



Harold Pinter's *The Go-Between*: The Courage To Be Hudgins Christopher C.

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Harold Pinter's *The Go-Between*: The Courage To Be*

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Harold Pinter's and Joseph Losey's *The Go-Between* is one of those rare cinematic events, a resounding critical success that also did well at the box office. With a script by Pinter, Losey's film won the Grand Prix (the *Palme D'Or*) at the Cannes Film Festival in May 1971 and also a number of awards from Britain's Society of Film and Television Arts, including Best Film and Best Screenplay (Billington, 208). Reviewers in the U.S. were unstinting in their praise as well. Charles Champlain in *The Los Angeles Times* wrote that *The Go-Between* was one of the best movies of the last six years. Andrew Sarris in *The Village Voice* labeled it the best movie of the year. And Pinter and Losey scholars agreed: Joanne Klein sees the filmscript as a major stylistic and technical advance in Pinter's work for the screen (101–102), and Foster Hirsch labels it “one of the world's great films” (136).

Ironically, little has been written about *The Go-Between* which grapples very fully with the intricacies of this wonderfully ambiguous work, arguably Losey's masterpiece and one of the best of Pinter's screenplays.¹ Writers typically gloss over the complex relationship between the social and the personal levels of the film and fail to analyze the implications of the very different conclusions of film and script. 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.

To use Paul Tillich's wonderful phrase, L. P. Hartley's novel suggests that Leo Colston has allowed his traumatic experience during the summer of his thirteenth birthday to make him retreat into a world of “facts,” that he has lost the “courage to be.” As an old man, Colston begins to confront his past and the fact that he has lost the courage to love and to explore his life. Through a Prufrock-like cowardice, he has become sterile. The novel suggests that Colston wins a battle with himself in going back to Norfolk to immerse himself in the landscape where he served as a “go-between” for two mis-allied lovers, the lovely, aristocratic Marian Maudsley, sister of his boarding school friend Marcus, and Ted Burgess, the earthy, passionate tenant of Black Farm, which borders on the country house Leo is so in awe of, Brandham Hall. Hartley clearly depicts Leo's decision to carry a message of life-giving vitality to Marian's grandson, the son of her “love-child” with Ted Burgess, as resulting in Colston's rebirth; though late in life, his courageous action allows him to reclaim his youthful potential, to engage happily with the life that remains to him.

In the novel, this progression through a failed initiation into the mysteries of sexuality is complicated by the implication that Leo has repressed his betrayal of Marian and Ted, at least to the extent of telling Mrs Maudsley that he has been delivering their messages. Most critics have suggested that Leo's flight into sterility is motivated only by the trauma of being forced

* Overall, I owe a great debt of gratitude to Harold Pinter, who has been generous to me in many ways over the last fourteen years.

¹ I'd argue that the best among a distinguished lot include *The Servant* (Joseph Losey, 1963), *The Pumpkin Eater* (Jack Clayton, 1964), *Accident* (Joseph Losey, 1967), *The Proust Screenplay* (1977, unproduced), *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (Karl Reisz, 1981), *Victory* (1982, unproduced), *Betrayal* (David Jones, 1983), *Reunion* (Jerry Schatzberg, 1989), *The Comfort of Strangers* (Paul Schrader, 1990), and *Lolita* (1994, unproduced). Interested readers might see my articles on *Victory* in *The Pinter Review* 1991, on *The Comfort of Strangers* in *The Pinter Review* 1995/96, and on *Lolita* in the January 1997 issue of *Literature/Film Quarterly*.

to discover Ted and Marian making love in one of the “outhouses” behind the Hall and by the trauma of Ted’s resulting suicide.

Pinter’s script scrupulously reflects the subtle spirit of Hartley’s novel, though it imaginatively recasts its form, fitting it to the cinema with a brilliant aesthetic dexterity particularly evident in his blending of scenes from Leo’s “near-present” life in the 1950s with memory scenes from that long past summer of 1900. In a 1984 interview in his comfortable study, the screenwriter commented to me that in his adaptation of novels for films he attempts to remain faithful to the spirit of the novel while still insisting on the freedom to seek out creative, formally pleasing ways to transfer that spiritual core of the work from page to screen. In a spring 1994 conversation with Steven H. Gale and myself, Pinter commented that his decision to adapt a novel depends on gut reaction, on his being able to find a kernel that moves him.

As many writers have suggested, the works that Pinter has adapted include themes and perspectives on behavior that are similar to those in his original work for the stage. Typically we encounter in Pinter’s filmscripts a world where people are desperately afraid of something. In the early plays, such fear is imaged in the threat of the intruder, of the Kafka-esque knock at the door, and characters try to escape such confrontation in various ways. In the later work, those fears clearly short-circuit the possibility of trusting relatedness, of the potential of love, for we find characters, acting out of a profound insecurity, trying to dominate others as an attempt to resist concomitant efforts at the “others”’s attempts to dominate them. Such power/control behavior is a part of love, Pinter suggests, but it reflects a lack of courage. And often that “cowardice” results in a refusal to confront the past, or in a willful attempt to misremember it, to understand it in the way most flattering to the self. As the work matures, Pinter’s interest in showing the relationship of past and present becomes more central, and his theatrical technique for suggesting the concurrence of past and present grows increasingly sophisticated. *The Go-Between*, then, with its fluid treatment of time and memory, its depiction of characters who are both sympathetic and immersed in various complex power struggles, courageous and cowardly as they confront their lives and retreat from them, is a fitting novel for a Pinter adaptation.

John Russell Taylor quotes Pinter’s reaction to first reading *The Go-Between*, which Losey had brought to him after their collaborations on *The Servant* (1963) and *Accident* (1967):

I was reading it all at one sitting and, as it happened, alone in the house. And suddenly at a certain point near the climax of the story, I found myself in floods of tears. Really weeping. A few pages later I was off again. It was all very eerie. And when Joe asked if I would like to write a script based on the book my first thought was, impossible: I shall just be in tears for months at a time. (202)

Struck by the intensity of this response to the novel, in our 1984 conversation I asked if Pinter still remembered that initial reading. He said that he did, that it was a novel with which he identified emotionally. At the time he thought that he was so close to that emotional experience that he would not be able to write about it. I suggested that his response *might* imply that he identified so strongly because of a personal experience, similar, somehow, to Leo’s. He was a bit taken aback — “good god, no, I’m a different person.”

