

Harold Pinter:

An Inventory of His Collection at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center

Descriptive Summary

Creator:	Pinter, Harold, 1930-
Title:	Harold Pinter Collection
Dates:	1960-1980
Extent:	2 boxes (.83 linear feet)
Abstract:	This collection consists primarily of scripts of Pinter's radio plays, stage plays, and screenplays.
Call Number:	Manuscript Collection MS-03267
Language:	English.
Access	Open for research

Administrative Information

Acquisition	Purchases, 1969, 1981, 1995 (R4957, R9261, R13540)
Processed by	Katherine Mosley, 1999
Repository:	Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin

Biographical Sketch

One of England's most important playwrights, Harold Pinter was born in Hackney, near the East End of London, on October 10, 1930. The son of tailor Hyman "Jack" Pinter and Frances Mann Pinter, he grew up in a working class environment. While attending Hackney Downs Grammar School, he became interested in acting and participated in school productions, and he also began writing essays and poetry. In 1948 Pinter was admitted to the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, but he left after two terms. From then until 1958 he worked as an actor, using the name David Baron from 1954 to 1958. He acted in BBC radio programs, attended the Central School of Speech and Drama (1951), toured Ireland with Anew McMaster's Shakespearean repertory company for 18 months, and then worked in various other repertory companies, including Donald Wolfit's Shakespearean company.

During that time, Pinter continued to write poetry and short prose pieces; his poetry was first published in *Poetry London* in 1950 under the pseudonym Harold Pinta. In 1957 Pinter was asked to write a play for the drama department at Bristol University, and in four days he wrote *The Room*, which was very well received and was entered in the *Sunday Times* student drama festival. A favorable review of that play led Michael Codron to produce Pinter's next play, *The Birthday Party*, which was not successful and closed after a week's time. However, his second full-length play, *The Caretaker* (1960), received critical acclaim. A prolific writer, Pinter went on to write numerous radio plays, television plays, and short plays, as well as full-length plays, for the stage. *A Slight Ache* (1959), which had been commissioned by the BBC and was later adapted for the stage, gained him the attention of a broader public. From then on, his reputation grew until he became known as one of the most influential and important dramatists of post-war England, responsible for the creation of two new dramatic terms, "Pinteresque" (defining his unique style) and "Pinter pause" (referring to his use of meaningful silences). *The Homecoming* (1965) is widely considered Pinter's best and most important play, but his other full-length plays, such as *Old Times* (1971) and *Betrayal* (1978), have also been significant. In addition to his stage and radio plays, Pinter has written screenplays, including *The Servant* (1962), *Accident* (1967), *The Go-Between* (1971), *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1981), *Turtle Diary* (1985), *The Trial* (1989), and *The Handmaid's Tale* (1990), among others. Pinter did not abandon his interest in poetry; besides publishing several volumes of poetry, he has also edited anthologies of poetry, including *Ninety-Nine Poems in Translation* (1994).

Pinter is an accomplished director and has directed productions of his own plays and others; he served as Associate Director at the National Theatre from 1973 until 1983.

Pinter has been married twice: first to actress Vivien Merchant (1956-80), with whom he had one son, and second to author Lady Antonia Fraser (1980-).

Sources

More information about Harold Pinter and his work may be found in the following sources:

Contemporary Authors, New Revision Series, volume 65, (Detroit: Gale Research Co., 1981-)

Dictionary of Literary Biography, volume 13, (Detroit, Mich.: Gale Research Co., 1982)

International Dictionary of Theatre, volume 2 (Chicago: St. James Press, 1992-96).

Scope and Contents

The Harold Pinter collection consists primarily of scripts of his radio plays, stage plays, and screenplays, dating from 1960 to 1980. In addition, there is one holograph letter from Pinter to Jacob Schwartz and one holograph and two typed letters to Schwartz' wife, Anita Sharp Bolster.

The scripts are all mimeograph or photocopy typescripts without any holograph notes, with the exception of *The Last Tycoon*, which has annotations by an unknown person, and *The Lover*, with a few annotations probably made by the costume designer. Material relating to the first New York production of *The Birthday Party* in 1967 includes review clippings, a reprint of a full-page advertisement from the *New York Times*, a letter from a fan to reviewer Henry Hewes, and notes about the play by unknown persons. Scripts for other New York productions include those for the Eastside Playhouse's productions of *The Basement* and *The Tea Party*, and Cherry Lane Theatre's production of *The Lover*. With Joseph Losey and Barbara Bray, Pinter wrote a screenplay adaptation of Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu* which was never filmed but was published as *The Proust Screenplay* in 1977; two typescripts of that work are present. *Voices in the Air*, a BBC Radio Third Programme which included Pinter's "That's All" and "Applicant," is represented by a complete script containing short plays and music by such other authors as David Climie, Donald Cotton, John Betjeman, Michael Flanders (*Trunk Call*), Antony Hopkins, Paul McDowell, N. F. Simpson (*Gladly Otherwise*), Piers Stephens, Donald Swann, and Sandy Wilson.

Related Material

Other materials at the HRHRC by or relating to Harold Pinter may be found in the David Hare, London Magazine, New Departures, Peter Owen, and Tom Stoppard collections.

Index Terms

Correspondents

Argabright, Betty L.

Bolster, Anita Sharp

Hewes, Henry

Schwartz, Jacob

Subjects

Dramatists, English

Poets, English

Screenwriters--England

Document Types

Screenplays

Scripts

box 1 folder 1 Letters to Jacob Schwartz and Anita Sharp Bolster, 1960, 1962, 1968

box 1 folder 2 *Accident* (screenplay adaptation of the novel by Nicholas Mosley) 'Dialogue and Continuity Release Script,' bound typescript, nd

box 1 folder 3 *The Basement*, bound typescript, [1968]

The Birthday Party

Bound typescript, [1967]

box 1 folder 4

Review clippings, advertisement*, notes by unknown persons, letter from Betty L. Argabright to reviewer Henry Hewes, 1967 (*removed to oversize flat files)

**folder
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box 1 folder 6 *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (screenplay adaptation of the novel by John Fowles), typescript, 3 Nov. 1979, with revision pages, 22 April 1980

box 1 folder 7 *The Last Tycoon* (screenplay adaptation of the novel by F. Scott Fitzgerald), bound typescript with holograph annotations by unknown person, 11 Aug. 1975, with revision pages 16-23 Oct. 1975

box 1 folder 8 *The Lover*, bound typescript, [1964]

box 1 folder 9 *A Night Out* (radio play), bound typescript, in Italian and English, [1961]

box 2 folder 1 *No-Man's Land*, bound typescript, nd

A la recherche du temps perdu [*The Proust Screenplay*] (screenplay adaptation of the novel by Marcel Proust, with the collaboration of Joseph Losey and Barbara Bray)

Bound typescript of French translation by Bray, nd

**box 2
folder 2**

Bound typescript, [1972]

folder 3

box 2 folder 4 *The Servant* (screenplay adaptation of the book by Robin Maugham),
dialogue/continuity typescript, [1963]

box 2 folder 5 *Silence*, bound typescript, [1969]

box 2 folder 6 *Tea Party*, bound typescript, [1968]

box 2 folder 7 *Voices in the Air* (BBC Radio Third Programme, devised and produced by Douglas
Cleverdon, with two short dialogues, "That's All" and "Applicant," by Pinter), typescript, [1960]