constructions and familiar models of argumentation one finds in public and political debate, as well a great deal of journalism. Pinter's discourse sets up a resonance *between* Blair's photo op and the Iraqi child, and from these two poles or objects engineers a 'precious image'[66] whose solicitation of thought in the audience evokes the real of politically orchestrated death; where death is otherwise typically destroyed by the standard 'sphere of information', reduced to what Baudrillard calls an 'immense zero-sum circuit'.[67]

Certainly Pinter's linkage of the two seemingly disparate news stories creates a discursive constellation (image and indirect speech constituting a discourse) that enables us to see what was hitherto unapparent. But perhaps more importantly it also invites us to question both the media we consume and the manner in which we do so. In paratactically linking and rendering coterminous two images that have been set at a distance through mainstream media formatting, Pinter dislodges the events from their standard sign system and solicits from his audience a different reading and therefore investment in political reality. It is the resonance created in the paratactic linkage of these 'objects' that permits Pinter to extract a new image from that relationship and its resonance, the effect being '*a forced movement of greater amplitude*'.[68] Both the fact of the civilian's fate and the politician's role are therefore endowed with significance and immediacy, rendered 'indelible' and 'of moment', as Pinter would himself say. If we accept, following Deleuze's account of Hume's theory of knowledge and subjectivity, that the movement and pattern of associations are what produce ideas, and in turn the habits which produce subjectivity,[69] then the imagistic linkages Pinter creates between Metcalf-Seitz and Blair-Iraqi child suggest the manner in which the citizens' political discourse in the Nobel functions to inspire processes of resubjectification vis-à-vis the political history to which he continually refers. The sheer force and muscularity of Pinter's new sign system reassembles the subjectivities of the victims of political violence and those laid to waste by militarism and indirect political subversion in a fashion which traces a line of flight from the ascendant modes of representation, those which have according to Pinter made events that were 'conducted throughout the world' and which were 'never-ending' seem 'as if [they] never happened'.[70]

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[65] Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, p. 165.

[66] Deleuze, *Proust and Signs*, second edition, trans. by Richard Howard (London: Continuum, 2000), p. 100.

[67] Baudrillard, *Paroxysm: Interviews with Philipe Petit*, trans. by Chris Turner (London and New York: Verso, 1998), pp. 71-72.

[68] Deleuze, *Proust and Signs*, p. 100.

[69] *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, pp. 21-36.

[70] *Art, Truth and Politics*, p. 293.

Memory and historical amnesia

Pinter's refraining of this compelling paradoxical phrase transposes into the 2005 context the ironic slogan Baudrillard employed to critique the 1991 Gulf War; the French thinker's collection of essays respectively entitled 'The Gulf War will not take place', 'The Gulf War is not really taking place' and latterly, and most controversially, 'The Gulf War did not take place'.[71] As discussed in the previous chapter, Baudrillard's is a provocative and much misinterpreted claim that observes the manner in which the Gulf War event transpired and was mediatized: the mainstream media displacing the real of the conflict's violence so that an event which constituted more of a one-way expulsion of relentless and jingoistic payload than a war[72] did not need to be felt or thought about in any comprehensive, engaged and alert way. Pinter's engagement with history positions itself contra the spectacle and refracted modes of spectatorship which both the mainstream media and politicians have, at times conjointly, created and solicited. It is precisely by excavating a gallery of events that comprise Western foreign policy and then dialoguing them with contemporary political states of affairs under the leadership of Bush and Blair that Pinter kicks against discourses and monumentalizations of the past which immobilize 'the social vitality of memory', and which do so to the effect of 'defining and demarcating a limit-interpretation to it.'[73]

As Pinter coaxes his audience to mentally figure the violence and brutality expressed in the relationships between Western power and those who have been subjected to it over the years, the events he foregrounds become unstable, lucent and can no longer be easily fitted within discursive frameworks and ideational processes which render atrocity abstruse by muting the sensible plateau of that sign within higher order thinking. Therefore one of the upshots of Pinter's enlistment of various image-centric discourses in order to capture the violence of political action that slips out of the frames typically employed in the telling of American and British post-war history is to construct a different subjectivity for the victims of power. It must be noted, though, how this subjectivity does not impel his audience to mourn and celebrate the dead in ways that displace attention from the reasons why a nation goes to war, which is to

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[71] Published in the French newspaper *Libération* and in the *Guardian* between January and March 1991. 'The Gulf War will not take place' was published in *Libération* on 4 January 1991. 'The Gulf War is not really taking place' was published in *Libération* on 6 February 1991 and 'The Gulf War did not take place' was published in *Libération* on 29 March 1991.

[72] Paul Patton observes: 'According to some accounts, the amount of high explosive unleashed in the first month of the conflict exceeded that of the entire allied air offensive during WW II. This was followed by a systematic air and land assault on the Iraqi forces left in Kuwait which culminated in the infamous "turkey shoot" carried out on the troops and the others fleeing along the road to Basra.' 'Introduction', *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*, pp. 1-2.

[73] Adrian Parr, *Deleuze and Memorial Culture: Desire, Singular Memory and the Politics of Trauma* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), p. 8.

displace attention from the difficult questions that beg asking when we are confronted with these species of political issue and reality. Hence we are reminded of the significance of questions in the citizen's discourse, which are to some extent a carryover from the open and difficult questions his dramas raise concerning socio-political reality, as Grimes notes (see Intro and Chapter 3). Again we find Pinter circumventing the provision of solutions and engaging in the production of problems, those which in this instance have to do with collective remembrance.[74]

If we regard Pinter's affective staging of past political events as an organization of the energies, affects and forces of memory,[75] then it becomes possible to move beyond construing his précis and dramatization of post-war foreign policy as merely a counter-narrative designed to get history right, so to say. Pinter's forceful refrain of '[i]t never happened' permits us to regard his fabulations and capture of the real of political violence as a prompt for his audience to work to make mental connections, as a set of 'cultural practices', those which seek to 'reinstate the singularity of trauma by restoring different connections to memory'.[76] These aestheticizations form a set of practices which perform an interruption into the processes of both the reification and elision of political history and in the long run, moreover, they function to put 'the productive power' of trauma, violence and death – their 'social energies and affects – to work differently'.[77] In striving to free extant texts from the power dynamic in which they are 'locked' as a result of political discourse and media framing, Pinter's affective discursive interventions into the distant and recent past create a new assemblage of meanings which might reorient his audience to other modes of apprehending and engaging with history. Moreover, if we accept Pinter's understanding that dominant historical narratives about the history of foreign policy have produced a lacuna and have fomented a widespread historical amnesia, then we can see how Pinter's return to history with a view to its affective *re*articulation is a form of breaking opinion and cliché. Performing this function is in itself a performance of power qua *puissance*.

