

FOLLOW THE YELLOW BRICK ROAD

A Study of the Work of Dennis Potter

by

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Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the degree of PhD
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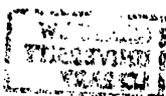
ABSTRACT

This thesis represents the first full-length academic study of the work of the late television playwright, Dennis Potter.

Drawing upon a wealth of primary research, including unpublished Potter scripts, interviews with leading film and television practitioners, as well as a special interview with the writer himself, it examines the entire body of Potter's work, with a view to showing a consistency and progression of authorial themes. On this basis, it argues Potter successfully used the medium of television with the same degree of freedom and complexity as others have used the novel or stage play.

The study is divided into six chapters, plus an Introduction and Conclusion. In addition, a special Epilogue has been written which reviews the extraordinary public events surrounding Potter's death in June 1994. In this way, the entire 'yellow brick road' of the writer's career is both followed and analysed:

Chapter One examines Potter's television apprenticeship in the nineteen sixties as a writer for BBC TV's The Wednesday Play slot.



Chapter Two focuses on Potter's nineteen seventies work for Play for Today and includes discussion of the banning of Brimstone and Treacle in 1976.

Chapter Three is an extended examination of theme and style as it relates to certain key Potter works: in particular, the writer's first novel, Hide and Seek (published 1973).

Chapters Four, Five and Six devote themselves principally to analysis of Potter's most famous television serials: Pennies from Heaven, The Singing Detective and Blackeyes, respectively,

Finally, the Conclusion and Epilogue draw the arguments of the preceding chapters together, advancing the view that all the clues to understanding Potter's final acts as a writer in 1994, lie in the body of past work which it has been the task of this thesis both to excavate and interpret.

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Very lastly, thanks to my parents. It is they who have been the most consistent supporters and encouragers of the project. It is to them that this work is dedicated...

FOR MY MOTHER AND FATHER

CAVENDISH: I dislike strangers. I positively dislike young men. And I actively hate young men who claim to be writing a thesis...

(Blade on the Feather by Dennis Potter, tx. ITV 19.10.80)

INTRODUCTION

0.0. a) 'Follow The Yellow Brick Road': Aims and Intentions

This thesis is about a screenwriter who, if not exactly hateful of the scrutiny of strangers, tended in his life not to welcome it, professing himself to be reclusive by nature. Nevertheless, Dennis Potter was perhaps the most instantly well-known and scrutinised of all British film and television writers. For more than a quarter of a century, millions watched, enjoyed or were outraged by his TV plays and serials. He was celebrated by the 'serious' newspapers as a 'genius', whilst excoriated in the tabloid press, in relation to his sexual themes, as "Dirty Den" and "Television's Mr Filth". As the 'controversial playwright', he featured as the subject of innumerable press and television interviews - each time, always a willing (and outspoken) interviewee; a ready source for the good journalistic quote. There thus seemed to be a paradox - a disjunction between the writer's apparent willingness to act as public property and his own professed reclusiveness; his intensely private nature. It is precisely this realm of seeming contradiction - the gap between the private and the public face - which this study will seek to occupy and explore.

Moreover, it is one that becomes readily apparent in relation to criticism of Potter's work. Whilst each new play or serial was always greeted with a flurry of publicity and was much discussed in the press and on TV as the work of a 'major writer', it is significant that right up to his death, little sustained critical attention had been paid to Potter's work in its entirety. Television had conducted its own 'internal' reviews (notably South Bank Show and Arena profiles of the writer), yet aside from the many column inches that Potter generated over the years, no substantial critical assessment of his work ever appeared in print during

his lifetime.² It was almost as if Potter's very omnipresence - his courting of a high press profile; his ability to attract 'controversy' and willingness to act as 'celebrity' author - served as a deliberate means of dampening critical interest in his work, giving the false impression that there was nothing more to say about this 'recluse', he himself having said it all.³

As this study hopes to show in abundance, nothing could be further from the truth. Its project is to demonstrate how for more than a quarter of a century and over nearly fifty works, Potter's career was a conscious attempt to create a self-consistent oeuvre for television, through the weaving of an intricate web of theme and cross-reference from work to work. Behind this enterprise lay a deep desire on the writer's part to demonstrate that far from its alleged ephemerality and domestic conditions of viewing being a handicap, television and its audience could be accorded the same degree of intelligence, 'seriousness' and respect by the practitioner as other cultural forms such as the novel, cinema film or stage play.