Emotional responses to works of art are complex, but they often are rooted in the subjective experiences that we bring with us to our experience as audience. In this regard, it is interesting that Michael Billington movingly describes in his sterling new biography a central event in Pinter’s life, his evacuation during the war years to Cornwall at a tender nine years of age:

His prime memories of evacuation today are of loneliness, bewilderment, separation and loss: themes that recur in all his works [...] according to Pinter, separation from parents was hardly distinguishable from death [...]. Yet, along with the sense of exile and confusion, evacuation brought acute moments of self-realisation [...]. In these hothouse circumstances, the slightly sheltered Pinter also became aware for the first time of the [...] potential [...] cruelty of boys in isolation: “I think as a result of that

loss and confusion one became, generally speaking, nastier, just horrid is the word. I think we were all a bunch of horrid little boys because of the loss of security.” (6–7)

Still, Billington continues, the images of the natural beauty of the countryside were memorable:

the rhododendrons he passed on the mile-long morning walk from the stables to the village school, [...] the lake in the castle grounds, [...] the glades stumbled across when walking through the local woods, [...] the roaring Cornish sea with the bay and the cliffs all impressed themselves deeply on his imagination [...]. But the most formative aspect of the whole evacuation experience was the loss of identity and the sense of living in some strange in-between world: an emotional no man’s land.

“There was,” says Pinter, “no fixed sense of being... of *being*... at all.” (7)

One readily recognizes in Pinter’s memories of his childhood analogues for young Leo Colston’s experience, both negative and positive. Still more important as a possible reason for the novel’s emotional impact on Pinter, Billington adds that the evacuation experience’s “profound influence on Pinter’s childhood sensibility is confirmed by his constant, almost obsessive return visits as an adult.” Billington cites teen-age hikes with friends around the area, Pinter’s taking Vivien Merchant, his first wife, to Cornwall on their honeymoon, and his visit with his second wife, Antonia Frasier.² With a tip of the hat to Thomas Bernhard’s memoir *Gathering Evidence*, Billington concludes “we are drawn back in adult life to scenes of childhood unhappiness” (7).

Such return often includes as one of its enabling emotions a kind of strength or courage, the ability to confront painful elements of one’s life. It also includes a type of nostalgia and an *instinct*, almost, toward self-examination, toward discovery, toward a re-living of one’s youth. The Joseph Losey papers housed at the British Film Institute include a letter to Losey from Hartley commenting on his pleasure at Losey’s capturing so many of the details of “The house where I actually stayed as a boy [...] Bradenham Hall in Norfolk [...]. Their son was my school friend, who asked me to stay.” He even remembers “The Deadly Nightshade” as part of his real experience on which the fiction is based.³

The courageous element of Colston’s return to Norfolk in his old age is central to the novel and to Pinter’s filmscript, as well as to the Losey film. In the novel’s “Prologue,” Hartley includes an imaginary dialogue between old Colston and the resurrected Leo, the spirit of his youth, who has been “revived” by old Colston’s discovery of a red collar box and a diary, long ignored relics of his past life. The old Colston imagines that his twelve-year old self reproaches him for growing up “such a dull dog, when I gave you such a good start,” spending “your time in dusty libraries, cataloguing other people’s books instead of writing your own” (25). Old Colston’s imagined answer is to blame his younger self, suggesting that it was the youthful Leo who let him down: “You flew too near to the sun, and you were scorched. This cindery creature is what you made me” (25–26). With the spirit of the youthful Leo chastising him for not having gotten over it in half a century, old Colston replies that the youthful Colston was the one who was “vanquished, and so was your century, your precious century that you hoped so much of.”

The youthful spirit begins to win this internal argument when he urges Colston on: “But you might have tried. You needn’t have run away.” Old Colston, in turn, criticizes his youthful self for his parting charge, “For your own sake, don’t think of them.” But the youthful alter-ego replies, breaking him off, “Try now, try now, it isn’t too late.” Old Colston concludes that he *is* thinking about them, confronting the coffins and vaults: “I *was* facing it, the scene, the people, and the experience. Excitement, like hysteria, bubbled up in me from a hundred

² The full text of Pinter’s reminiscence of the period, a previously unpublished interview, originally appeared in *The Pinter Review: Annual Essays 1994*.

³ My sincere thanks to the wonderfully efficient staff at the British Film Institute Archives, whose resources I used in the spring of 1984, soon after the Losey papers had been catalogued and placed on their shelves.

unsealed springs. If it isn't too late, I thought confusedly, neither is it too early: I haven't much life left to spoil. It was a last flicker of the instinct of self-preservation which had failed me so signally at Brandham Hall" (27). He opens the diary and the novel begins.

The prologue's alter-ego conversation clearly suggests that Old Colston's going back over his life, his courageous decision to confront it, is what leads him to his visit to Norfolk. After recounting the events of his youth in the body of the work, with much musing from the mature self over the import of the youthful events, old Colston finally concludes in the novel's "Epilogue" that he was neither "so guilty as I believed myself to be in the long months that followed my visit, or so blameless, as, in the years that followed them, I had come to think I was. I had come to blame the visit for everything," for his abandonment of life: "Once a go-between, never a go-between had become my maxim" (304–305). And so in the novel, it is with a "quiet mind" that he finally opens the last bit of evidence, the sealed letter which he has never delivered to Ted, the one Mrs Maudsley has tortured him over during her inquisition scene in the garden. The letter reveals both Marian's quite genuine affection for the young Leo and, at the same time, her desire to use him as enabling device. Old Leo is moved to the first tears he's shed since leaving Brandham Hall: "The figures in the picture started moving; curiosity stirred in me again. I would go back to Brandham and find out what had happened after I left" (305–306).

Once the epilogue re-emphasizes that Colston's motive for his return has been a courageous self-confrontation, vital, involving, healthily aggressive, Hartley moves his narrator into the present scenes that Pinter and Losey evoke so skillfully. Those show the results, Colston's life-affirming decision to act once more as "go-between," to abandon his maxim for living, and partly living, over the last fifty years. His trip to the church, where he discovers that Hugh Trimmingham has married and had a child is the source for Pinter's reiterated scenes where old Colston is at the cemetery. To his surprise, Hugh has married Marian, "true as steel" despite the scandal; he discovers that her son has been killed in action in France, and that Hugh himself has died at 36 in 1910. After saying a prayer for all of them, Colston meets the grandson by sheer chance, the eleventh Viscount Trimmingham, whom he recognizes as resembling Ted; the young man tells him that Marian now lives in the house that had belonged to Nanny Robson, the old nurse Marian has pretended to be visiting while trysting with Ted. And he reveals that Marian is lonely, since "she doesn't have many visitors" (311). As in the film, then, claiming that she is not lonely, that all sorts of people come to visit her, "interesting people, artists and writers," Marian tries to put the best possible light on her fall from the previous grandeur of her life at the estate, her lines remarkably similar to Anna's in *Old Times* (1971). Some of the truth begins to emerge when she reveals that her grandson rarely comes to visit her, that he holds a grudge against her, and that he is worried about marrying, "a distant cousin, but still a Winlove — but he won't ask her because [...] he feels [...] he's under some sort of spell or curse." At this point, the fall of the family fortunes quite clear, she asks old Colston to go see Ted's grandson and to tell him of the beautiful love that Ted and she shared (317). In the novel, the visit will be to a Brandham Hall where the grandson lives in a small corner, having leased the rest.

