

*Pursuing Pinter*  
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**Susan Hollis Merritt**

## PURSUING PINTER<sup>1</sup>

Susan Hollis Merritt, the author of *Pinter in Play: Critical Strategies and the Plays of Harold Pinter* and Bibliographical Editor of *The Pinter Review*, defines contexts of her academic scholarship “Pursuing Pinter,” which began after she first experienced the New York premières of *The Homecoming* and *The Birthday Party* in 1967-1968. She relates details of her subsequent meetings with Harold Pinter pertaining to his Archive in the British Library; to these archival holdings; to some of her later theatrical experiences of his stage and film work as a playwright, a screenwriter, and an actor; and to her own and other scholars’ publications.

**Key words:** adaptations, British Library, Harold Pinter, Harold Pinter Archive, Harold Pinter Society, Susan Hollis Merritt, films, *King Lear*, *The Pinter Review*, Pinter scholarship, plays, screenplays, *Sleuth* (1972 play by Anthony Shaffer), *Sleuth* (2007 film based on screenplay by Harold Pinter)

“. . . sometimes it’s necessary to go a long distance  
out of the way to come back a short distance correctly.”  
–Jerry to Peter (“THE STORY OF JERRY AND THE DOG”),  
*The Zoo Story*, by Edward Albee

Pursuing Harold Pinter has been one of the great joys of my academic life—emotionally intense and intellectually exhilarating, profoundly private and pertinently public, deeply personal and socially and politically engaging. My academic pursuit of Harold Pinter began over forty years ago, in 1967-1968, with my first experiences of *The Homecoming* (1964) and *The Birthday Party* (1957) on stage. At that time I was in my second year as a Ph.D. candidate in English language and literature at Indiana University at Bloomington, specializing in Drama and Restoration and Eighteenth-Century British Literature (the genre and period of my Qualifying Examinations) and minoring in Literary Criticism in the Indiana University School of Letters (successor to Kenyon School of

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<sup>1</sup> I presented an earlier version of this essay as a plenary speaker at the conference *Artist and Citizen: 50 Years of Performing Harold Pinter*, at the University of Leeds, in April 2007. Its subtitle was: “From Stage to Screen and Page, From Page to Stage and Screen – and Back and Forth Again.” I have shortened the title for publication here.

Letters, in the Kenyon School of English, from 1951-1979). While I was back home for two consecutive university breaks, my mother, Bedonna Merritt, gave me two tickets to these plays. We lived in New Rochelle, New York, about a half-hour's drive or a forty-five minute train ride from Manhattan. As one of my undergraduate college friends was visiting us at the time, I offered the other ticket to her, and the two of us took the train into the City to see *The Homecoming* together.

In his televised interviews with Harry Burton (*Working With Pinter*) and Charlie Rose (*The Charlie Rose Show*), as in some of his earlier interviews, when asked about how he regards the audiences of his plays, Harold Pinter illustrated his attitude toward audiences by describing the mutual "hatred" of the first New York audiences and cast of *The Homecoming* during that American premiere of the play, directed by Peter Hall with the original Royal Shakespeare Company cast, which opened at the Music Box theater on 5 January 1967, with one change in the role of Teddy, from Michael Bryant to Michael Craig (Pinter, *The Essential Pinter* 183). According to Pinter, from the moment of the curtain rising on John Bury's set, audiences despised the production and the play. I must have been an exception. While my friend did indeed hate the play and made it clear to me in no uncertain terms that she was appalled by both its language and its sexuality, I was thrilled by my experience of *The Homecoming* and truly appreciated the production and the actors in it.

During another university break in 1967-1968, my mother got tickets to Alan Schneider's New York premiere of *The Birthday Party*, which had opened at the Booth Theatre in October 1967, and this time she herself accompanied me. My identification with James Patterson's Stanley being browbeaten into gagging speechlessness by the figures of authority Goldberg and McCann despite his rebellious resistance against playing "the game" got so deeply under my skin—Henderson Forsythe's whimper as "PETEY (*broken*). Stan, don't let them tell you what to do!" resonating so strongly—that it launched my academic work on Pinter. During Spring 1968, I was enrolled in a graduate seminar in Modern British Drama (covering Shaw to Bond), with Professor Harry M. Geduld (who taught in both the English and Comparative Literature Departments at Indiana University). As he had not yet included work by Pinter in the course, I asked him if I could write my seminar paper on the plays of Harold Pinter. He welcomed the idea, which resulted in my first academic paper on Pinter, entitled "The Power of Pinter's Women."<sup>2</sup> From then on,

2 As I point out in the last chapter of *Pinter in Play*, where I discuss "Critical Change: My Own Case" (255-56), I learned only later that Geduld had already published a review of *The*

I was hooked on Pinter and determined to write my Ph.D. dissertation on his work.

The next year, 1968-1969, I embarked upon research for my dissertation, ultimately completed in 1973 and entitled “Fantasy behind Play: A Psychoanalytic Study of Emotional Responses to *The Birthday Party*, *The Caretaker* and *The Homecoming*” (Diss. Indiana, 1973). My dissertation was directed by David Bleich (*Readings and Feelings: An Introduction to Subjective Criticism* [Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1975]; *Subjective Criticism* [New York: Oxford UP, 1978]), a pioneer in psychoanalytically-based reader-response theory, criticism, and pedagogy, and it adopted Bleich’s key revisions of certain theoretical premises in Norman Holland’s *The Dynamics of Literary Response* just published the same year (New York: Oxford UP, 1968). In 1968, during another school break, I traveled home again to see the New York premières of *Tea Party* (1964) and *The Basement* (1966), directed by James Hammerstein, at the Eastside Playhouse in New York City, where the double bill had opened that October.