If, as subsequent chapters will show, underlying Potter's 'seriousness' about television was a deep desire to leap over cultural hierarchies in order to address the mass (working class) TV audience from which he himself originally came, it can also be seen how such intensity was the private face that motivated the partly reclusive writer to step out into the media limelight, promoting his work to the largest possible audience. Given there is a complexity of 'authorial' themes running through the work, this public-private dichotomy in turn points up how much there is a need for a large-scale study of Potter's work to do what the profusion of individual interviews and articles were unable, by virtue of their very

commodity form, to do during the writer's lifetime - namely, to tease out in extended detail the various thematic links between works; tracing through time, Potter's own personal progression as a television 'author': the private 'yellow brick road' he followed, step by step, for nearly thirty years.

As such a summary indicates, the completion of this research could not be more timely (or even eery). The typically very public events that surrounded Potter's death from cancer in June 1994 mean this long-gestating research project is now able to offer a complete view of Potter's 'yellow brick road', given that the writer's journey along it has sadly ended. Combined with an interpretive reading of 'authorial' themes, one of the other aspects of that journey which the thesis will try to map is the changing industrial conditions of television drama in relation to which the writer had to struggle and adapt. Central here is the tracing of a history of the decline of the television studio play and the corresponding rise of all-film production which increasingly led to bitter creative struggles between the writer and various directors, producers and senior managers in television. In this way, an account of some of the key production aspects of Potter's career - from his early apprenticeship on The Wednesday Play right up to his death in 1994 - may hopefully serve as a paradigm for the rise and fall of a particular tradition of 'authored' drama on British television.

In so doing, the thesis relies heavily on primary sources. As its Bibliography attests, extensive research has been conducted in various archives: all Potter's extant plays were viewed and original unpublished scripts consulted (including those of productions for which videotapes of transmission no longer exist). Transcripts of important Potter

television and radio interviews were collated, together with an extensive array of press clippings and magazine profiles. Many top film and television practitioners who worked with the writer were also sought out and specially interviewed for this project, with the result that the study is able to draw upon a unique record of over twenty first-hand accounts, covering all periods of Potter's life and career. Perhaps most important of all was an interview conducted with the writer himself in 1990 - the only time he ever spoke at length about his work in an academic context. Here, it is important to note the use the study makes of previous press and broadcast interviews with Potter - sometimes in contrast with the writer's stated position on his work in interview. The aim is to suggest not simply a sense of continuity but also a progression over time in the writer's thinking and pronouncements about his own work.⁴

Ultimately, the study is both textual investigation and excavation - an attempt to unearth the thematic continuities over twenty five years of a truly seminal and celebrated television 'author'. As all of this implies, the thesis is principally concerned with an analysis of text and production rather than of audience attitudes and pleasures, though sections of it are devoted to the critical and ratings reception of key Potter works, in acknowledgement of the fact that dramas such as Pennies From Heaven and The Singing Detective were as much social events as texts, with a discernible impact on the national culture. In each case, the object is not so much to conduct a detailed sociological analysis of the reception patterns of Potter's work, as to suggest the effect that the public impact of certain of his works had on the author himself as well as his subsequent career.

At the very outset, however, of such a journey along Potter's own 'yellow brick road', is it even possible to motivate the concept of an 'author' in television ? Surely one must agree with Rosalind Coward that at least in terms of film and television production, all such notions are media constructs - attempts to "hide knowledge... from us... and make us complicit in the belief" that forms of mass communication can in fact be "instruments of personal expression" ?⁵

0.0 (b) TV Auteur ? : Questioning 'Authors' in Television

Certainly, it has become conventional wisdom in media study that television production is an industry - the fruit of collaboration and collective endeavour. Writing in 1987, Rosalind Coward questioned press constructions of Potter as TV auteur, suggesting these belied the industrial nature of the medium. Since film and television presented us with "a complexity of production and division of labour", this, she argued, made the image of "the transparent communication between one author and his or her audience hard to credit".⁶

On closer inspection, however, this 'complexity of production' which Coward sees as rendering invalid notions of authorial expression on television, can be seen to resolve itself into a clear hierarchical system of creative power relations whereby traditionally in British television, the writer was privileged in drama production over other creative personnel (for example, over the director who was often relegated to the secondary role of interpreter or réalisateur of the writer's ideas). Particularly in the realms of the single television play where Potter's reputation as 'author' was first established, prioritization of the writer was paramount - an emphasis and respect which, as John Caughie has argued, derived in large part from British television drama's strong historical and cultural links with the theatre.⁷