Though Marian's vision of that past and Colston's are very different, in the novel the old man does take Marian's message of hope and love to the grandson, as she requests:

I marvelled [...] at the extent of Marian's self-deception. Why then was I moved by what she had said? Why did I half wish that I could see it all as she did? And why should I go on this preposterous errand? I hadn't promised to and I wasn't a child, to be ordered about. My car was standing by the public call-box; nothing easier than to ring up Ted's grandson and make my excuses [...].

But I didn't, and hardly had I turned in at the lodge gates, wondering how I should say what I had come to say, when the southwest prospect of the Hall, long hidden from my memory, sprang into view. (319–320)

In context, this action on Colston's part is an emblem of a very positive growth. In the first place, from the beginning the novel emphasizes that the southwest exposure is the Hall's grandest, and that Colston has been unable to recall it for years. As Hartley writes Losey, "the southwest prospect was symbolical, of course, it represented the happier side of Leo's experience, which doesn't reveal itself to him until he was much, much older" (Losey Papers). And, in the second place, as we've seen, the spirit of the young Leo chastises old Colston for merely cataloging books rather than writing one of his own. The fact that old Colston has written the story that we read is the most concrete evidence we have of the creative, energizing effect his confrontation with his old life has had. The young Leo, finally, would have been proud.

One of the brilliant achievements of this film is that it captures both the enjoyable elements of Leo's youthful experience and the discomfiting ones simultaneously and manages to suggest that old Colston has been at fault for allowing those events to destroy his life, for choosing sterility and retreat. The Pinter script, like the novel, suggests that Colston courageously delivers that message of hope and vitality, and triumphs because of his new-found courage. The Losey film misreads this part of the spirit of the novel and suggests that Colston does not take the message, that he refuses Marian's last charge. Though Losey weakens it, his film still suggests something of old Colston's courageousness, a Pinter theme which echoes throughout the canon in praise of a strong free will in the face of adversity.

In 1989, Lois Gordon reported that Pinter understood his adaptation of Kafka's *The Trial* (1993) as concentrating "on the important thing [of how the man] fights like hell all the way" (50). Two decades or so previous, in February 1967, Pinter's *The Basement* was broadcast on the BBC, the first extended example of his ability to project scenes which suggest the simultaneity of surface reality and memory or fantasy. As I argue in a 1985 essay, using a pattern of rain imagery quite similar to that in his present-time scenes for old Colston, Pinter suggests that Law, his central figure:

[...] would never be brave enough to face that harsh rain. In R. D. Laing's terms, like Stanley in *The Birthday Party*, Law is a victim of what he has feared in the first place, 'engulfment' by another, stronger personality. But he has conditioned that engulfment himself, almost encouraged it. Courage to confront one's dangerous experience more fully is the television plays' implied alternative or 'answer' to such a horrifying surrender. (Hudgins, 81)

Billington, generously calling this the "definitive analysis of the play," adds "I think that's right — the play is about the need to embrace life and resist takeover" (192).

In our 1994 conversation, I asked Pinter if this were a conscious thematic emphasis on his part. A lengthy, complex reply, centering on his filmscript for *The Comfort of Strangers* in sum suggested that, yes, Pinter could see that that was a recurring motif in his work. More specifically, in my 1984 conversation with Pinter, I asked if he thought of Leo's finally going to see the grandson at the end of the film as an act of courage. After brief comments about Jamesian ambiguity and Hartley's first person narrator, Pinter mused that, yes, he supposed that he had thought of it as a courageous act, though he emphasized that our own conversation was fifteen years after he had written the filmscript.

Losey isn't so cautious in his analysis of the implications of his film's conclusion. In his comments to Michel Ciment, he says that "Leo has finally understood what his life has been and has put things back into perspective. It's a belated catharsis. The old man finally refuses to allow himself to be used" (304). He adds "What is important about this ending [...] is that he doesn't pass on the message" (316). The film reflects Losey's vision of the conclusion and its implications, not Pinter's.

As the film, following the Pinter script in most respects, draws to its double climax, the actions of the memory sequences and the actions of the present-time sequences lead us with mounting intensity to parallel moments of truth, the first Leo's betrayal of the lovers and its

consequence and the second old Colston's receiving Marian's request to carry her message. In an excruciatingly painful scene, in old Colston's memory, Mrs Maudsley interrupts Marian's and Leo's playful wrangling about whether or not Leo will deliver that last letter. She takes him on a walk in the garden, leaving Marian anxiously glancing after them (filmscript, 356). Though Losey rearranges several of Pinter's time-present sequences, here, he still intersperses them with this anguishing memory from the past, implicitly commenting on the similarity of the emotional trauma for young and old Colston.

Mrs Maudsley draws out more and more information from the over-matched Leo, who tells three lies, the first that he's lost the letter, the second that he has taken messages for Marian before to Nanny Robson, the third that he knows the way to Nanny Robson's cottage. Her catching him in all three devastates Leo. When he has to admit that he doesn't know the way to Nanny Robson's, she calls for the gardener to take that letter; when he says he's lost it, she threatens to have him turn his pockets inside out; when he says he's taken letters to Nanny Robson before, she says, essentially, how could that be so if you don't know the way? As he stumbles and stammers, she says "If you don't take them to Nanny Robson —" (358). In the film, Losey cuts to a shot of the two of them, silent, through the glass of a greenhouse. He then cuts to a shot of Leo sitting on the lavatory lid, with Mrs Maudsley's voice-over completing her query, "— to whom do you take them?"

We never know for certain, then, whether or not Leo answers. I'd suggest, though, that both the film and the script imply that he has not had the strength to resist this onslaught. His betrayal of Marian and Ted, either directly in his admission that he's carried letters to Ted, or indirectly in his comments about his walks in the old garden by the outhouses where they are discovered in their trysting place, explains the extremity of the effect Ted's suicide has on him. That horrific emotion is amplified by his fear that Marian hasn't really liked him but only used him. In the novel, the effect on the adolescent Leo is a loss of memory in the months that follow the event; the film and the script suggest a similar devastation with the portrait of the mature, dried up Colston and Marian's comments on his life: "You ought to have got married. You're all dried up inside, I can tell that. Don't you feel any need of love?" (360). Leo, contemplating Mrs Maudsley's penultimate question on the toilet, never allows himself to envision his answer. That in itself suggests the intensity of the guilt his failure has caused him.