It is therefore not reductive to link Pinter's problematization of typical or even clichéd investments to discussions in all previous chapters of Pinter's variegated manipulation of aesthetic conventions and the typical modes by which we invest in different media. The moment one apprehends that Pinter's Baudrillardian refraining of '[i]t never happened' is referring to the manner in which language and discourse create and shape reality, regardless of what has in actual fact transpired, it is difficult not to see Pinter as drawing upon striking moments in his plays.

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[74] ibid., pp. 3-4.
[75] ibid., p. 3.
[76] ibid., p. 4.
[77] ibid., p. 11.

Take *The Homecoming*, for example, during which Lenny briefly controls the narrative and speaks reality into being when he assures Ruth that the 'certain lady [...] down by the docks' in his anecdote was in fact 'diseased' – simply because he 'decided she was';[78] or *The Birthday Party*, which 'concludes with Meg and Petey beginning to readjust to a life without Stanley as if the events of the play [which consist in large part of invasion, manipulation, rape, physical assault, and psychological torture] had never happened'.[79]

The citizen's awareness that it is only through language that one can reinscribe a highly charged version of past history that has been distorted or even elided through language certainly derives from the playwright's sensibility, from a career-long investment in both that which gets dragged up from some unidentifiable offstage past and the characters' sundry attempts to distance themselves even from what has happened in the run of the play. Here one feels the full force of the dramatist's and the citizen's coeval investment, which critical moments in Pinter scholarship index in their affirmation that the plays' dramatic stakes never involved a failure to communicate but rather evasion,[80] nor did they involve 'the impenetrable mystery of the universe', and thus absurdity, but rather 'the vicissitudes of living within a specific cultural order'.[81]

While the playwright's familiar problematization and elision of the past might seem wholly antithetical to the citizen's interest in excavating and stabilizing it in the Nobel lecture, the two Pinters converge on the basis of an investment in how 'the past is not past [...] it never was past. It's present' and that '[y]ou carry all the states with you until the end', as Pinter claimed to Gussow in 1971.[82] This assertion is in fact what drives the citizen's efforts to, firstly, reinstate that which has been effaced from official discourse and, secondly, to endow those realities with an affective valency, one which renders these socio-political states of affairs more than an abstract reflection, more than historical tableaux of violence whose experiential quiddity belongs to the past. Thus harnessing the force of the past in all its absences is integral to engendering an experience that can provoke change-oriented action in the present. As such, the citizen's preoccupation with the past is a gesture towards a future (life) that might break from the patterns that are repeatedly territorialized by contemporary political discourse and the mediatizing of events.

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[78] *Plays 3*, pp. 38-39.

[79] Quigley, *The Pinter Problem*, p. 227.

[80] Charan Guru Behera, *Reality and Illusion in the Plays of Harold Pinter* (New Delhi: Atlantic, 1998), p. 95.

[81] Marc Silverstein, *The Language of Cultural Power* (Lewisburg, London and Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1993), p. 144.

[82] Pinter in Gussow, *Conversations*, p. 38.

Aesthetics as a politics

Given, as we saw in the previous chapter, how the monument on Deleuze and Guattari's terms is not a representation of history that returns us to the past but rather a fabulated bloc of sensation that collapses past and present, it does not surprise that Pinter's 'minor' aestheticizations in the lecture give way to the recitation of poetry and the use of performance. Indeed, the imagistic concision of both serves to further intensify and complexify the affective register of the lecture. As such, Pinter surreptitiously moves from his critique of a language whose power is to dissuade if not prevent forceful and autonomous thought to enlisting a language that derives from and has the capacity to render thought and the corporeal body immanent, therefore prompting embodied and processual acts of cognition. In a tripartite circuit, Pinter first enacts a poem, then he renders an ironic performance of Bush the younger's speech writer and finally culminates with another enactment of a poem, this time his own verse 'Death', once again recontextualized in an expressly political milieu.[83]

Whereas Pinter seemed early in the lecture to transition from reflecting on his own early and mid-career dramas to enlisting two later plays which involve interrogation, torture and collapse the personal and the political as a means to set the stage for his critique of political language, he now 'returns' to art, but does so precisely in order to further intensify the critique and political register. By no means is this return to art a simple demonstration of its importance to Pinter. His interest rather is in the capacity of the aesthetic to lift an audience 'out of mundane consciousness' and 'to create a sensible reality whereby the ordinary world is modified'.[84] Here in the denouement of *Art, Truth and Politics* Pinter turns to poetic images and aesthetics because they can exploit, to an even further degree, the intrinsic force of the discourse[85] and endow his political language with 'an intense material of expression';[86] poetics and performance arguably capable of transmitting affective force more immediately and directly than through more explicit emphases on facts and his invocation of the correspondence model of truth.

The first step in this process entails a form of mediatization whereby Pinter refracts his own critique through the voice, poetry and indeed critical authority of another artist, Chilean and Nobel laureate (1971) Pablo Neruda. The intensely vivid poetics of 'I'm Explaining a Few Things' are a violent response to the decadence of the Spanish Civil War; the ironic title and

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[83] As observed in Chapter 5, the poem was written on the occasion of the passing of Pinter's father, but appeared in his collection of political poems, *War*.

[84] Georges Bataille, qtd. in O'Sullivan, *Art Encounters*, p. 48. Originally appears in *Prehistoric Painting: Lascaux, Or, the Birth of Art* (London and New York: Macmillan, 1980).

[85] Réda Bensmaïa, 'Foreword', *Kafka*, pp. ix-xxi (p. xviii).

[86] ibid., p. xvii.

simultaneously disturbing and beautiful verses a demand that we bear witness to and absorb atrocity. By enlisting a poem about the Spanish Civil War to speak to and condemn the post-1945 landscape of Western power and US foreign policy, Pinter produces new resonances by translating the old ones into a more recent, yet related political field of action and politicized context of utterance. Revolting in its conveyance of the destruction and carnage caused by war, 'I'm Explaining a Few Things' contains one particularly visual and affecting passage: 'bonfires/ leapt out of the earth/devouring human beings [...] and the blood of children ran through the streets/ without fuss, like children's blood'.[87] Lines such as these are a potent device with which to render salient the fact of civilian deaths.

The extent to which the poem's images register a violence at visceral, neural and proprioceptive levels can overwhelm processes of cognition and intellection such that the formulation of thought and interpretation, when they do come, become anatomized and highly reflexive, a challenge as opposed to a routinized act of deference to extant ideology and thus familiar subject positions. The 'explanation' of war the poem performs upon listeners is immanently physiological: an explanation in the form of a bodily shudder or a convulsion whose violence transcends the extant understanding and opinions we carry on the matter and therefore impinges upon the contours of our subjectivity, however briefly. Aestheticized as such, the fact of civilian death, particularly infanticide, imprints itself upon listeners' sensory-neural and emotional networks and mediates cultural 'information' in the form of muscle memory developed from past experience. The stimulation of the viscera to the effect of engendering affects that propel thought is politically antithetical to the political discourse Pinter interrogates early in the lecture, a language consisting of hackneyed words and phrases utterly devoid of the affect which repotentializes the force and movement in thought.