In the section on my own “critical change” in the last chapter of *Pinter in Play*, where I discuss that process of writing my dissertation in detail, I consider another “crucial change in my work on Pinter and my critical perspective in general resulting from my participation in New Directions in Literary Study, a Summer Seminar sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities and taught by Ralph Cohen at the University of Virginia[, in Charlottesville, Virginia,] in 1978. . .” (260), which focused on the questions “What is literature?” and “What is criticism?” In *Pinter in Play*, I point out that,

As a result of my experience in Cohen’s seminar, I became even more skeptical of my former speculations about what other critics thought and felt. With this greater skepticism I also began to view a “psychoanalytic methodology” as just one of any number of possible critical approaches and to achieve a broader perspective on it. Having studied Derrida, Lacan, Heidegger, Gadamer, Foucault, and Kosík (among several other theorists) with Cohen, I decided to try to place Pinter criticism in the context of current literary and critical theory. In 1980-81, while teaching at Assumption College, in Worcester, Massachusetts, I conceived the . . . project [ultimately published as *Pinter in Play*], applying for a fellowship from the NEH [the National Endowment for the Humanities] to support it. (260)

During the period from 1980-1982, while I was involved in applying for the NEH Fellowship that I eventually was awarded for academic year 1982-1983, starting my European travel in the summer of 1982, my

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*Birthday Party* and *Accident*: “The Trapped Heroes of Harold Pinter,” *Humanist* 28 (Mar./Apr. 1968): 24, 31.

pursuit of Pinter continued unabated, as it had while I was teaching at the University of Hartford from 1972-1979.

From both Manchester, Connecticut, where I lived when I taught at the University of Hartford, and Worcester, Massachusetts, where I lived for the year before that, in 1971-1972, and for four years after that, from 1979-1983, I was within just a few hours' drive of my parents' home in New Rochelle, or after they moved from New York, still close enough to Manhattan to drive there. Throughout the 1970s and early 1980s, whenever there was an important stage premiere or an especially important revival of Pinter's work in New York City, I could usually travel into the City to see it.<sup>3</sup>

### *Close Encounters of a Kind*

In 1982, when I was living again in Worcester, Massachusetts, I learned from an announcement published in the local newspaper, the *Worcester Telegram & Gazette*, that the Tony-Award winning regional theater Trinity Square Repertory Company, located nearby in Providence, Rhode Island, whose Artistic Director Adrian Hall was, would be producing the American premiere of *The Hothouse* and, in conjunction with Pinter's one-week visit to work with Trinity Square Rep on their production, that Pinter would be awarded an Honorary Doctorate at Brown University. A colleague at Clark University, who wrote book reviews frequently for the *Worcester Telegram & Gazette* and knew its editor quite well, recommended that he engage me to write a preview article introducing Harold Pinter to the local Worcester audience, who might be interested in seeing the production in Providence. Although Hall had invited me to sit in on rehearsals while Pinter was working with them, he had to close rehearsals due to the actors' nervousness about working with the playwright. After Pinter left, I returned to sit in on another rehearsal, to interview Adrian Hall and members of the cast about their experience working with Pinter, and to see the results on opening night. In *Pinter in Play* I cite that article, ironically entitled "Stalking Harold Pinter." In

3 In that period I saw the American premieres of *Landscape* and *Silence*, in a double bill directed by Peter Gill for the Repertory Theatre of Lincoln Center at The Forum of the Vivian Beaumont Theatre in April 1970 (during another university Spring break) and the revival of *The Birthday Party* at the first Harold Pinter Festival directed by Jules Irving for The Repertory Theatre of Lincoln Center, at The Forum of the Vivian Beaumont Theatre, in the Winter of 1971 (during another university Winter break); the 1975 New York revival of *The Homecoming*; many of Pinter's films such as *The Servant*, *The Pumpkin Eater*, *Accident*, and *The Go-Between*; and Peter Hall's film of the Royal Shakespeare Company production of *The Homecoming* in 1973, as part of the 1973-1974 American Film Theatre subscription series to which I had subscribed in a local Hartford-area movie theater; and the American premieres of *Old Times*, *No Man's Land*, and *Betrayal*, both the stage play and the film.

Harry Burton's documentary film *Working With Pinter* (which I watched on a DVD that Burton sent me in late February 2007 and again in Leeds in April 2007), I could finally experience the process that I was not in rehearsals to observe directly in 1982. My own earlier account of Trinity Square Rep's experience of working with Pinter, observing "his concern with what he would consider the *accurate* production of his plays, that is, with productions that he would consider faithful to the published texts and to his intentions" (*Pinter in Play* 18), does, however, jive with that film's presentation of clips of Burton's and his actors' experience of working directly with Pinter in developing their productions of *Old Times* and *No Man's Land*.