In the novel, Hartley's narrator provides revealing detail:

I could not answer, but an answer came. There was a sound as if the sky was painfully clearing its throat, then all around the thunder muttered.

Rain followed instantly. I can't remember how our interview broke up, or whether either of us said anything more, nor do I remember how we reached the house. (293)

In a scene that parallels Pinter's own symbolic use of the room, Hartley then has Leo return to find his room occupied by another guest; he has been displaced, his "refuge," as he labels it, eliminated because of another's possession. And he retreats into that emblematic place of excrement.

The film never shows Leo's reading that letter late in life, but it does concentrate on the freeing results it presages in the novel, and on the present rain that colors the novel's and the script's final memory scenes. After the shot of Leo, miserable on the toilet, Losey cuts to a shot of Colston entering the cottage that we've gradually recognized as Marian's, following Pinter's emphasis that, except for the final shot, all shots of present sequences are in the rain. Many writers point out that these present-time sequences are a-chronological. That is, after many establishing shots of the exterior, we see Leo in the cottage's sitting room, the maid taking his hat and coat, just after we've seen a closeup of Ted's singing to Marian's accompaniment after the cricket match; after we see Leo's fleeing Ted's anger at his insistence that Ted tell him about sex, Losey cuts to a shot of the maid ushering him into the room, with a voice-over from Leo's writing to his mother asking to come home. Old Colston

picks up a picture and looks at it. And after the shot of Leo on the lavatory, Losey cuts to a shot of Colston's entering the cottage and the maid's ushering him through the hall. Then we cut back to Leo on the toilet, with Marian's old voice saying: "So you met my grandson [...]. Does he remind you of anyone?" (359). In the script, Colston's response is: "Of course. His grandfather." Less ambiguously, in the film Colston says "Of course. Ted Burgess." As we see the old faces of Leo and Marian for the first time, the action of the present-time sequences becomes increasingly dominant, and the question of whether or not old Colston will serve as go-between one last time comes to the fore, with the memory sequences of the birthday party, to thunder and lightening, providing a gloss for the action of the past that has led old Colston to this state.

James Palmer and Michael Riley examine these scenes in detail, providing sensitive insights about how the present scenes comment on the significance of scenes from the past or vice-versa, and they do a fine job of mapping out Pinter's rendering of the ever-present nature of the past, the fact that it is coincidental with our experience of the present (89). But they argue that the reverse order of these particular scenes from present-time suggests Leo's subconscious desire to back out of the meeting" (111). That's an understandable reading, especially given their misreading of Marian's having summoned Colston to Norfolk (106), but it's off base. This and other a-chronological sequences of the present-time portions of the film reflect the spirit of the novel more complexly. In the first place, the present-time sequences comment on the past-time sequences in ways that resemble the novel's narrator musing on the implications of those past events. For example, at the celebration following the cricket match between the Hall's habitués and the villagers, Leo is asked to sing. The narrator tells us:

For the second time I was called upon to exchange the immunities of childhood for the responsibilities of the grown-up world. It was like a death, but with a resurrection in prospect: the third time it happened there was none. Even as I left my seat [...] and felt my mouth going dry, I knew that I should get back to what I had been, just as certainly as, the third time I knew that I should not. (169)

In the novel, such commentary suggests that the older narrator is looking back with mature insight on these formative events that he recounts from his present vantage point. The lines emphasize that the young Leo has gradually been negotiating the transition between childish things and maturity with strength and appropriate aggressiveness and pride at this stage of his life. His star performance on the cricket team, as he catches Ted out, is the first incident that the old Colston now reads as a progression toward the adult world. Ironically, of course, that foreshadows his catching Ted out as illicit lover, as well, which results in that guilt-inducing suicide. Leo's second emblematic death and re-birth is his triumphant singing. But the reference to the third, as yet unknown to the reader, "death," from which there is no immediate and positive rebirth, creates a narrative tension, a foreshadowing of disaster that adds import and structural resonance to the narrator's progress.

In the second place, such a-chronology in the present-time sequences reflects both a particular understanding of the memory process and the form or structure of Hartley's novel. As we know, framed by its prologue and epilogue, the novel itself is the book that old Colston has written, as his younger alter-ego calls upon him to do. What we have in prologue and epilogue, then, represents the much more recent memories of the narrator, his take on events of his very recent past. That's in contrast to his memories of the events of his distant past, which by their very nature are more fixed. Pinter's vision of memory, particularly in *Old Times*, suggests that we establish older memories as foundations of sorts. They assume a structure, whether true or not. More recent memories aren't fixed; they're more chaotic, as we struggle with them, trying to find a structure that we find pleasing. That's what Pinter's script and Losey's film suggest is going on as Colston looks at his more recent experience, the part of his life that has led up to his "rebirth," his reacquaintance with things vital, human, love-dealing. Pinter's script also once more respects the spirit of the novel, which provides us with

old Colston's memory of those more distant events in chronological order, despite the narrator's foreknowledge as reflected in some of his comments on those events.

Pinter's script and Losey's film come up with evocative cinematic parallels that are often quite similar to the narrator's present-time glosses. For example, after Marian lashes out at Leo for his decision not to carry her letters to Ted once he learns of her engagement to Viscount Trimmingham, the script and film show him journeying to the farm with that letter, devastated by Marian's cruel attacks, and Marian's old voice comes over, "So you met my grandson" (335). We then cut to a shot of Ted, holding his gun between his knees, cleaning the weapon with the barrel disturbingly under his chin. The shot creates a feeling of foreboding without actually "naming" the reason, but Marian's voice-over provides a hint of the connection, the association of the grandson with Ted at least subliminally beginning here. The present-day shots of Colston looking at a cemetery in the rain provide a similar equivalent for the novel's narrative comment. Andrew Sarris mistakenly argues that the filmmakers try "to delay our recognition of the link between past and present." The subtlety of the connection does make the audience pay closer attention, and it replicates the difficulty Leo has had in confronting that connection for so many years. Still, the earliest of the present-day sequences imply the connection between the two narrative lines. The film opens with shots of rain on the windows or windshield of an automobile. As we watch young Leo approach the southwest prospect of Brandham hall in a carriage, in voice-over old Colston tells us, "The past is a foreign country. They do things differently there" (287). As we watch Leo's embarrassment at not having appropriate summer clothes, and Marian's offer to rescue him by taking him to town on a shopping expedition, we hear, in voice-over, old Colston's comment, "You flew too near the sun and you were scorched" (295).