Pinter's centralization of the poem at this stage within the broader network of various discourses and performed voices introduces a singular aesthetic moment into an already robust political performance composed of facts, statistics, anecdotes, morally-charged indictments and imagery. Pinter in fact clarifies the political function of Neruda's poem when he attests that 'nowhere in contemporary poetry have I read such a powerful visceral description of the bombing of civilians';[88] this statement an index of how Pinter sees the language of 'I'm Explaining a Few Things' as operative within a political economy of affect, and therefore as sufficient to create a new world and subjectivity vis-à-vis the reality of political violence and the (ab)use of political power. In reciting the resonant and affective words of another political poet,

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[87] *Art, Truth and Politics*, p. 296.
[88] ibid., pp. 297-98.

Pinter compounds his own singular voice with a view to problematizing his audience's ability to set the body aside in their contemplation of both political history and the current geopolitical landscape. In its usage, furthermore, Neruda's poem bears the trace of all previous assertions and moments in the lecture, and performs a consolidating function as it is discharged in the wake of Pinter's image-centric post-1945 history of political rhetoric, action and events. Both Pinter's enactment of the poem and his commentary on its visceral character, along with his performance of all other minor aestheticizations hitherto, suggest strongly that it is not truth and falsity that are the genetic element of thought[89] but movement at the deepest corporeal levels.

Performance

Having used Neruda's poetics to animate the visceral dimension of his political intervention, Pinter turns to performance as a means to fabulate and interrogate a specific political discourse that has become quite familiar in the post-9/11 era. Volunteering himself as George W. Bush's speech writer, Pinter imagines the American leader addressing his nation on television:

> 'God is good. God is great. God is good. My God is good. Bin Laden's God is bad. His is a bad God. Saddam's God was bad, except he didn't have one. He was a barbarian. We are not barbarians. We don't chop people's heads off. We believe in freedom. So does God. I am not a barbarian. I am the democratically elected leader of a freedom-loving democracy. We are a compassionate society. We give compassionate electrocution and compassionate lethal injection. We are a great nation. I am not a dictator. He is. I am not a barbarian. He is. And he is. They all are. I possess moral authority. You see this fist? This is my moral authority. And don't you forget it.'[90]

The performance generates significant irony since Pinter's enactment of the office of Bush's speech writer is simultaneously a portrayal of the American leader; a highly charged and suggestive theatrical device given how much effort Pinter has already devoted in the lecture to exposing and condemning the Bush administration, underlining its role in Afghanistan and Iraq in the latest chapter in post-war political history. The irony is thickest as Bush's characterization of his opponents appears as a form of projection that effectively turns the descriptions back on the speaker himself, suggesting that it is the President and the political culture from which he emerges that are actually worthy of the very accusations he levels at Iraq's former leader and at Bin Laden.

Picking up on previous stages of the lecture where he demonstrably interrogates the hegemonic and constraining function of language 'as used by politicians', at this stage Pinter's

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[89] Paul Patton, *Deleuze and the Political* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 25.
[90] *Art, Truth and Politics*, p. 299.

enactment of the speech writer-President foregrounds and dismantles the thought terminating clichés that often suffuse political discourse: false dichotomies, weasel words, glittering generalities, equivocations, association fallacies, appeals to force and so on. Conjuring the Orwellian language of newspeak, Pinter's performance of the oxymoronic phrases '[w]e give compassionate electrocution and compassionate lethal injection' contests Bush's claims to probity as a national characteristic, and at once consolidates the acts of political syncretism and language deformation detailed through the lecture in the compact history of foreign policy. Reminiscent of *One for The Road, Precisely*, 'American Football', *The New World Order* and *Party Time*, Pinter's dismantling of binaries such as Good and Evil, East versus West and Christian versus heathen and his conflation, moreover, of Western leaders with demagogues and political villains who are axiomatically vilified (Stalin, Hitler, Hussein) performs a trope that is germane to the political dramas and poetry.

'Death' redux

When Pinter introduces his own verse into the lecture, it is by way of summation: 'I have referred to death quite a few times this evening', he reflects and then adds: 'I shall now quote a poem of my own called "Death".'[91] As a poem that places death 'in a network of human relationships' and suggests 'that we seek to minimize death either by shrouding it in the stultifying language of bureaucracy or by abstracting it from a world of feeling and thought',[92] Pinter's transposition of 'Death' into his political discourse at this stage functions to capture the sense and immediacy of this political reality, to will '*the embodiment* and the actualisation of the pure incorporeal event in a state of affairs' and in the bodies and flesh of his audience.[93] By inviting the audience to give mental shape to a reality which poses a significant challenge to thought, the recitation of the poem serves as an affective-performative that plugs into a larger assemblage of affects engendered by Pinter's enactment of the Neruda poem, his performances of a bloodstained Tony Blair appearing before the press, Bush's speech writer and the American President himself, and a whole host of other dramatizations of both the performance of power and victims' physiological and mental subjection to it. All of these are performances that tear away any legitimacy political pragmatism might be said to have, and more specifically the assumptions, presuppositions and opinions that enable the intellectual refraction and rationalization of real violence, human suffering and death. While Pinter's initial discursive moves in the lecture appeared at face value to move from aesthetics to politics, it becomes clear

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[91] ibid.
[92] Billington, *Harold Pinter*, p. 397.
[93] Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, p. 166.

at this stage how he employs aesthetics precisely as a means to move even more squarely into politics.

The smashed mirror, 'intellectual determination' and dignity

In the conclusion to the lecture, Pinter invokes the mirror in such a way that conjures the universally recognized trope of art's truth-telling function vis-à-vis nature (i.e. the world). The trope, however, is immediately collapsed into politics as Pinter smashes the reflective surface:

> When we look into a mirror we think the image that confronts us is accurate. But move a millimetre and the image changes. We are actually looking at a never-ending range of reflections. But sometimes a writer has to smash the mirror — for it is on the other side of that mirror that the truth stares at us.[94]

Witness how this compelling tableau is a revision of Pinter's opening treatise on art in so far as here the writer's identity and citizen's species of truth are simultaneously foregrounded. By no means an innocuous image and symbol, the mirror points at once to politics and aesthetics: connoting, on the one hand, the timeless metaphor for art and its capacity for truth telling — art being the mirror that is held up to nature — and, on the other hand, connoting the correspondence model of truth Pinter has enlisted throughout the Nobel, a model based on *a statement of truth* (language) that can be sharply distinguished from its reference in nature (action).[95] While in the preliminary stages of *Art, Truth and Politics* Pinter made no claim as a writer to capturing 'the truth', it is curious that he is now portraying himself as capable of doing so in that very role. As it happens, the lecture is not moving as linearly as it might have seemed, and these near-final remarks suggest that Pinter's sharp distinction between his two identities is indeed not as rigid or tenable as one might have expected following Pinter's initial framing.