While Pinter was working on *The Hothouse* production at Trinity Square Rep, I met him for the first time, not quite by chance. After Adrian Hall closed rehearsals, the public relations director of Trinity Square Rep told me to call her every morning, to check to see if they felt comfortable enough with Pinter to have me observe rehearsals, and, just in case they were able to do so, she told me to be in the theater lobby every day at 12 noon, when Pinter arrived. On the last day of rehearsals, when he came striding through the lobby door, I approached him and introduced myself, telling him that I was writing a book on criticism of his plays and was interested in interviewing him. In the first part of *Pinter in Play*, "Perspectives on Pinter's Critical Evolution," in a section of the first chapter "'Progress' and 'Fashion' in Pinter Studies" entitled "Pinter on Pinter Criticism," I allude to our first encounter:

In February 1982, when I spoke with Pinter in Providence, Rhode Island, with regard to arranging an interview about the criticism of the plays, he said: "I can tell you right now. I'm not interested in critics." In correspondence later that year, he politely declined to be interviewed on this subject, in effect limiting production of more Pinter on Pinter criticism. (12)

In *Pinter in Play* I also describe how, after recognizing that I would not be interviewing Pinter about his critics, "The announcement that the NEH would support travel for research and consultation with other scholars led to a 'brainstorm' (my own 'Aha!' experience) that eventually became a core" of the book:

the consultations would be personal interviews with scholars and other critics (including several journalists and some actors and directors) to improve my understanding of why others interpreted Pinter's work as they did. ... I traveled to the critics themselves and directly asked them questions about their experiences of and writing on Pinter's plays. Through the interviews with the Pinter scholars I learned from them firsthand the contexts for their publications, finding out what *they* thought were the sources

of their own critical choices and changes, much as a journalist, a biographer, or an ethnographer would do. (261)

I started my research in London for a few weeks, visiting the British Library (then still located in the British Museum), the BBC Written Archives Centre in Reading, and the Colindale Newspaper Library. From London, I flew to Dublin, to do research at University College Dublin and to interview journalists who had reviewed Pinter's plays; to Paris, to do research in the Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris; back to London, to do more research in various archives and to interview both Sir Harold Hobson and Martin Esslin, and Elizabeth Sakellaridou (then Hadzisyrou), who was just beginning her dissertation later published in 1988 as *Pinter's Female Portraits: A Study of Female Characters in the Plays of Harold Pinter*; and to Frankfurt and by train traveled on to Munich and then Bamberg and Freiburg, West Germany, to interview Ewald Mengel (whose dissertation on socioeconomic role playing in Pinter's plays was later published in German) and Mengel's dissertation director, Paul Goetsch.

Throughout the fall and spring of 1982-1983, I continued pursuing Pinter through his critics. In Fall 1982, during my swing through the Midwest, arranged by a wonderful travel agent, I traveled from Worcester, Massachusetts, to Charleston, Illinois, via Chicago, to interview Lucina P. Gabbard (*The Dream Structure of Pinter's Plays*); to Joplin, Missouri, via Kansas City, to interview Steven H. Gale (*Butter's Going Up: A Critical Analysis of Harold Pinter's Work*); and to Columbus, Ohio, to interview Kathy Burkman (*The Dramatic World of Harold Pinter: Its Basis in Ritual*). During Spring 1983, I flew back to Charlottesville, Virginia, the site of my 1978 NEH Summer Seminar with Ralph Cohen, to interview Austin Quigley (*The Pinter Problem*), and then I flew to New York City, in part to interview Lois Gordon, whose 1968 book *Stratagems to Uncover Nakedness* had been a key inspiration for my Ph.D. dissertation. These Pinter critics and scholars formed the core focus of several chapters on their critical strategies, characterized through my controlling metaphor in "Pinter in Play" as "Thematic Tactics"; "Ritual Ruses"; "Psychoanalytic Maneuvers"; "Linguistic Parlays and Parleys"; "Socioeconomic Role-Playing"; and "Feminist Ploys."

After the formation of the Harold Pinter Society by a few of us Pinter scholars brought together by Steve Gale at the 1986 annual convention of the Modern Language Association, and the foundation of our journal *The Pinter Review*, Steve Gale and Frank Gillen, who became its co-editors, invited me to be its Bibliographical Editor, and I have been

compiling the “Harold Pinter Bibliography” for publication in *The Pinter Review* since then (our first issue appeared in 1987).

Beginning in 1983-1984, after I moved to central upstate New York, during 1985-1987, when I lived in Corvallis, Oregon, and throughout the 1990s, I continued traveling back and forth to New York City from Bluff Point, New York (where I still live now), to Portland, Oregon, from Corvallis (where I lived for just those two years), and, after 1987, fairly frequently from New York to London and Prague, experiencing plays and readings by Pinter whenever I could, over a dozen productions and programs in all.<sup>4</sup> Between 1994 and 2003, when I traveled back and forth between New York, London, Chichester, Edinburgh, and Prague, I experienced another twenty of so productions of Pinter’s plays in English and Czech.<sup>5</sup> Over these years, from 1987 on, my reviews of several of these

4 For example, I saw the American premièrès of *Betrayal*, with Blythe Danner as Emma, Roy Scheider as Robert, and the late Raoul Julia as Jerry, directed by Peter Hall at the Trafalgar Theatre in 1980; *One for the Road*, *Victoria Station*, and *A Kind of Alaska*, billed as “Other Places” (but not including *Family Voices*, which I heard on radio later), directed by Alan Schneider at the Manhattan Theatre Club (18 May 1984; his last production; he was killed by accidentally stepping in front of a motorcycle in London on his way to mail a card to Beckett, while the Pinter production was still going on; it closed on the 20<sup>th</sup>); I also saw productions of *The Homecoming* and *One for the Road* in Portland, Oregon, during the period from 1985-1987. Back in New York from 1987-1988 on, I saw Carey Perloff’s CSC Repertory revivals of *The Birthday Party*, first by itself (1988) and next as part of her double bill with the New York premièrè of *Mountain Language* (1989); Pinter’s public interview by Mel Gussow and his readings of an extract from *The Hothouse* and of all of *One for the Road* at the 92<sup>nd</sup> Street Y in October 1989; *Moonlight*, with Blythe Danner as Bel, Jason Robards as Andy, and Liev Shreiber as Jake, directed by the late Karel Reisz for the Roundabout Theatre Company at the Laura Pels Theatre in 1995; Pinter’s public interview with Austin Quigley and his reading of all of *Ashes to Ashes* at the 92<sup>nd</sup> Street Y in December 1996; and *Ashes to Ashes*, with Lindsay Duncan and David Strathairn, directed by Karel Reisz for the Roundabout Theatre Company at the Gramercy Theatre in 1999. My reviews of several of these productions appear in the *Pinter Review*.