Even this early, that line is clearly associated with the young boy's infatuation with the aristocratic daughter, the image just on the screen, and provides foreshadowing, a foreboding sense of what is to come. With such implications already established, when we cut from the past-time swimming scene to a car pulling into a village and cutting its engine, when we hear young Marian's voice-over, "It's dripping on my dress" (302), we should be able to make the inference that this is the old man's memory. When we see the back of the old man, in several scenes, looking over a present-day cemetery near his car, the suggestion is clear that he contemplates the fate of figures he has known in his past. And with the memory narrative's focus on Leo, and the present-time narrative's focus on the old man, I think the identification of the two fairly straight-forward.

In our 1984 conversation, in the context of comments about audiences' and critics' confusion over shifts of perspectives in *The Basement*, *The Pumpkin Eater*, and *The Go-Between*, Pinter said that he didn't think that his work was all that difficult, that given a reasonably intelligent audience paying reasonably close attention it was perfectly easy to follow. He told the story of a good friend, an intelligent lawyer, who had criticized him for showing in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* a telephone call, apparently in a nineteenth-century scene. Pinter had replied, "What do you think? A phone in the nineteenth century?" And his friend had said, O.K., but you can't *do* that." Pinter said, "Why not; it's perfectly obvious what is going on."

The early cumulative effect of Pinter's and Losey's use of voice-overs and cross cutting between present and memory sequences clearly connects *The Go-Between's* two story lines. Garnering appropriate thematic implications for Colston's once more serving as go-between is perhaps more difficult for an audience; our recognition that his violating his maxim of fifty years is courageous depends on our awareness of structural patterns of images, but that is consistent with Pinter's subtlety and fondness for ambiguity.

In Pinter's script, after we watch Mrs Maudsley's and young Leo's horrific discovery of Ted and Marian making love, we cut to a shot of Marian lying in her hammock, a repetition of Leo's initial image of her, figures playing croquet in the background. In voice-over, old

Marian says, echoing the novel, “you came out of the blue to make us happy. And we made you happy, didn’t we? We trusted you with our great treasure. You might never have known what it was, you might have gone through life without knowing” (366). Pinter calls for a cut to old Colston listening as Marian tells him to tell her grandson everything, just as it was, a reiteration of her request to put an end to his “silly” concern about a curse being on him. And then Pinter calls for a bloody shot of Ted’s suicide. We cut, in the script, to old Marian, and then to a car’s windscreen moving toward Brandham Hall, with Marian’s voice still over: “Remember how you loved taking our messages, bringing us together and making us happy” (366). Her voice continues in similar vein, as the car rises toward the Hall. As Marian suggests that Colston should tell the grandson of the beauty of their love, the sound “*stops abruptly*,” just as she says “Tell him —” (367). Pinter’s script directions call for the car to come to the top of the hill, for the southwest prospect of Brandham Hall to spring into view, the elms cut down, dust from the car slightly obscuring the vista.

Now, Pinter’s is an ambiguous ending. But the image of the car first going down an incline, then beginning to rise, and finally reaching the top of the hill is suggestive of moral growth. It also echoes an earlier Pinter scene of Leo in a carriage going down a frightening incline, which is left out of the film (315). In that omitted scene, Pinter calls for a closeup of Leo’s frightened face, a shot of old Colston in the village street, and a shot of Marian’s skirts going through the weeds, clearly to meet Ted. There is no rising, there, only terror and foreboding. Here the car’s rising to the top of the hill, the shot of that imagistically potent southwest exposure, and the fact that the car is heading toward the Hall at all, suggest that Leo will complete his mission, and that he will courageously triumph over the adversity, now, that has deadened him all these years. Significantly, too, this present scene is no longer in the rain. That he sees the Hall bereft of its former glory, though, implies that he is not slavishly following Marian’s bidding, that he has his own vision of the past, and that, of course, in the novel, IS its very “text,” what he communicates to the grandson. That vision includes some notion that Marian’s claim that the love between herself and Ted Burgess was a thing of great beauty is at least partly true. In turn, understanding that ambiguity depends on recognizing the social structure and themes of novel, script and film, which are all quite similar.

The ending of Losey’s film is a good bit different than that mapped out in Pinter’s script. Though Losey implies a kind of triumph for Colston, it is not as reverberant a triumph as the one Pinter implies may take place, nor does it suggest the kind of potential for relatedness, for emerging from sterile isolation that Pinter’s and the novel’s conclusions do. In the film, Losey follows the script’s concluding scenes up to the point when the car stops at the top of the hill. We see a shot of Colston looking towards his right from the car, then a shot of the reflection of the Hall in the glass of the car window which colors old Colston’s face, a beautiful technical achievement with accompanying metaphoric implications of the effect this place has had on the man’s life. We see Colston looking back, then straight ahead, and then the car moving. Colston stares out again, and from his point of view we see a shot of the Hall, elms down, exposed, a single small car in the long drive, clearly the grandson’s and emphatically not the Rolls Royce of aristocracy.

And the film ends. Closely observed, Losey’s conclusion implies that Colston does not deliver Marian’s message. As we’ve seen, Losey regards that as a triumph, as suggesting that Colston now refuses to be used, that he rejects Marian’s control over his life. But that rejection would seem simply to lead Colston to more of the same, toward more sterility and isolation, which is inconsistent with the spirit of the novel, and with the spirit of Pinter’s script. And it negates the growth that Colston’s coming to Norfolk in the first place so pleasingly and subtly implies. Losey’s is an unfortunate, darkening choice.

But Losey’s imaginative filming of much of Pinter’s script provides substantive weight, particularly in his evocative renderings of the various social levels of the film. As Hartley

suggests, his story is not only the tale of the dimming of the bright hopefulness of Leo's young life but also a reflection of how ill the twentieth century for which Leo had such hopes has turned out (Losey Papers). Social themes, particularly those associated with class structures, are one of Losey's preoccupations. Though not widely recognized at first, that's also one of Pinter's central interests. In this film, Losey's and Pinter's contextualizing social backdrop centers around the British class system, attitudes toward British colonialism and war, and the trauma of shifting attitudes toward sexuality.