Situated thus, Pinter renders his final remarks, indeed a warning, as an artist-citizen:

> I believe that despite the enormous odds which exist, unflinching, unswerving, fierce intellectual determination, as citizens, to define the *real* truth of our lives and our societies is a crucial obligation which devolves upon us all. It is in fact mandatory. If such a determination is not embodied in our political vision we have no hope of restoring what is so nearly lost to us — the dignity of man.[96]

Attending closely to this passage reveals how Pinter's language is bilocated, which is to say it effects a 'double process' whereby several discursive moments coexist.[97] Even as Pinter's concern for human dignity in this conclusion most obviously invokes the authority of the

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[94] *Art, Truth and Politics*, p. 300.
[95] Peter Hallward, *Badiou: A Subject to Truth* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), p. 153.
[96] *Art, Truth and Politics*, p. 300, author's emphasis.
[97] Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, p. 154.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), it partially returns us to art by summoning the discourse of dignity that pervades prior Nobel lectures, Pablo Neruda's *Towards the Splendid City* being one of the most noteworthy examples:

> In the midst of the arena of America's struggles I saw that my human task was none other than to join the extensive forces of the organized masses of the people [...] because it is only from this great popular stream that the necessary changes can arise for the authors and for the nations. [...] I can find no other way for an author in our far-flung and cruel countries, if we want the darkness to blossom, if we are concerned that the millions of people who have learnt neither to read us nor to read at all, who still cannot write or write to us, are to feel at home in the area of dignity without which it is impossible for them to be complete human beings.[98]

Neruda refrains dignity again in the final passage of his lecture, but does so, just as we previously saw Pinter using the Chilean poet to invest his own critique of war with added force, via Arthur Rimbaud – a poet who strove assiduously to forge a new poetic language with which to live life and whose work was expressly sensory and synaesthesic: 'that the whole future has been expressed in this line by Rimbaud: only with a *burning patience* can we conquer the splendid City which will give light, justice and dignity to all mankind.'

But just as Pinter's discourse of dignity obliquely summons both Neruda and Rimbaud, the concluding appeal to intellectual determination against the forces Pinter has sedulously portrayed and indicted up to this final point in the lecture conjoins with key moments in his dramas, the most obvious resonances here being Petey's final cautionary remarks to Stanley in *The Birthday Party* to not 'let them tell you what to do'[99] and the manner in which *Ashes to Ashes* underlines 'the challenge of moral engagement' and the transvaluation of 'our perceptions of what is real and unreal in our daily lives and in the constitution of our moral selves.'[100] Thus Pinter's return to art in the conclusion performs an infolding of aesthetics and politics. His oblique conjuring of his own artistic voice and the voices of other humanist poets confronts us with the manner in which the ostensibly drama-oriented discourse early on in the lecture adumbrates and in the course of events retroactively undergirds Pinter's overtly political discourse.

Perhaps equally if not more interesting than Pinter's defense of dignity, however, is the manner in which his appeal to 'intellectual' determination animates all prior characterizations of truth as performed action and the consequences of such action *and* the importance of adopting a rigorous empiricism as a life practice. Notice how in obliging his audience to engage the critical

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[98] 'Pablo Neruda – Nobel Lecture', *Nobelprize.org: The Official Web Site of the Nobel Prize* <http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1971/neruda-lecture-e.html> [accessed November 2008].

[99] *Plays 1*, p. 80.

[100] Grimes, *Harold Pinter's Politics*, p. 197.

faculties in order to discern 'the *real* truth of our lives and our societies' Pinter fully actualizes the virtual political discourse that existed all along in his initial remarks on the ever-elusive but *de rigueur* search for dramatic truth: Despite remarking early on that '[t]ruth in drama is forever elusive', and that '[y]ou never quite find it', we must recall now how Pinter insisted that 'the search for it is compulsive. The search is clearly what drives the endeavour. The search *is your task*.'[101] Thus the means – intellectual determination – are now suggested as a complement to his earlier assignation of the 'task', as he puts it; the conclusion to the lecture divulging in full that he was always already surreptitiously setting the terms of his imminent political intervention.

While it is interesting to observe the intertextual relationship of all these discourses, I suggest that the significance lies more in the manner in which the inter-resonance constitutes a 'utopian' gesture. To speak of utopia in this sense, on the artist's terms, is not to regard Pinter as concerned with 'statements about the ideal nature of social existence (unlike many utopian philosophies)' but as engaged, rather, in a politics and promotion of 'acts that offer resistance to the norms and values of the present.'[102] The conclusion betrays fully Pinter's layering of discursive interventions (both his own and those of others) which derive from a collective commitment to 'engaging with the concrete present situation as it in fact is',[103] but engaging with the express aim of 'breaking with or resisting the present for the future'.[104] Even though Pinter's appeal to be intellectually vigilant against the pillow of propaganda and hegemonic discourses is levelled within a broader framework of solidarity, his 'call to arms' offers no guarantees and is indeed 'not a narrative of inevitable progress, nor does it offer the security of commitment to a single set of values against which progress may be judged.'[105] Intellectual determination as such appears as a process and *not* a specific thought or determination which operates in accordance with an image of thought or ideological architecture. Thus Pinter's conclusion underlines the extent to which his politics are tactical rather than strategic, which is to say they recommend a life practice that each person must negotiate moment by moment, as opposed to sketching a programme defined by set beliefs, thoughts and actions. This goes some way toward explaining why Pinter's critique of the American administration's shelling of words like freedom and democracy does not at any point entail or give way to attempts at defining what these terms really do and should mean but instead vivifies what these words have come to entail in their current meaning and usage. Not only does this point feed Pinter's activism back into his

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[101] *Art, Truth and Politics*, p. 285, my emphasis.
[102] Jonathan Roffe, 'Utopia', in *The Deleuze Dictionary*. ed. by Adrian Parr (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), pp. 293-94 (p. 294).
[103] ibid.
[104] ibid.
[105] Patton, *Deleuze and the Political*, p. 8. Qting. Deleuze and Guattari, *Negotiations*, p. 173.

dramatic writing for the stage, film and poetry, it also underlines, even in his most overtly political moments as a dramatist, the separation of his work and political investments from those of his committed contemporaries who increasingly sewed 'small utopian gestures [...] into the rhetoric of the plays' in the form of 'epigrams, *bon mots*, slogans, witty formulations, and at the other extreme, spectacle, imagery, utopianism, and moments of theatrical *tour de force*.'[106]