5 These productions include: Sam Mendes’ Royal National Theatre production of *The Birthday Party*, at the Lyttelton Theatre, in London, in 1994; the Theatr Clwyd production of *Old Times*, with Julie Christie, directed by Lindy Davies, at Wyndham’s Theatre, in London, as well as Pinter’s production of *Taking Sides*, and David Jones’s production of *The Hothouse*, starring Pinter as Roote, at the Minerva Studio Theatre, Chichester, all in 1995; and Alan Stanford’s Dublin Festival production of *The Collection*, with Harold Pinter playing Harry, at the Donmar Warehouse, in 1997. While in Prague, I experienced, in Czech, Ivo Krobot’s production of *Návrat Domů* (*The Homecoming*) and Karel Kříž’s and Vlasta Gallerová’s productions of *Měsíční svit* (*Moonlight*) at Divadlo Labyrint studio klub, in November 1994, as well as President Václav Havel’s “Playwrights’ Roundtable” in Plzeň, as part of the PEN Congress that I attended; and their Czech double bill of *Milenec* (*The Lover*) and *...a v prach se obrátíš* (*Ashes to Ashes*), as well as a Dutch production of *Ashes to Ashes* (*Ceneri alle ceneri*), translated by Alessandra Serra (Pinter’s Italian translator), with English surtitles, at the Riverside Studios, Hammersmith, London, in June 1998.

productions, related articles and interviews, and accounts of the Lincoln Center symposia have appeared in *The Pinter Review*.<sup>6</sup>

### *The Harold Pinter Archive in the British Library*

While a Visiting Fellow in the Institute for European Studies at Cornell University, in 1993-1994, when I started learning Czech for a new project (now entitled “The Global Politics of Contemporary Drama and the Media”), I used to search Lexis-Nexis at an Olin Library dedicated computer station (now I do so from my home computer). On 15 September 1993, as I was routinely checking publications in the *Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe* database, a newspaper headline from a news report by Lawrence Donegan published in the Manchester *Guardian* of the day before, 14 September 1993, flashed on the screen: “Pinter Papers for the British Library.” When I saw it, I nearly jumped out of my seat, exclaiming aloud, “Wow!” The news that Harold Pinter had “deposited his literary archive in the British Library” (“The British Library Receives the Archive of Harold Pinter”) led to what I fondly call “my second first meeting” (a close encounter) with Harold Pinter during my initial research for my essay “The Harold Pinter Archive in the British Library,” published in *The Pinter Review: Annual Essays 1994*. That experience was the quintessential Pinter scholar’s dream come true.

On my way to Prague, where I was working on my new project, in July 1994, I stopped in London, to spend a couple of weeks in the British

6 In June 2000 I attended the Harold Pinter Society Pinter in London conference, during which some of us went to see the stage production of *The Dwarfs* by the Mandrake Theatre Company, at the Lyric Studio Hammersmith. One evening during our conference, Harold read all the roles of his then-newest play, *Celebration*. In early February 2001, I flew to London to see Patrick Marber's production of *The Caretaker*, with Michael Gambon, Rupert Graves, and Douglas Hodge, and to see Di Trevis' and Pinter's stage adaptation of his *Proust Screenplay, Remembrance of Things Past*, which she directed so beautifully. In July and August 2001, I rented an apartment nearby Lincoln Center for two weeks so that I could experience all of the productions, films, and related events during its Pinter Festival, conducting an interview with Henry Woolf and Gari Jones about their production of *Monologue*, all thrilling experiences. In October 2001 I traveled to Toronto for the World Leaders Festival Homage to Harold Pinter, seeing scenes of *The Lover* produced by different acting couples, and hearing Harold reprise his dramatic reading of all the parts of *Celebration*. I experienced productions of *The Dumb Waiter* and *A Night Out* and *Night School* at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, while in Edinburgh to attend “Harold Pinter: Provocations: The David Cohen British Literature Prize Event,” his interview by Ramona Koval, at the Edinburgh International Book Festival, on 25 August 2002, his first public appearance after his cancer surgery (I felt compelled to be in his audience for moral support). Already in Denver to visit my mother, where she and my father had moved during the early 1980s, I was lucky enough to experience a production of *Betrayal* directed by Anthony Powell for the Denver Center Theatre Company in May 2002. In 2003, I flew from Rochester to New York City, to see David Jones's revival of *The Caretaker* for the Roundabout Theatre Company.

Library (then still in the Students' Room in the Library's section of the British Museum in Bloomsbury), immersed in the treasure trove that we now affectionately call "Harold's Archive" and also, at his advance invitation, to meet with Harold Pinter in his Aubrey Road working "pad" (as he called it). Between our first kind-of close encounter in Providence, Rhode Island, in February 1982, and learning the news about his archive, in September 1993, I had sent him a copy of *Pinter in Play* and he had already been receiving multiple copies of *The Pinter Review*, with my various articles, reviews, and my "Harold Pinter Bibliography" in them; so by then he was more familiar with my work than he had been a decade earlier. He sent me a hand-written thank-you note, saying that he appreciated the "seriousness of [my] endeavours," and, regarding *Pinter in Play*: "I do dip into it from time to time"; and, after I wrote him that I would be examining his papers in his archive in the British Library during July 1994, he invited me to call him to set up a meeting after I arrived in London.