Michael Billington captures this balance nicely, suggesting that the book and the film tell "both the story of an unhealed emotional wound, and a metaphor for the innocence and experience of twentieth-century man" (207). The shots of the Hall itself, particularly in contrast to images of Ted's farmhouse, imply a criticism of this leisure class, who have all they can do to come up with plans to while away their summer days, with croquet, picnics across the stream, swimming expeditions and so on, all mapped out at breakfast under the firm hand of Mrs Maudsley. The opening shots of the elaborate silver service, ordered and ready for the next meal, under the glowering portraits of ancestry, take on critical overtones in contrast to Ted's simple hutch with its limited crockery. The first damning social criticism in both script and film's dialogue is Marcus's carelessly telling Leo to leave his clothes where they fall, "That's what servants are for" (293). And Leo's discomfiture about being properly clothed in a situation where he is "out-classed" is a recurring image. In this context, Marcus' brother, Denys, ironically labels Leo Robin Hood, in his new suit of green, which, along with Losey's inclusion of shots of luxuriant herds of deer and various poaching and trespassing references, comments on Leo's role in taking Marian from the rich and giving her to the poor; it also underlines his own genteel poverty as child of a pacifist and collector of books. This structural motif continues with Denys's first mistaking Ted for a poacher and wanting to order him off when the swimming party discovers him "taking a header" at "their" river (299).

Most evocatively, Losey's imaginative shooting of Pinter's scene where Mr Maudsley says morning prayers in the presence of the servants is at least close to satire (304). After prospering from hearing several beautiful Biblical passages, the staff file out like a troop of soldiers to do their duty, minions to their hypocritical masters. And just as Maudsley is reading "See that you walk circumspectly, not as fools," the camera focuses on Marian as she walks in late. The conclusion of the scene evokes sympathy for Maudsley, as well as continuing ironic class commentary, for his last reading enjoins us to "give thanks for all things," and he is speaking of salvation as the camera focuses on Leo's meeting Viscount Trimingham's scarred face for the first time.

Similar social satire runs pleasantly rampant in the cricket game sequences, where Losey draws our attention to the contrast between the attire and attitudes of the grand spectators supporting the Hall and those supporting the villagers, slovenly on their benches. At the celebration which follows the game, the contrast between the raucous locals and the decorous members of the Hall crowd a-slumming makes for similar satire, with Ted acting above his station. And after Leo's singing triumph, on their way home Marcus remarks "Well, thank goodness we've said good-bye to the village for a year. Did you notice the stink in that hall?" (334). To Leo's credit he did not, but at this point Marcus announces Marian's engagement to Trimingham, clearly startling Leo, who is increasingly friendly to Ted, though overawed by Trimingham's befriending him. The world, which he would like to understand as an orderly place, as dependant on unquestioned "rules" like those he values in his schoolboy life, suddenly becomes more complex.

With Chekhovian overtones, novel, script and film map out the gradual decay of this corrupt class system. In the first place, that Marian, despite her marriage to Trimingham, ends living not in a mansion but in a cottage formerly belonging to Nanny Robson comments not only on her own fall in fortune but that of the aristocracy in general in the twentieth century. That the

grandson wishes to marry a “girl” in the script and film, a distant cousin of very limited family pretensions in the novel, clearly suggests his fall from Viscount blessedness as well. And that the Hall is denuded of its luxuriant landscape in script and film, rented out in the novel, again suggests a decay of the aristocracy.

The film’s references to the Boer War and colonialism are especially important signifiers of the twentieth century’s failure to fulfill the hope it seemed to promise in 1900 when Leo’s story opens. The novel’s noting that Marian’s son died in World War II emphasizes the point. Leo’s first encounter with Trimingham, as we’ve seen, occurs during the morning prayer sequence. A close, startling shot of the two of them, Leo’s innocent face contrasting with Trimingham’s disfigurement from his battle scars, establishes the importance of the relationship. Later scenes emphasize just how awed Leo is at Trimingham’s rank. Yet that rank, and its accompanying *noblesse oblige*, certainly has not spared Trimingham. The novel provides fuller comment on the Boer War that is the source of Trimingham’s wound through various snatches of dialogue; Losey and Pinter have Marcus say, punningly, in explanation to Leo, that Trimingham got his wound in the war, “gored by the Boers” (305). The line economically captures a jingoistic, uninformed British condescension to a people less aristocratic or “civilized” than themselves. In his notes, Losey writes that the Viscount “sacrificed his beauty to the purposeless Boer War” (The Losey Papers). That war notoriously included British atrocities, “scorching the earth” and imprisoning thousands in camps where a myriad died, including women and children. Long forgotten by most of us, the motives for the war involved the Boers eliminating the rights of foreign nationals, which impacted ownership of prosperous gold mines. Thus, in the context of his class, Trimingham’s patriotism is understandable, but it is ridiculous from the mid-century perspective of the novel’s “present,” and the loss of life in service to a doomed colonialism a tragic waste.

Several scenes obliquely comment on the class system that allowed the war to be fought, on the sources of Britain’s cannon fodder for its soon-to-vanish colonial adventurism. In Leo’s smoking room scene with Trimingham, the Viscount first praises Ted Burgess, but comments, finally, that though he’s a decent fellow, he’s a bit wild and something of a “lady-killer” (346). After Maudsley walks in, Trimingham says that he’s been talking to Ted about joining the army, and that he’s seemed quite interested. Maudsley murmurs that he “won’t be altogether a loss to the district,” adding that they say “he’s got a woman up this way” (347). Reflecting Losey’s understanding of the work in his notes, the scene implies that Mr Maudsley and Trimingham suspect a relationship between Ted and Marian, and that their solution is to bundle him off, to rid themselves of a trouble maker. That reflects a long established British practice, of course.

Both script and film tie Ted’s decision on whether or not to go for a soldier to what Marian wishes. After the smoking room scene, Leo tells Ted that he has come to say goodbye, thinking that his mother will allow him to come home as he’s requested. And then he asks if it’s true that Ted is going to war. The boy is concerned about Ted’s well-being, just as he is about Trimingham’s; that concern emerges in his questioning Trimingham about a duel over an unfaithful wife, in the novel specifically because he thinks that Ted would kill Trimingham in any such duel. In the film, Ted bristles, asking who has told him that he’s going to war. But Leo simply asks if Ted knew about Marian’s engagement and if that is why he’s going. Ted replies, “I don’t know that I am going. That’s for her to say. It isn’t what I want, but what she wants” (348).

Beginning with this line, Leo becomes remarkably sympathetic to Ted, breaking out of his strained formality. He offers to take what he is certain will be a final message, a choice that properly, if ironically, takes the side of true love over class, over aristocratically arranged marriages. Ted’s conclusion that it’s Marian’s decision implies that he is so in love that he will do anything to make her as happy as possible in this horrific situation. It parallels, to a

degree, Trimingham's line that "Nothing is ever a lady's fault," which is in response to Leo's observation that the duel was probably the lady's fault, but that she didn't have to pay any price (349). Leo's observation is the telling one; Trimingham's appears ludicrous, continuing the motif of criticism for aristocratic attitudes toward sexuality. Here, Ted's remarks reveal his hope that Marian will violate social/class tradition and either marry him or keep him as lover after her marriage to Trimingham. Still, that Ted rejects the idea of meeting Marian the next day but asks Leo to tell Marian that Friday "at half-past five, same as usual" is "good" suggests a kind of healthy balance in the relationship, a partnership where Ted is not completely overwhelmed by Marian's dictates (348–349).