In this way, even after television drama evolved from the simple 'live' staging of theatre plays to the mounting of its own original productions, theatrical respect for script and writer remained, being translated into a desire to commission new scripts especially written for the medium. As the outsider commissioned by the broadcasting institution to feed it with original plays, the television playwright very much came to be regarded

as the 'artist' and was given relative creative freedom by the institution to pick his or her theme and express an 'idea' (- though always subject to ultimate veto from senior management, in terms of constantly shifting guidelines of public 'taste', 'decency' or 'offence').⁸

Meanwhile, in terms of their assigned institutional roles, the director and / or producer's task was to function largely as enabler or metteur en scène - realising the script technically in terms of production, whilst at all times endeavouring to facilitate communication between 'author' and audience by staying close to the writer's 'intentions' and remaining faithful to the script.⁹ In turn, it was almost this very 'literary' nature of the single television play which helped to signal its cultural 'seriousness' - its difference from the rest of the evening's schedule and hence the need of the viewing audience to give it a different, closer sort of attention. In the listings guides as well as in their opening titles, television plays were headlined as 'by' the writer - Dennis Potter, David Mercer, Elaine Morgan and so on. This institutional privileging of the writer as 'author' not only determined how the plays were received and reviewed ('as the latest work from' Potter, Mercer and so on), it also typically had important effects on the nature of the productions themselves.

The precedence given to the script meant that directors and actors would often treat the 'serious' TV play as they would a stage drama - heavily rehearsing it; digging into the text in an attempt to extract the 'author's' meanings. With the help of the director, leading actors would often strive to work up a more intense, 'theatrical' performance than they would normally be able to give in the more popular TV serials and series where generic as well as tighter budgetary constraints made pressures on

rehearsal time that much greater. In this aim, the performers were frequently aided by the predominantly studio-bound settings which were a feature of most British television plays up until the early nineteen eighties. With its wholly artificial lighting and boxed sets, the studio provided a far more 'theatrical' environment for actors and directors (most of whom were recruited to television from the stage) than the alternative production method of location filming. Originally the result of production necessity, the studio play had become, by the nineteen sixties and seventies, its own raison d'être, surviving in the schedules despite the increased technical availability of film stock. Encouraged particularly at the BBC where senior management were keen that investment in studio space be put to good use (as well as, implicitly, that the theatrical connection of the 'well-made' play be preserved), the persistence of the studio TV play further reinforced the pre-eminence of the writer in the production process. With amounts of external location filming often strictly rationed, the confined domestic interiors of studio drama inevitably helped focus attention on the writer's themes and dialogue, as well as on 'theatrical' virtues of individual performance and character interaction.¹⁰

It is for reasons such as these that John Caughie has suggested the privilege given to writers and their ideas helps explain "the astonishing formal conservatism" which marked mainstream single play production from the mid fifties to the early eighties. Despite sporadic attacks from television 'dissidents' such as Troy Kennedy Martin and John McGrath, the connection between the theatre and the single play not only lingered on in terms of a cross-over of personnel from one to the other but according to Caughie in "a resistance to theorisation" as well as experimentation in form. It was for this reason he concluded in 1980

that the 'theatrical' privilege given to the writers of TV plays "was and is regressive".¹¹

On the other hand, with the hindsight of a decade and more in which the single play has been almost completely superseded by the growth of television film production, together with a resulting enhancement in the status of the director, the privileging of the writer which uniformly used to pertain in single drama production can now be seen to have had its own advantages and 'progressive' logic. Not simply a regressive throwback to the theatre, the single play, particularly at the BBC, had developed its own distinctive place in the television schedules by the sixties and seventies - becoming a kind of weekly free space on TV for novelty and experimentation, in addition to acting as a platform for new writing as well as new directing talent.¹² As Caughie acknowledged in 1980, under the titles first of The Wednesday Play and then Play for Today, the BBC-1 single play slot came to function as some kind of 'cutting edge' for television, extending not only formal boundaries but what could be said and more crucially, shown on television.¹³ Tolerated and indeed tacitly encouraged by senior BBC management, the watchwords for The Wednesday Play and Play for Today were 'provocativeness' and 'controversy' - symptoms not only of an expressed desire by practitioners to challenge contemporary mores but also part of an institutional attempt to win large audiences for the single play.¹⁴