### ***Meeting Harold Pinter While Working in His Archive***

„How time flies when one has fun!“

– Vladimir to Estragon, in Act 2 of *Waiting for Godot*  
(1948, 1956), by Samuel Beckett

My first bonafide meeting with Harold Pinter, on Friday, 15 July 1994, was the climax of what had already been a scholarly dream sequence. Although at times quite uncomfortable in the stifling heat of the old British Library's Modern Literary Manuscripts non-air-conditioned Students' Room, where the archive of Harold Pinter was first housed before the new British Library opened at St. Pancras, I had been absolutely thrilled by what I was finding. Most often, according to the original system of displaying the names of those ordering such manuscripts, it appeared that I was the first scholar to examine the contents of what ended up being 31 of the then 64 boxes. From about 10:30 a.m. to closing at 5 p.m., I explored box upon box (each a cubic foot of holographs, typescripts, and other, most-often unpublished materials), scrutinizing every page of Harold Pinter's handwritten and sometimes self-typed drafts of his poems, plays, novel, prose fiction, other prose pieces, screenplays, and letters, much of it not itemized in the British Library's photocopied "Finding List." I took extensive notes on the pages that I examined. It was such an exhilarating experience, as I recorded Harold Pinter's cross-outs and changes and insertions and extensive passages of apparently-uninterrupted writing, realizing how much of *Old Times* or *No Man's Land* or *Betrayal* and other published works apparently came to him in

a flash of genius during one sitting, on the one hand. On the other hand, I discovered his meticulously-detailed chronology of *Betrayal* and research for the song contest between Deeley and Anna in *Old Times* and the fifteen alternative titles for *No Man's Land*. In the archive boxes, I saw the first handwritten draft of *The Homecoming* and his apparently-first typescript draft of the first act of the play. I even found in some of the boxes unpublished works that I had never heard of before and that I suspected no one else had either. I found, in response to Pinter's sending them *The Proust Screenplay* prior to its publication, unpublished correspondence from Jackie (Kennedy) Onassis, (handwritten on her personal 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue New York stationery), Ferdinand Arrabal and Barbara Bray from Paris, and many other people.

After I had made the appointment to visit Harold Pinter in his two-story mews house study at Aubrey Road for that coming Friday (15 July 1994), suddenly I asked myself: "How does one prepare for a meeting with such an author whom one has studied ("pursued") for nearly half of one's own life?" At that point, I had been "pursuing Pinter" for over twenty-five years! I told myself gravely: "There is nothing more that I can do to prepare for this meeting. There are no further notes that I can give myself. If I am not ready now, I'll never be ready. Nothing that I will do in the next few days can ready me more." So I just gathered up all my notes on the Harold Pinter Archive in the British Library, the basis for my 1994 *Pinter Review* account of that title, "screw[ed] my courage to the sticking place" (as Lady Macbeth would have her husband do), and, after my trial run the day before, a story in itself, there I was, stepping over his threshold right into actual Harold Pinter territory: the equivalent of the quintessential Pinter scholar's "seventh heaven."

Once inside, directly opposite the entrance door, I saw an entire wall of shelves displaying what seemed to be *all* of his plays and screenplays. My eyes focused immediately on a very slender volume which looked unfamiliar, and out I blurted: "I didn't know that there is another edition of *Party Time*!"

"You have an eye like an eagle!" he exclaimed, plucking the volume off the shelf. "It's the television version, just published! Here, you can have it."

All the more thrilled, I must have beamed as I thanked him.

As he led the way, away from the alcove with his then-unoccupied assistant's desk on the first floor, upstairs to his second-floor study, I glided dreamily behind him. Though at first I hovered momentarily over what later turned out to be a small woven-straw drinks table, saving me from mistakenly perching on it, he directed me to an actual chair. I put

my shoulder bag down beside it, opened it, and took out my papers, in a sudden flash deciding against using the otherwise-ubiquitous tape recorder, and, hoping for the best, plunged right in. But before I could even indicate how nervous I was and how I could not fathom how even to prepare for such a meeting after having studied his work for over twenty-five years, Harold Pinter jumped up from his chair nearby me, moved over to his desk, and picked up the copy of *Pinter in Play* that I had sent him in 1990 (later I sent him the 1995 paperback edition as well). “I’ve been re-reading your book,” he said, indicating that he felt that *he* had to prepare for meeting *me*. What a turn of events! I could barely take in the implications. That really put me on a more level playing field with him and thus more at ease. It was a very compassionate gesture, I think in retrospect.

Referring to my notes, I summarized what I had been examining in his Archive at the British Library, and, at some point to illustrate, began reading to him from my notes on what appeared to be his handwritten first draft of *The Homecoming*—“Do you remember that Teddy was originally a policeman?” I asked him. “No,” he replied, quite astounded; “I don’t remember that at all!” I read him excerpts from my notes taken from that handwritten draft of *The Homecoming* in Box 24 (cf. Add MS 88880/1/21), Box 60’s folder labeled “Fragments—Bits and Pieces” (cf. Add MS 88880/4/16), and Boxes 11-14 and 40 (cf. Add MS/4/2-15) holding his handwritten versions of what eventually was published as his novel *The Dwarfs*, quoting from his own handwritten and typed drafts of several of his unpublished manuscripts. We leaned forward intensely as we spoke. “I don’t remember that,” he would say from time to time, quite delighted with what he was discovering anew to be deposited in his own Archive. He expressed chagrin at what he called his “disappeared” manuscripts of the plays *The Room*, *The Birthday Party*, *The Dumb Waiter*, *The Caretaker*, and several other early plays, and displeasure with himself for having sold the only extant typescripts of the play *The Caretaker* to the Lilly Library at Indiana University at Bloomington (which I told him I had seen in the late 1960s, when I was a graduate student there, so I knew precisely what he was referring to).