The following scene in the script, partially omitted in the film, suggests that Ted is right in his assumption. Marian's and Leo's conversation begins with her chastising him for being as hard-hearted as the beds are in Brandham Hall, "harder than the ground" (349). Leo responds with a story of a boy he knew who commented that sleeping on the ground made his hips sore, innocently asking if Marian found that. Reiterating that her bed is a hard one, Marian goes on to apologize for being "so nasty to you the other day. I'm not really nasty. I'm a good natured girl, really." Marian's lines parallel Ted's earlier apology for having angrily chased Leo off when he has pushed Ted to tell him about "spooning." It reestablishes Marian's and Leo's closeness, and allows Leo to express his heartfelt concern for Marian's and Ted's happiness. Marian's apology also reflects Losey's understanding of her. As he writes in his notes on the film, Marian is "Beautiful, willful, spoiled, rebellious, *wasted*, because really in a reasonable society she could be quite a useful human being."

A close-up of Leo comments on the impact Marian's apology has on him in the Pinter script, and then he asks "Do [...] soldiers have to sleep on the ground?" (350). His implied sympathy for Ted quickly becomes specific as he blurts out that Hugh has asked Ted to join up and that Ted has said he might. Continuing a series of scenes that reveal how deeply Marian is in love with Ted — her wishing to keep his bloody handkerchief he's used to bandage Leo's wounded knee, her determined battle with her mother to delay the announcement of the engagement, her responses to Ted's success at cricket and singing — she replies here, "No. No he won't, he won't go to the war. I'll see to that. I'll tell Hugh... that it's out of the question. One word would do it" (350). In the film, which now begins to follow the script, Leo's generous response, reflecting a wonderful emotion, beyond jealousy and adolescent infatuation, is: "Why don't you marry Ted?" Marian replies, "I can't... I can't. Can't you see why?" Puzzled, deeply disturbed, Leo then asks "But why... are you marrying Hugh?" And Marian responds "Because I must. I must. I've got to" (350). As Marian softly cries, in the film, Leo first puts his arm around Marian, mature, comforting, and then she embraces him.

Marian's lines economically establish both that she is indeed rebellious, will resist the "social" solution of sending the lower class lover/troublemaker off to war, and that she nonetheless feels trapped by the repressive class system. Her story and Leo's pointedly criticize the sexual morality that is a part of that system. Deeply, even beautifully in love with Ted, she still feels that she cannot violate the class dictates so vehemently represented by her mother. Leo, growing up within an Edwardian ethos that sexual matters are not to be discussed in "polite" company, is so overwrought with adolescent confusion that his part in Marian's downfall destroys his life. In sum, Losey and Pinter imply that the aristocratic/Edwardian hypocrisy about sexual matters coupled with the rigid class system's attitudes toward marriage destroy the potential happiness of Marian, Ted, and Leo, or at least doom their rebellious choices. Marian's decision that she must marry Trimingham implies that the marriage is arranged to save the family fortunes. Ironically, of course, it does not. And her marriage to Trimingham will be a hollow one, like that of her parents. Much as in Lawrence, Trimingham is labeled as sexually weak, physically flawed by his culture, blond, slim, lacking in passion, orderly to the point of sterility. In contrast, Ted is dark, physically

imposing, earthy, associated with the birth and death cycle of farmyard animals and harvests, dangerous at bat, dangerous with his gun, and a “lady-killer.”

At one of the most sensitive stages of adolescence, Leo is attracted to both men, but finally sides with Ted. Given his culture, he wishes to deny sexuality, to remain “childish,” but with that thermometer rising throughout the summer, he is unable to do so. The film emphasizes his reticence with Leo’s choice of songs at the celebration after the cricket match where he sings of his wish to be taken to heaven, by angels “Clad in robes of virgin white” (332). Three other scenes explicitly label Leo’s wish to avoid adult sexuality, but simultaneously suggest his wish to move beyond childhood. In the first instance, upset at the letter’s revelation that Ted and Marian are lovers, Leo asks Ted what has led to his mare’s pregnancy. When Ted resists telling him, embarrassed, the boy asks if one could “marry someone and never do... whatever it is?” His wish to avoid sexuality clear, Leo still strikes a bargain with Ted that he will continue being postman in exchange for Ted’s telling him later about “spooning” (323).

In the next scene with Ted, the farmer is sympathetic to Leo’s pain at Marian’s hands, but tries to avoid Leo’s questions by suggesting that sex education is a job for Leo’s dad. Telling Ted that his father is dead, Leo concludes, “And I’m quite sure he never did it!” (339). As the kettle boils, Leo is still desperate to know, pelting Ted with questions: “What is lover-like? [...] What is a lover? What does a lover do? Are you a lover? What do you do? You know. I know you know. And I won’t take any more messages for you unless you tell me!” (340). In a third scene, after he’s written to his mother, he also seeks to explore further, going into the smoking room, inquiring about how to live his life from the adults whom he seeks out, on one level, to take the place of his dead father. The scene is labeled by Maudsley’s questions about whether Trimmingham has been showing Leo the pictures. In the film, Leo looks at the risqué paintings and turns away. That Leo has refused Trimmingham’s offer of a cigar carries the obvious connotations, lightly rendered. His awkward, naive entry into the “man’s realm” of the smoking room implies that he is not ready for the maturity that is being thrust upon him but still hungers for it. At the same time, the image of the smoking room as a slightly bawdy retreat criticizes this culture’s attitudes toward sexuality.

The most negative image of sexuality in the film is reflected in the competition between Mrs Maudsley and Marian. The script and film suggest that Mrs Maudsley’s marriage is a cold one, that she is jealous of Marian’s vitality and beauty, and frightened that Marian may overstep her bounds and venture into forbidden areas. From the beginning, Mrs Maudsley tries to guard Marian to save her for Hugh. Scenes where she attempts to prevent Marian from shopping with Leo until after Hugh’s arrival, where she suspiciously eyes Marian’s responses to Ted during the cricket game and the following celebration, where she bitterly urges Marian to get on with shopping for her trousseau, and where she almost servilely defers to Hugh about what to do during a typical day at the country house all point us in this direction. Pushed over the brink by Marian’s not returning in the carriage from her supposed visit to Nanny Robson, the brittle woman erupts with Leo into the night in spite of her husband’s passionate outcry, “Madeline!,” the first time we hear him utter her name as he tries to block her from discovering Marian at what they all know she is doing. Mrs Maudsley’s unfeeling domination of Leo in the letter scene, the source of his overwhelming guilt, and her equally horrific dragging him to see Marian and Ted’s making love, are the two most immoral acts in the film, reflective of the negative sexual attitudes that make Leo’s maturation so difficult.