Of course the challenge or the 'fault' of Pinter's politics, depending on one's perspective, involves coming to grips with the Nobel laureate's replacement of guarantees that the world can and will be a freer place with a stern emphasis of the 'difficult path of practical, empirical learning and careful attention.'[107] Because Pinter offers no clear belief system as a utopian exchange for contemporary liberalism, the act of thinking can only be construed as an orientation of thought towards breaking clichéd, hegemonic and ossified frameworks, practices and rationalities – in the main a defence against the sedimentation of opinion and common sense as a species of thought that comes from elsewhere and has therefore already performed the thinking for us. We can regard Pinter's solicitation to engage the intellect as a political resistance to and critique of hegemonic discourses and nihilistic material transactions as a performance of the event of thought itself. This is to say that while the citizen's lecture instantiates what is the case, doing so in a manner that solicits an embodied investment in the factual outcomes of politicking, it simultaneously aims to confront us with the understanding 'that we are not yet thinking (an event of *impouvoir*)'; Pinter's ultimate aim in appealing to intellectual determination being to produce an affective encounter whereby 'we "comprehend" that we are not yet perceiving or hearing the world *as it is*.'[108] In this way, the first premise of Pinter's conclusion edges his audience not towards political reform but towards revolution, a 'revolutionary action' which 'by virtue of its partial character, is determined to call into question the totality of power and its hierarchy.'[109] This, I submit, is what makes Pinter's appeal to an engaged and determined intellect qua political act a micropolitics: a practice that *begins* with the individual, at the deepest levels of subjectivity, but which has knock-on effects within the wider social field.

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[106] Begley, 'The Aesthetics of Refusal', pp. 634-35.

[107] Roffe, 'Utopia', p. 294.

[108] Gregg Lambert, 'Cinema and the Outside', in *The Brain Is the Screen: Deleuze and the Philosophy of Cinema*, ed. by Gregory Flaxman (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), pp. 253-92 (p. 259).

[109] Deleuze, *Desert Islands and Other Texts 1953-1974* (Los Angeles and New York: Semiotext(e), 2004), p. 208.

Harold Pinter's politics: a 'coherent force' yet-to-become

It is important at this point to reflect on a claim Pinter makes earlier in the lecture. In positing that a certain demographic of Americans are 'demonstrably shamed, sickened and angered by their government's actions', he suggests that they have 'yet' to become 'a coherent political force'.[110] Pinter's use of the word 'yet' is quite suggestive, in the Deleuzian sense, of a virtual people to come who have only to be actualized through the performance of innumerable vigilant revolutionary acts; those which contest at every step the mental fascisms that derive from the effects of hegemonic language and the dispersal of thought-arresting rationalities whose field of action expresses itself even at the deepest levels of subjectivity. To speak the language of 'yet to come' is to acknowledge that given specific conditions things can always be otherwise. Regardless of Pinter's scepticism of theorizing,[111] his utterance of the phrase in such an interrogative and politicized context expresses something of the philosopher's ethics in so far as that figure classically adopts an anarchic posture against *doxa*, a posture which itself functions to suggest how the course of events in any milieu always constrain or prevent the production of other outcomes, realities and ways of thinking and living. While this is a discourse and critique that forego the rhetoric of hope, it can be said that a hopeful gesture emerges in its rigour and production of thought that engenders difference, as opposed to thought that functions to sustain extant institutions and mental architectures, specifically those which do not mobilize new affects, passions and emotions, and thus new conditions for and ways of desiring and being with others.

If we construe Pinter's political discourse, and indeed much of his dramatic writing, in terms of its interruptive character and function, and therefore as hostile to the application of common sense and opinion, then perhaps we might reinscribe a gesture of hope in his oeuvre – hope, as Grimes rightly points out, being overwhelmed by the silence that resonates beyond echo throughout a great deal of Pinter's body of work. As with Pinter's appeal to intellectual determination as a politics, his emphasis of a force that is yet to come takes both him and his audience away from political programmes and defined ideologies, which is certainly in keeping with the artist's consistent remarks throughout his career about how he always works with images rather than structures in his various processes of composition for stage, screen and poetry. To characterize resistance to dominant power as a *force* rather than a movement or defined collective is to create the space for heterogeneous identities and groups to form

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[110] *Art, Truth and Politics*, p. 298.
[111] Mel Gussow: 'Theory is something you find very antagonistic.' Pinter: 'Most definitely. For example, "theories of drama" and that kind of thing I find quite unreadable.' *Conversations*, pp. 41-42.

networks that might identify and exploit events that will, if manipulated efficaciously, interrupt flows of power that hinder productive becomings.

Conclusion

It is easy enough to see a disjoint between Pinter's language and investments as a citizen and the much younger imminent playwright who declared to not 'want philosophies, tracts, dogmas, creeds, way outs, truths, answers, nothing from the bargain basement'.[112] But I suggest that the apparent contradiction can in the final analysis be reconciled if we apprehend that the species of truth for which the citizen has use, which he invokes for political leverage, and the aims of freedom towards which that leverage is directed, continue to have nothing to do with the chain of ideological terms the young Pinter is referring to in a statement that fingers why Beckett's writing is important to him. Pinter's remarks on Beckett from 1954 are a response to the capacity of certain kinds of art, and by extension critical discourse, to 'slaughter the moment of experience', as Taylor-Batty understands, 'laying it to rest shrouded in obscurantist vocabulary.' Pinter, Taylor-Batty adds, 'dismisses [those] who "never open the door and go in" but rather operate "on" [art]' and 'rejects critical discourses that might map out poetic expression but fail to recognise the effects that such expression offers in the moment of utterance.'[113] Indeed we can see how this sentiment continues to pervade the citizen's discourse as it does not invite audiences to invest in the speaker as an icon and the purveyor of a worldview, but instead to engage with certain political realities from a subject position that correlates '[t]he highest form of consciousness' and 'the deepest form of the subconscious'.[114] To invest as such entails resisting the forces that function to 'slaughter the moment of experience' where political violence and death are concerned, forces that lay to rest what has actually occurred by means of a political language that Pinter would undoubtedly regard as just one more 'obscurantist vocabulary.'

For Pinter, both early in his career as a putatively apolitical artist[115] and subsequently as a citizen, the truths to be queried are precisely those which stem from ideas as opposed to states of affairs. For it is the former which sees cognition become a form of seizing power and a claim

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[112] 'Samuel Beckett', in *Various Voices*, pp. 67-68 (p. 67).

[113] 'Fling Open the Door and Let Pinter's Pause Be Heard'.

[114] Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, p. 154.