The hour seemed to flash by. When it was time to leave, I must have seemed surprised. It seemed to have gone so well. I could not have imagined it going better. Obviously, I did not want it to end. Then he confirmed how I felt: “Do you want to come back?” he asked me. “Of course,” I replied enthusiastically, though I really did not know if I could survive going through all the turmoil of meeting him again! We arranged for me to come again, same time, same place, on Wednesday of the following

week. I really do not remember the trip back to my hotel in Bloomsbury. All I know is that I must have floated out the door, back up Holland Park Road to Notting Hill Gate. I was already on the train for some time before I realized that I must have been grinning ear to ear the whole way, totally absorbed in mental images of the experience.

During our two meetings on 15 and 20 July 1994, as I recount in *Pinter in Play*:

When I described some of these items [in Box 60: “Fragments–Bits and Pieces;”] to Pinter, he did not recognize them. Yet he was so intrigued that he called me to say that he decided to see Box 60 when he lunched at the British Library on 25 July. (30)

He had Box 60 sent to him by messenger to examine before talking with me about specific items in it on the telephone the day before I was returning to New York on the 26<sup>th</sup>:

When I spoke with him by telephone before leaving London the next morning, he said (as he has since clarified): “I liked ‘Vanishing Point’ and ‘Lunch Counter’ (Eddie, Ronnie, etc etc). But detested ‘The Gathering’ (Letter). Pinter later sent me a one-page, single-spaced typescript of ‘Vanishing Point,’ a dialogue between Patrick and his aunt that Pinter dates as 1953. The aunt comically confuses the names of her nieces and finally threatens Patrick with having her niece dole out an unnamed ancient punishment, which frightens him, thus anticipating the politically oppressive tortures exposed in some of Pinter’s recent plays and sketches [from “Precisely” (1983) on]. (30)

After I returned home and wrote the penultimate draft of my essay describing his Archive, I sent Harold Pinter a copy, seeking his permission to quote from his unpublished manuscripts, which he granted in most cases, though, as I point out in the published version of the essay, he did not allow for excerpts from his unpublished correspondence with others to be quoted (perhaps due in part to copyright issues requiring other writers’ permissions) and did not want quoted the parts of “Queen of all the Fairies” (an 8-page typescript composed in 1949)—his revealing reminiscences about his acting school days—where he mentions his father’s sternness (as his father was then still alive) and felt that a reference that he made to one of the “Hackney gang” (Ron Percival) was not particularly kind. He was clearly very sensitive to the feelings of others still alive who might be hurt by “Queen of all the Fairies,” which still resides in the Archive but has not yet been published. He may have been withholding future publication on account of those mentioned in it who were or are still alive. My 1994 Archive essay does, however, quote fairly extensively from it with his written permission, and some people have

incorporated my quotations and my comments about them in their subsequent work, though not always with proper attribution.<sup>7</sup>

Following my July 1994 meetings with Harold Pinter and the publication of “The Harold Pinter Archive in the British Library” in the 1994 volume of *The Pinter Review*, with illustrations of some drafts reproduced from photographs supplied by the British Library, Steve Gale and Chris Hudgins published a follow-up article describing the contents of boxes containing materials relating to Pinter’s screenplays in the 1995 volume of *The Pinter Review: Annual Essays*. Beginning in the same volume in which my article on the archive appears (1994), *The Pinter Review* has published pages from what is believed to be the first holograph version of *The Homecoming*, which I had supplied from my trips to the Archive, a corrected version of those pages (whose order had been mixed up after I sent them), typescripts of later versions of that play prior to its publication, an article in which Frank Gillen interprets the potential significance of some of those changes from draft to draft, and similar articles by Gillen incorporating his insights from examining manuscripts of *Landscape*, *No Man’s Land*, *Moonlight*, and *Ashes to Ashes*. Several other critics, including Linda Renton, Charles Grimes, Steve Gale, and Chris Hudgins, have made important use of changes in Pinter’s composition of several of Pinter’s poems, dramatic works, and screenplays, extending some of the insights that I provided in my 1994 *Pinter Review* essay on the archive. In their stupendous volume, *Harold Pinter: A Bibliographical History*, William Baker and John C. Ross incorporate into their Appendix A, descriptive references to the boxes containing manuscripts pertaining to the plays listed by me and the screenplays listed by Gale and Hudgins, and, elsewhere in the main body of the book, sometimes they refer to boxes storing the manuscripts of Pinter’s poems and some other genres of his published writings.

I received a handwritten request from Harold, dated 20 July 2000, saying that he gathered that I was working on his Archive in the British Library and asking me to send him “my documentation” of it. Along with a photocopy of my 1994 article “The Harold Pinter Archive in the British Library,” which amended and corrected the in-house British Library List

7 See, for example, Dilek Inan, “Public Consciousness Beyond Theatrical Space: Harold Pinter Interrogates Borders and Boundaries,” *Nebula* 2.2 (June 2005): 33-57. All the quotations on Inan 37 derive from my 1994 essay “The Harold Pinter Archive in the British Library, as does Inan’s statement, “his unpublished early prose work written in 1949, *The Queen of all Fairies* [sic] introduced his embryonically present political attitudes” (37; followed by no source citation). In “The Harold Pinter Archive in the British Library” 29, before quoting fully the passage that Inan reproduces from my essay, I write: “On ts, 5 of ‘Queen of all the Fairies,’ Pinter provides a glimpse of his early political attitudes. . . .”

of Holdings of his Archive (Loan 110A), in enlarged print (since I knew that he was having eye problems at the time), I also typed up (for his personal use only) my more recent notes on the Archive through Box 74.