The most positive images of sexuality and its potential ironically are of both Ted and Leo. The basically healthy portrait of Ted’s earthiness, of his vitality, include some comment on sexuality’s dangers, of course, but this quality in Ted is what attracts Leo. Most critics concentrate on Leo’s naive vulnerability, but novel, script and film suggest his potential for a full life. The film and script repeatedly emphasize the simultaneity of the adolescent urge to explore and to retreat, to remain a child and to become a man. Before his arrival at Brandham

Hall, Leo has managed to overcome adversity from his school fellows. The two-edged image of his casting a spell on them suggests that he has taken forceful action against their attempts to dominate him and also that his wish to rely on “magic” is juvenile, childish. The wish to dominate the fates is both impossible to fulfill and infantile at its root. When Marian takes Leo shopping for his new outfit, and briefly wishes that she had such power, Leo says that magic is something he uses only at school, implying that he has left childish things behind. His resentment at dinner at Marcus’s having told the tale emphasizes that suggestion. The scene also establishes that Marcus tells his mother confidences he should keep, implicitly including Leo’s claim to Marcus that he knows Marian’s whereabouts.

Under duress, though, Leo returns to his dependence on magic. Dismayed that his mother will not let him leave early, and, more importantly, horrified at Marian’s unhappiness, he ventures out into the night to destroy the “Belladonna” with a spell. Again, imagistically the action is *both* courageous *and* suggests a wish to escape the difficulties of an adult world. In the film, in addition to the script’s “Delenda est Belladonna,” Leo says “Die, die, all evil.” Leo would like to return to innocence, to naïveté, to a world before the fall, and he would also like to destroy the poison that threatens those he loves. Ironically, the literal translation of the Latin is “Destroy the Beautiful Lady.” The ambiguous phrase both reflects the culture’s identifying female sexuality as dangerous and suggests that Leo’s attempt to save Marian contributes to the destruction of her potential happiness.

The film and the script include numerous images of Leo’s potential for a full life, implying that were it not for these events he would grow beyond naive adolescent fear and infatuation. His early crush on Marian actually reflects a positive stage in the development of adolescent sexuality. The scene where Leo offers Marian his dry bathing suit to protect her dress from the dampness of her hair is achingly right. It captures both Leo’s loving attention to “other” and Marian’s complex flirtation. For Leo, the image suggests a readiness to move beyond the dependence on “mother,” an intermediate stage, a sexual fascination with a “safe” object that will serve, in normal development, as a precursor to a healthful sexual relatedness. For Marian, this and similar images suggest that she genuinely likes Leo, grows to care for him deeply, and at the same time wishes to take advantage of him, to use him for her own purposes, and to glory in her power over him. The scene is a telling image of adolescent infatuation and a metaphor for much of what passes as mature love as well.

And Leo does grow beyond that initial infatuation as he wrestles with newly complex moral dilemmas. He is courageously exploring his environs on his own, creatively rounding out his personality. Marcus sick with the measles, Leo strikes out for territory foreign to his urban, middle-class background — the Hall and its aristocratic intricacies, its abandoned outhouses, and, perhaps most importantly, the surrounding fields and farms. His exploration of Ted’s farm, beginning with his leap down the haystack, imagistically suggests a type of courage, a freeing from a variety of constraints. As we’ve seen, the film suggests that Leo’s choice to abandon that courage springs from his inability to confront his own guilt in the matter of the letter, his betrayal, more than from his sudden confrontation with sexuality.

In *The Courage to Be*, Christian existentialist Paul Tillich writes that

Courage is the self-affirmation of being in spite of the fact of nonbeing. It is the act of the individual self in taking the anxiety of nonbeing upon itself by affirming itself either as part of an embracing whole or in its individual selfhood. Courage always includes a risk, it is always threatened by nonbeing, whether the risk of losing oneself and becoming a thing within the whole of things or of losing one’s world in an empty self-relatedness. (155)

Tillich’s definition of such loss captures what has happened to Leo, his retreat into “an empty self-relatedness.” The threat of “nonbeing” is rooted in Leo’s refusal to confront his own guilt for so many years. Ironically, trying to avoid that threat leads to an even more profound abandonment of life, of the “courage to be.” As Tillich goes on to write, emblematically,

[Luther] experienced the connection between the anxiety of guilt and the anxiety of fate. It is the uneasy conscience which produces innumerable irrational fears in daily life [...]. Therefore conquest of the anxiety of guilt is also conquest of the anxiety of fate. The courage of confidence takes the anxiety of fate as well as the anxiety of guilt unto itself. It says "in spite of" to both of them. (167)

I'll limit myself to noting just briefly the similarity of Luther's experience of encountering the devil in the privy to Leo's experience of a profound guilt in the lavatory after his betrayal at the hands of Mrs Maudsley. More importantly, in Pinter's script and in Hartley's novel, Leo's courageous decision to confront his guilt and to move beyond it, to once more serve in the full and rich and ambiguous experience of humankind, to recognize both the beauty and the horror of Ted's and Marian's love, to carry the message, represents an embracing of life in spite of its dangers and its limitations. That's an image of courage that's increasingly central in the Pinter canon. And, as Charles Champlain observes, the social levels of the film increase the reverberations of that courageous act: "The excitement of 'The Go-Between' is in fact the tension between the lustrous surfaces and the awareness of rumbling changes beneath, the coming assaults not only on the cruelties of class but the hypocrisies surrounding love and sex." That Leo, in novel and script, manages such a life-affirming decision, resulting in renewed hope for human relatedness and in the aesthetic creation of the novel itself, in his writing books rather than cataloging those of others, in this broader context represents a guarded optimism about the possibility of our confronting our own lives; and that includes the possibilities inherent in our own culture's confronting its rich past, both its horrors and its wonders.

Much of the richness and success of the film springs from Pinter's script. In an early letter, he wrote to a friend: "Of course I recognize forms and employ them, or, rather, go to meet them — a continuous voyage, and my seed within them, they expand or snap. There is no such thing as a static mode of expression. There is no form which does not take alteration with one artist's approach" (Esslin 247). Pinter's script audaciously expands the form of the cinema. The various notes and manuscript revisions in the Pinter Archives at the British Library clarify that process, a magical adventure that parallels Leo's own in wondrous ways.⁴

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⁴ My sincere thanks, as well, to Sally Brown, Curator of Modern Literary Manuscripts at the British Library, and to her generous staff, who guided me through the Pinter Archive.

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