[115] Within the literature discussion abounds regarding Pinter's apparent apoliticism in the earlier stages of his career. Just two useful points of reference on this matter are: Pinter's own assertion that 'I'm not committed as a writer, in the usual sense of the term, either religiously or politically. And I'm not conscious of any particular social function.' 'Introduction: Writing for Myself', in *Harold Pinter: Plays 2*, pp. vii-xi (p. x); and Drew Milne's observation that '[a]mong Pinter's attractions for the critical establishment was the way his work appeared to scorn [the politicized styles of many of his contemporaries] and could be seen as the continuation of dramatic art as something above and beyond politics.' 'Pinter's Sexual Politics', p. 195.

to truth that manifests the power of ruling groups.[116] These are preliminary steps toward looking beyond the fact of Pinter's turn to truth as a citizen so that we might apprehend both the consequentialism that motivates this turn and the specific means by which truth is produced and used. Thus, widening our scrutiny of Pinter's invocation of apodictic states of affairs and his catholic reference to the correspondence model of truth so as to include an examination of the structure of the Nobel lecture and the citizen's political style – largely his enlistment of aesthetic devices in order to endow the truths he posits with force – permits us to see that 'signs and images belong to a logic of "sense and event" rather than of truth and proposition.'[117] And it is precisely Pinter's exploitation of this logic of sense above and beyond his appeals for us to separate what is the case from what has been claimed to be the case which makes his activist discourse unique and arguably efficacious as a political intervention. Lingering too much on Pinter's discourse of truth and his demarcation of two identities will only continually ground us in considerations of difference at the level of representation, and therefore capture us in a cycle whereby we make simplistic observations of how the citizen does and does not compare to the artist. Nor will it permit us to move to and beyond awareness that '[t]ruth and falsity are properties of [Pinter's] statements of beliefs only'.[118] It is only, I submit, by looking through and ultimately askance of representational coordinates that we can begin to apprehend how Pinter's capture of the real of political violence and death and his harnessing of their sense and affective force are precisely what make his claims to veracity and falsity take effect, what perform an alteration in the general flow of things and, finally, what lift his audience out of mundane consciousness.

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[116] Hans Barth, *Truth and Ideology*, trans. by Frederic Lilge, foreward by Reinhard Bendix (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1976), pp. 167-68.
[117] Rajchman, *The Deleuze Connections*, p. 118.
[118] James O. Young, *Art and Knowledge*, p. 69.

Conclusion

In this thesis I have argued that Pinter's aesthetics is a politics, doing so by examining Pinter's writing and work in various media through the lens of the Deleuzian concepts 'affect' and 'becoming'. The concluding paragraphs which follow briefly revisit and summarize the most significant arguments presented throughout the thesis, but they also suggest future directions for Pinter scholarship. I return here to the four categories which structure the introductory chapter of the thesis, but now this time in reverse: subjectivity, thought, images, language and the body. In moving through each category I aim to underline that Pinter's work is political because it introduces audiences into processual states which open up opportunities for new modes of thought and feeling. In this way, these processual states can be characterized as becomings, rather than states of being.

Plateau-problem #1: affect and subjectivity

As we have seen, there are significant repetitions and changes across Pinter's oeuvre at the level of his 'representation' of identities. Pinter's early plays and his writing for Joseph Losey problematize easy audience investment in characters. Inner lives and psychological states are energetically present and charged but do not dispose themselves to being easily recognized, read and placed within standard narrative and interpretive frameworks. From this we can discern how the earlier work instantiates an event, a disruption to thought, specifically through the stylization of character. In contrast, the post-1983 dramas, political poetry and speeches begin to formulate the voices of victims and victimizers in ways that recommend identifiable paths of investment and thus capture readers/spectators in more defined relationships. Yet a through line does exist in that Pinter persists across the decades and media in abstentions from psychological realism, from the kind of dedicated character development which commonly becomes *the* point of connection and engagement for an audience. With Pinter's aesthetics and overt politics we find the inner life replaced with the dynamics and mechanics of relationships. From beginning to end we find in Pinter not an interest in or dedication to articulating the essence of human beings but in the relations between things, relations that are external to the characters and objects themselves.

This aesthetic feature enables us to see how Pinter's subsequent more politicized writings bear the trace of, and arguably depend to some extent upon, earlier aesthetic tendencies. Although the characterization of those subjected to political violence from *One for the Road* to the Sandinistas, the Iraqis and the Guantanamo detainees in *Art, Truth and Politics* is antithetical to

the active problematization of our relationship to early characters such as Stanley, Ben, Gus, Ruth and many others, one finds a continuity in how the work, in the moment of encounter, does not promote subjective self-consciousness, but strives instead to harness forces that collapse the distance between audience and the performance, thereby impinging upon the contours of a typically perceived egological stability, doing so in a manner which opens a space for the dissolution, renegotiation and reassembly of selfhood itself. Underneath the integuments of signification and representation in Pinter's work, one discovers an intervention, performed through diverse aesthetic and linguistic means, of 'the basic components of mental activity,' which is to say affect.[1]

My Deleuzian intervention into Pinter's oeuvre invites future reflections on the relationship between Pinter's works and audience to interrogate commonly held assumptions about human consciousness, perception and knowledge. Perhaps phenomenological approaches to Pinter can widen so as to bring a theory of subjectivity to experience which exists at the hem of and even beyond conscious perception, what Deleuze calls a radical, transcendental empiricism. Any serious interrogation of audience subjectivity and the nature of consciousness, perception and knowledge will have consequences not only for the way we think and write about Pinter's work post-event but also for the way we interact with and absorb the work in the event of assembling with it.

Plateau-problem #2: affect and thought

Looking across Pinter's work in various media, this thesis has sought to underline how thoughts are not imparted by the work in the form of capsules which deliver content but are, by contrast, generated in the immanent encounter between 'audiences' and the work's aesthetic-affective embodiment of the sense of being of socio-political realities. Both Pinter's inversion of cliché, troubling of epistemological clarity (and thus our enjoyment of a sense of knowledge acquisition) in the earlier dramatic and cinematic work and his mediation of our reflex application of common sense and pragmatic images of thought in his overtly political writing betray how his project has always involved investing thought with movement, often such that it becomes turbulent and even violent. Accepting that Pinter's work performs an intervening and potentializing function, and acknowledging the works' primary role in how thought is given a body as it emerges in extensity, I suggest that we do not define thought as belonging to a subject.[2] Thought, rather, can and should be defined as immanent to the meeting and

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[1] Reidar Due, *Deleuze*, p. 10.
[2] ibid.

assemblage of two sets of forces: the human and the Pinter-machine, an arrangement which does not render the mind a centre of consciousness but rather 'the site of thoughts'.[3] As such, the action upon 'audiences' performed by both Pinter's aesthetic and overtly political gestures invites us to jettison Cartesian and Kantian versions of the idealist subject, a coherent and predominantly cognitive being that apprehends media outside of itself specifically by means of mental representations of bodily experience.