In this set of notes typed in response to Harold's request, I also itemized and described in considerable detail the contents of Box 74 containing his papers relating to "Celebration" (since been relocated to Add MS 88880/1/16-17), which I had found especially interesting, because it contains many of Pinter's holograph changes, relating to dialogue and the names of characters (Lambert, for example, was at an earlier point in Pinter's writing process called "Nick"). Among the speeches heavily revised is the Waiter's speech relating to his grandfather, including the line "My grandfather was carving out a niche for himself in politics," after which Pinter had inserted "at the time" (page 2), with some changes to the names that the Waiter alludes to (pages 3 and 4), though most of them stayed the same. (Seeing the recent DVD of *Celebration*, with Michael Gambon, Colin Firth, Penelope Wilton, and others, as well as the Lincoln Center Pinter Festival/Almeida Theatre production with another wonderful cast, including Lindsay Duncan, one of Pinter's favorite actresses, in July/August 2001, were particularly exciting experiences.)

Since 1999-2000, I have returned to the British Library to check new deposits and to update my notes further, with an eye toward publishing an account of these additional manuscript materials in an updated article on the Archive in the future. The online "Finding List" for the Harold Pinter Archive, still listed as "Loan No. 110 A/1-74: Harold Pinter Archive," in the searchable current British Library "Manuscripts Catalogue," begins with the sentence: "The archive of Harold Pinter is contained in 80 boxes as follows:" with each "Box No." listed separately, with a brief, very general description of its contents. Between December 2007 and 2 February 2009, when the fully acquired and catalogued Harold Pinter Archive re-opened, Loan No. 110A become incorporated in the new acquisition, located as Add MS 88880. (Loan No. 110B is the Archive of Lady Antonia Fraser [Mrs. Harold Pinter].)

From 20 to 24 October 2006, I spent several hours a day examining the newest boxes (numbered 75 to 80; now re-located in Add MS 88880/2/116-120). They contain mostly several typescripts of Pinter's as-yet unfiled screenplay adaptation of Shakespeare's play *King Lear*, which he completed in March 2000, entitled "The Tragedy of King Lear." Originally commissioned for a film to be directed by Tim Roth, it did not get a green light before Pinter died, as far as I know, and I do not know its

current status.<sup>8</sup> I received the “second draft” typescript dated 31 March 2000, from Pinter in February 2007, after I returned from the Archive, for purposes of comparison with my notes. As with the unfiled *The Proust Screenplay*, which I saw adapted for the stage as *Remembrance of Things Past*, by Pinter and Di Trevis and directed by Trevis at the Royal National Theatre in London in February 2001, when I also saw Patrick Marber’s production of *The Caretaker*, with Michael Gambon (Davies), Rupert Graves (Mick), and Douglas Hodge (Aston), I really do hope that Pinter’s screenplay “The Tragedy of King Lear” eventually gets filmed so that we can all see it on screen and fully appreciate how Harold has dealt with the subplot in a creative manner while rendering dialogue using only Shakespeare’s original words in the play, remaining thus true to its text while making some plot alterations.

I also examined closely and took some extensive notes on the contents of the then-new boxes numbered Box 76 to 80 (now re-located in Add MS 88880/2/103-115), containing the manuscripts of Pinter’s last screenplay adaptation, of Anthony Shaffer’s play *Sleuth*, commissioned for the 2007 film *Sleuth* directed by Kenneth Branagh and produced by Jude Law, who stars in it opposite Michael Caine; Law plays Michael Caine’s former role of Milo Tindle in the original 1972 film *Sleuth*, while Caine plays the role of Andrew Wyke, previously played by Lord Laurence Olivier. Quite fascinated by the care Pinter obviously took in adapting *Sleuth* to film, and knowing that a close examination of his screenplay “The Tragedy of King Lear” would take me much more time than I had that October, I asked Harold to send me the drafts of both screenplays, anticipating my future research relating to both of them. His assistant, Ann Hudson, sent them to me in February 2007.

After taking some extensive notes on the boxes containing typescripts and revisions relating to Pinter’s screenplay for *Sleuth*, I re-read his typedraft completed in May 2005 more carefully, watched a DVD distributed by Anchor Bay Entertainment of the original 1972 film with Olivier and Caine, produced by Palomar Productions International, which was directed by Joseph L. Mankiewicz, and based on Anthony Shaffer’s own screenplay, and compared Pinter’s May 2005 version to some of the

8 A film of *King Lear* starring Keira Knightley as Cordelia, Anthony Hopkins as King Lear, Gwyneth Paltrow as Regan, and Naomi Watts as Goneril was planned for release in 2009 by Ruby Films, but, in February 2009, the company announced its cancellation (“Planned Keira Knightley Version of King Lear Cancelled,” *Telegraph* 26 Feb. 2009). Although there will still be another film adaptation of *King Lear* based on a script by its director Michael Radford, according to Michael Fleming (*Variety* 3 Feb. 2009), perhaps in the future a film based on Pinter’s screenplay “The Tragedy of King Lear” can still be made. In *Sharp Cut: Harold Pinter’s Screenplays and the Artistic Process* (Lexington: The UP of Kentucky, 2003), Steve Gale discusses a March 2000 typescript of Pinter’s screenplay briefly (370-72).

work that I found him doing in the previous typescripts and holograph changes. Even before the film was released, and I watched it on DVD, I could see why Pinter's screenplay has been described on his website as an "updated version."