If we consider how Pinter's work mobilizes thinking processes, rather than conveying specific thoughts to be simply embraced or rejected, then the through line from Pinter's earlier plays, to the screenplays and films, to the political poetry and speeches is revealed. Approaching Pinter in this manner is not about identifying the content of thoughts produced by Pinter's work. Rather, it is about enquiring into how such a mobilization occurs and the effects of that process.[4] Thought itself is potentialized by means of the production of intensities within the neural network and across the visceral and proprioceptive folds of the body; a process whose overwhelming force can interrupt the invocation of pre-existing principles, opinions, narratives of common sense and ideologies. On these terms, thought is not *given* by the text/performance but is rather an *event* that is engendered between and among readers/spectators and between readers/spectators and the text/performance.

The image of thought provides one further means by which to recap Pinter's handling of thought across several media. Here it is of utmost importance to reiterate Grimes's observation that 'Pinter's unique, even paradoxical style of political drama separates as far as possible the act of questioning from the existence of solutions. Pinter ends his political theater in silence because he has no answers to afford us'.[5] Indeed this silence is fully operative across Pinter's oeuvre, the political poetry and speeches also offering no solutions as they too, in their own way, pose and serialize questions qua problems. In issuing an appeal to think – but without dictating the means by which to think *about* the subject matter, the problems – Pinter's work consistently coaxes forth and underlines the importance and power of thinking *processes*. This is a tactic which troubles the notion that thinking simply takes place through the mental representation of given meanings that exist independently and which 'are then somehow grasped by the thinking mind'.[6]

My consideration of the salience and import of various economies of sensation in the poetry and post-1983 dramas *and* of the citizen's efforts to capture and reinscribe the sense of

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[3] ibid.
[4] Maaike Bleeker, 'The A,B,C's of Différence', in *Discern(e)ments: Deleuzian Aesthetics/Esthétiques deleuziennes*, ed. by Joost de Bloois, Sjef Houpermans and Frans-Willwm Kirsten (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2004) pp. 131-49 (p. 147).
[5] *Harold Pinter's Politics*, p. 220. See also, in this thesis, p. 21, n. #78 as that corresponds to Chapter 2.
[6] Bleeker, 'The A,B,C's of Différence', p. 147.

being of political violence and death permit us to see how Pinter's formative dismissal of discourses that stand 'pointlessly at one dismal remove from the very experience under scrutiny'[7] continues to resonate, specifically as an ethics, in the later stages of his more precisely political engagements. For Pinter, thought does not entail the facilitation of acquiescence via explanation but rather the production of a force powerful enough to animate thinking processes and give new direction to thought itself, all to the effect of making the present situation stammer and potentially even actualize an alteration of things as they currently stand.

Plateau-problem #3: affect and images

Images underpin Pinter's entire career as a writer, and their presence and function in each medium comprise one of the most salient through lines of this thesis. As we have seen, images are the substantive grammar from which are engineered the early plays, the cinematic works and the political poetry. Myriad images are also a significant moment in the discursive network of the citizen, as are images that are engendered through the recitation of visceral poetry and Pinter's minor performances and aestheticizations of both those who abuse political power and those who are resultantly immolated by it. Pinter's visual economies across these media demonstrate how the manner in which he employs language in various contexts involves the subsumption of the representational plateau of language into a pronounced and sensorily charged affective-performative one.

While current scholarship thinks images in Pinter largely in terms of representation, which is to say the character, content and symbolic meaning of images in his plays and screenplays, I have striven to indicate the importance of beginning to parse the different species of images in Pinter: the imagery that arises from the dialogue (i.e. manifested within spectators' imaginations) and its interaction and hybridization with other images comprised of live or filmed performing bodies and the *mise en scène* and, most importantly, the relations and dynamics Pinter establishes *between* these imagistic milieus. An examination of how lines and constellations emerge when apparently discrete and isolated images disperse, compound and inter-resonate across the entire plane of a play, film, poem or even political lecture reveals a prominent locus for the works' engendering of affective experience. Images, like words, should not be seen as free-standing, their meaning construed in terms of what appears to exist within their respective contours or tenements. Instead they ought to be considered with regard to their emergence in certain contexts of utterance or performance, the connections they make between things and indeed the affective, asemiotic in-between such movements and connections can foment.

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[7] Mark Taylor-Batty, 'Fling Open the Door and Let Pinter's Pause Be Heard'.

At the same time, this thesis argues for the importance of understanding images in terms of how they are not simply 'languaged' but are, more accurately, material entities which insert themselves into the material bodies of theatre and cinema spectators, readers and those who listen to recitations of poems and political speeches. This is a process of alchemic, material adjustment and change, some aspects of which elude consciousness while others register phenomenologically, sometimes amenable to cognition and verbal and conceptual systems, and sometimes elusive to such taming. However, it is important to examine and reflect further on moments when the image, regardless of the medium, becomes more than itself, monstrously soliciting new and different modes of negotiating and investing in Pinter's work, and facilitating the Pinter/audience co-production of new and different experiences, emotions and thoughts.

Finally, in order to explore the means by which Pinter's work is affective, images have been employed throughout this thesis as one plateau among others. While discussion and analysis of images do emerge throughout Pinter scholarship, questions and problems regarding the image in Pinter's oeuvre and aesthetics warrant a more dedicated and comprehensive study, work that might further harmonize and push further what has been written by Pinter scholars and those working more decidedly in film studies. It is indeed conceivable that entire studies might be written that address images in Pinter's dramas and the screenplays and films by employing theories of affect as Deleuze and his philosophical proximates have wielded them in the context of cinema and film.

Plateau-problem #4: affect and language

The continuities between Pinter's earlier work and his political plays, poetry and discourse as a citizen are further notable at the level of language. In the early plays and films, the language wielded by characters becomes *the* cornerstone of the work; the way in which characters use language, their style, transducing the dramatic elements of action, characterization and narrative predominantly into voices and their discourses. Language does not provide a window into the minds and souls of the characters but is detached, rather, from subjects, and thus circulates as sound effects and performs ideologies and rhetoric which come from the more general space of the social milieus in which the characters emerge. Here we are confronted with the manner in which Pinter troubles the path to easy and comfortable investment in his characters. Although often derided,[8] the upshot of the characters' impenetrability and abnegation, as it were, of the usual dispositions that would permit a familiar and satisfying

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[8] '[O]ver the past 13 years, since I started writing plays, so many people have found my characters horrible or inexplicable. Unrecognizable.' *Conversations with Pinter*, p. 19.

connection with audiences is that attention is displaced to the manner in which language is used, and therefore to its role in the power relations among characters. At base, the use of language both as a stratagem to cover nakedness (nakedness meaning what the speaker *really* thinks and is feeling) and as a technology of governmentality manifests equally across the oeuvre. The citizen's discernment of language employed by political figures is made wholly possible by his having spent so many years aestheticizing and embodying this order of behaviour in drama and film. It is therefore notable that Pinter's political critique does not aim to persuade his audience what politicians *are really like*, but invests instead in critiquing language function. From this standpoint, we are not far from the territory upon which Pinter began: though his dramatic characters are by no means politicians, they nonetheless employ language as a means to circulate power and harness the forces of impulsion to their advantage.

As with images, my arguments and analyses over six chapters have intended to regard Pinter's language as extending beyond its ostensible signifying function and thereby literally inserting itself into the bodies of those confronted by the work. Language is thus a material entity whose operation upon and within individuals can effect changes at a material level, i.e. neural re-wirings and even the transformation of practices and behaviours in response to the work. In this way, the force, momentum and sensory dimension of Pinter's universally peculiar and striking assemblages of language eclipse, and frequently enough arrest, ideational and conceptual expression. To speak afresh of meaning in Pinter we must replace notions of communication and even representation with a discourse of sensation, significance and expression. The important attribute of Pinter's language, in all media addressed in this thesis, can be found in how it engenders sense, or the being of sense, of states of affairs through placing the faculties in communication and inter-resonance. Pinter's repeated and various pronouncements of the 'being *of* the sensible' and of the intelligible[9] establish conditions that are propitious for an action of envelopment and transformation.[10] As such, all Pinter's language, taken in the broadest sense of the word, does not represent actions, persons, and worlds so much as express an event,[11] which is to bring about another world through an artful production of violent ontological stammerings and disruptions.

Irving Wardle's insistence, reaffirmed by many others following him, that the importance of Pinter's language is not to be found in what is being said but in the way in which it gets said portends and inspires my desire to rely upon structural analysis as a means to theorize how

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[9] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 176.
[10] Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, pp. 208-09.
[11] ibid., p. 210.

specific dramatic lines, movements and arrangements are apt to engender extra-linguistic forces and experience, a 'freedom' from representation and formal composition that can only be achieved via specific and deft superintendence and manipulation of these identifiable formal structures. Thus it is important to understand that while neural and corporeal intensities produce affect, which in turn produces emotions, and which we subsequently begin to narrativize and conceptualize, the pattern is circular with Pinter in that his style of language use is precisely what dramatizes the intensities and animates the entire process 'along the way'. This is a feedback loop or infolding of all moments, nodal points or expressions in a constellation of linguistic and extra-linguistic realities, as opposed to a bottom up, top down and thus unidirectional phenomenon.

While we might be continually drawn to the signifying function of Pinter's language, we would do well to remember in Pinter the extent to which the denotation of speech is subtended by affect, the extent to which propositions express sense and eventness, expression taken in the energetic and thus molecular sense,[12] whether it be the dialogue of Pinter's characters, the voices in the poetry or the citizen's discourse. Further scholarship might take upon itself the task of attending more closely to the expression and affective dimension of language in Pinter, particularly when a whole world opens up in the event that one invests in both the *way* in which things are said at any moment in Pinter's robust oeuvre and, relatedly, the kinds of relations this very aesthetic feature sets up between itself, the works' utterances, and those upon whom it operates. In this way, the interrelated *elements* of language's structure and, more importantly, the delivery and context of that delivery can offer analytical purchase on the incarnation of actions and reactions at the level of the audience.[13] If the question of what Pinter's language can make a body do, to reprise (from the Introduction) Spinoza's interest, then the preliminary steps taken by this thesis serve as an invitation for analysis of Pinter to move in a more materialist direction, to eke out new problems regarding the physiological dimension and action of the work that are so clearly a part of what has enabled the Nobel laureate to have left so indelible a mark as an artist, and more incipiently as an activist.

Plateau-problem #5: affect and the body

Finally, the analyses through each chapter should have indicated the extent to which the corporeal body is a primary point of contact, mediation and negotiation where Pinter's work is concerned; the bodies of readers, spectators and listeners a locus for the works' operation, a field

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[12] ibid., p. 211.
[13] ibid.

of action, or surface, where meaning qua significance emerges. While Pinter's work is and can be interpreted by means of logocentric critical paradigms, this thesis has attempted to underline the usefulness and importance of construing meaning in terms of what Pinter's work makes a body do and how the work establishes the conditions for such 'doings', or events.

Thinking the affect-body plateau in Pinter enables us to trace a through line across media and periods on the basis of how the writing, or its performance, troubles any notion of distance or hierarchy between subject and object, observer and that which is observed. Consideration of how Pinter's work comes into being in the encounter between two (sets of) forces which operate upon one another sees subjects taking on the physical material qualities of the objects they only think they are apprehending at a distance.[14] The consequence of accepting such a thesis is that arguments for the alienation and abstraction of those who encounter Pinter's work, typically inspired by a stringent Cartesian dualism, must take seriously the reality of a more decided involvement and anchorage within the performance landscape; a landscape involving disconnection, or the delinkage of typical connections and, concomitantly, the production of difference by means of strange, unexpected and often difficult (re)linkages and connections. Pinter's work thus invites us to worry the mind-body split, for what one finds in his theatre of the body across several media suggests that an appeal to the body and its passions does not entail the nullification of thought. Arguably, the various violences Pinter's work can be said to perform upon and within the audience body endow thought with the kind of force and movement required to perform more actively and autonomously within our own lives.

The extent to and means by which Pinter 'gets us in the guts', as Joseph Hynes puts it, does not simply imply that this is where we 'live', as he adds,[15] but more accurately confirms the need to further develop a means to speak rigorously about what this entails, what it means. Though significant, Pinter scholarship that endeavours to coax ideologies and philosophical concepts from the work is perhaps 'guilty' of displacing the affective world into which one is more often than not insinuated when attending an efficacious production of Pinter's work. Attending vigilantly to that species of violence Pinter's work manifests upon and within the bodies of all manner of readers and audiences – *before* the formation of cognitive and interpretive codes[16] – should progressively enhance our appreciation of and teach us to speak with nuance about the eventness of the work, its action upon us in the moment of encounter. To look as rigorously as possible to the affective plateaus of Pinter's work is not an appeal to neglect

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[14] Laura U. Marks, *The Skin of the Film*, p. 141.
[15] 'Pinter and Morality', *The Virginia Quarterly Review*, 68. 4 (Autumn 1992), 740-52 (p. 752).
[16] John Rajchman, *The Deleuze Connections*, p. 124.

representation and thus the molar. Rather, investment in how affect introduces spectators into evanescent zones or eruptions of prepersonal, presubjective and asocial experience that precede verbal and mental articulation should, over time, enable a better understanding of the immanent relationship between the molecular and the molar, and enable increasingly productive accounts of the dramatization of the being of sense that is always already subtending and even intervening into hermeneutic consistency: the exercises of interpretation and the symbolic meanings we bring to Pinter's work. These are the affective interstices where I have sought to characterize Pinter's various aestheticizations, both in and out of the theatre, as a politics.

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