In the May 2005 draft, Pinter in effect strips the heavy-handed visual metaphors and sound effects relating to the figures remotely controlled by Andrew and Milo throughout the original film (which he had not watched), to focus an audience's attention more on the language of these competitors. The "cat-and-mouse game" that each one plays is therefore a more subtle interplay of dialogue, composed of sly innuendoes and witty repartées. Their dialogue reveals how nearly evenly matched are these two opponents in a game played to the death, involving love, sex, and money. Pinter's screen version exposes the power relations between Andrew and Milo so clearly that one does not need the added outdated film metaphors of the remotely-controlled inanimate figures underscoring which one is the stronger at various points in their games, though Branagh's filmed version updated those metaphors in setting Wyke's house as a bastion of high-tech wizardry, shot from various subjective oblique angles and edited in a clearly-expressionistic mode.

### ***Pinter Playing Beckett on Stage and Screen***

I had been able to visit the British Library Pinter Archive again in mid-October 2006, when I had traveled to London primarily to experience Harold Pinter's performance in *Krapp's Last Tape*. Like my experience of Nobel Week, which I write about in my account in the 2008 volume of *The Pinter Review*, Pinter's performance was the experience of a lifetime that I felt I just could not miss having.

As I wrote Harold later, I held my breath throughout, so intent on not missing a moment. At points I wished I were a camera, I recalled, so that I could have recorded it to relive the experience again and again. So I was very pleased indeed to receive an advance screener of the BBC Television film of Harold's performance, filmed "on Wednesday the 25<sup>th</sup> of October, the day after the run ended" (Ann Hudson, e-mail dated 26 Feb. 2007), as it captures it for posterity and adds some very interesting close ups of Krapp's drinking "behind the scenes" off stage (which we could not see but could only hear—sounds of the popping of a cork and the pouring of the liquid into a glass), and additional television camera angles and sound effects.

The Royal Court's Jerwood Theatre Upstairs is a very small venue, and I sat in the fourth row of the unreserved seats, just behind Lady Antonia Fraser, who had suggested that I sit there to get the full effect.

Seeing the BBC film, I was struck by how much like a close-up of his performance most of us who saw it on stage already had. It is a consummate performance by a consummate actor and playwright who, in bravely taking on this challenging role when he had been so gravely ill in December 2006, was paying homage to his early mentor and friend. In his “conversation” with Charlie Rose at the Old Vic broadcast on American public television in March 2006, Pinter explained why doing *Krapp’s Last Tape* was so important for him.

Pinter had performed roles as the Man in *Rough Cut for Radio* (BBC, 1976) and as the Director opposite Sir John Gielgud (Gielgud’s last role), in Beckett’s short play dedicated to Václav Havel, *Catastrophe* (first for radio and then when he performed for *Beckett On Film*, directed by David Mamet). But he had never acted on stage in a play by Beckett before Rickson’s production. He very much wanted to do so. He told Charlie Rose that he had “asked Sam’s permission” to perform the role as he did and that he was fairly confident that Beckett would have overlooked any adaptations that he and Ian Rickson made to the text in order to accommodate his own physical limitations at the time, like using a motorized wheel chair and cutting out the vaudevillian bits involving slipping on bananas (which would have required being fully ambulatory and been too great a physical risk for him to take then).

Seeing Harold perform the role of Krapp even exceeded my earlier experiences of him on stage in his own plays *The Hothouse* (as Roote, Minerva Theatre, Chichester Festival Theatre, in 1995), *The Collection* (as Harry, Donmar Warehouse, in 1997), and *One for the Road* (as Nicolas, Lincoln Center Pinter Festival, July-August 2001). Taking just those performances together with *Krapp’s Last Tape* and his recent radio performances as Edward in *A Slight Ache* and as Max in *The Homecoming* conveys his range as an actor and playwright, as a true genius and man of the theater. Adding his performance on camera of his Nobel Lecture, while in a wheelchair, however weak-voiced he was from illness, still powerfully speaking words demonstrating his dual commitments as an artist and a citizen, one wonders how much more any one man could accomplish in a lifetime. His own over fifty years of “performing Pinter”—including his early poetry and prose works—from *The Room* and his early revue sketches to *Celebration* and *Press Conference* and *Apart From That*, demonstrate how much Harold Pinter deserves all the attention paid to his work and to all he stands for: in art, in politics, in life; as artist and citizen. Traveling back and forth across media and oceans for over forty of those fifty years, I have found pursuing Pinter truly an honor and a privilege. I will greatly miss the opportunities that I had in

the past to meet and to speak with Harold Pinter and deeply mourn the still-unfathomable loss of this great playwright and friend.

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## ИЗУЧАВАЊЕ ПИНТЕРА

Резиме

Сузан Холис Мерит, аутор дела *Пинтер у драми: критички преглед и драме Харолда Пинтера* и уредник библиографског издања под насловом *Критички огледи о Пинтеру*, даје краћи осврт на ток своје академске каријере изучавања Пинтера, а коју је отпочела након што се први пут сусрела са њујоршким премијерама комада *Повраћак* и *Рођенданска журка* у периоду од 1967. до 1968. године. Ауторка пише о свом накнадном сусрету са Харолдом Пинтером и доводи у везу одређене моменте сусрета са подацима из Архива Харолда Пинтера у Британској библиотеци, као и своје позније сусрете са представом и филмом Пинтера као драмског писца, сценаристе и глумца са својим публикацијама, односно са публикацијама осталих проучавалаца његовог дела.