In this aim, one of the strategies of the original architect of The Wednesday Play, BBC Head of TV Drama, Sydney Newman, was to encourage, through the foundation of a story editor system, the recruitment of as many new writers to television as possible. Following on from his successful policy at ABC's Armchair Theatre, the reason for the

prioritisation of new writers was clear. Whilst with new directors there was the time and expense of training, new writers were the quickest and cheapest route of fulfilling the play slot's aim of trying to reflect life at the 'cutting edge' of social change in contemporary Britain.¹⁵ Drawn from a variety of different backgrounds, writers came to be privileged under Newman's story editor system because unlike directors, they were neither members of staff nor regular free-lancers. Outsiders to the broadcasting institution, they fitted in with the BBC's public service ethos of giving voice to a range of opinions and statements which otherwise could not or would not receive airtime. Single play writers had the advantage of being able to express 'controversial' views or radical opinions which the institution and its own staff, operating under codes of political 'balance', could never allow to be aired uncritically in any other television form. The 'authored' single play thus fulfilled certain useful 'progressive' functions in the television landscape of the sixties and seventies, bringing to it a freshness, energy and above all element of personal address which could seldom manifest itself in the more 'machine-made', production line ethos of popular drama series and serials.

It was this sense of the BBC single play as a special space for the expression of the individual, 'dissident' or questioning voice which Potter was able to exploit as one of the new television playwrights recruited to The Wednesday Play in the mid sixties. (: S 0.1; 1.0 a) From his beginnings on The Wednesday Play right through to the nineteen eighties, he was able to embark upon the self-conscious construction of a television oeuvre of linked 'authorial' themes because he knew that as a result of the single play's privileging of the writer, his scripts would never be rewritten or tampered with by the director but always faithfully

rendered in terms, invariably, of a television studio production.'⁶ In this regard, he was by no means unique. The system of single play production which pertained at the BBC in the sixties and seventies implicitly encouraged the writer to think of him or herself as self-expressive artist. Where Potter stood out was that in keeping with his own aspirations, he took such notions much further than any previous television writer had done - exploiting the privileged status of the writer which was built in to the system in order to create 'authored' thematic and stylistic continuities not only within a particular work but as his writing career progressed, across a large body of work as well.

Hence in contrast to Coward's critiques of Potter as television 'author', individual thematic and stylistic continuities can be shown to exist and as the rest of this study will attempt to trace in detail, are readable across the range and variety of Potter's writing for the medium. The reason that this should be so is not so much the result of any attempt by television to 'hide knowledge' of the collective nature of production from its audience, as the fact that in the period of the sixties and seventies when Potter first began to carve out a reputation for himself as a television playwright, writers and their ideas were privileged in single drama production over all other aspects. Far from Coward's questioning of the 'author' in television, 'questioning' authors like Potter were indeed able to exist at that time because the very structures of British television allowed and encouraged them to do so.

0.1) 'First Steps': Outline of the Early Life and Career of Dennis Potter

THE ARTIST

Beauty is like the transcendent God
whom earthly pilgrims never attain ...
... There lies the purpose and the tragedy
of the artist who seeks mastery
Pity him walking an endless road
like a pilgrim to a holy city ...'⁷

This poem, penned by Potter when he was just eighteen years old and still at grammar school, provides a quite definitive summary of his later writing career - in particular, his religious sense of authorship. The artist is characterised as 'the pilgrim' in search of 'a holy city': a 'transcendent God' he knows he is destined never to reach but for Whom he must keep striving. As subsequent chapters will argue, the progression of Potter's work is precisely that of a growing preoccupation with religious or 'spiritual' themes. Moreover, as echoed by the title of his 1972 play, Follow The Yellow Brick Road, the image of life as a journey, with a shape and an ultimate destination - an 'endless road' along which the artist must keep travelling - was one Potter was frequently to evoke in his later writing career.'⁸

Thus what is striking (and slightly unnerving) is why at eighteen, in making his 'first steps' along that road, the young Potter should be thinking in such terms, when, as is widely known in terms of biographical fact, he never consciously set out to be a writer. Instead, progressing on to Oxford to study politics, philosophy and economics, it was the dream of entering the hard-nosed world of politics which consumed him in early adulthood. What the early poem suggests is that while at this time professing himself to be an atheist, underlying his "intensely political nature" was a religious sensibility - a personality formed by Biblical teaching and imagery.'⁹ Moreover, as the poem also attests, that

religious background had already moulded the distinctive outlook which would come to mark the later plays. Thus the importance of Potter's early life to the subsequent work cannot be overstated. He himself once suggested that everything in his writing stemmed from his first fourteen years.²⁰ If this was an exaggeration, it was only a slight one. As Philip Purser has noted, with Potter, in terms of the upbringing that first shaped him, "time and place and community conspired together with unusual attention to detail"²¹:

Dennis Christopher George Potter was born on May 17 1935 in the village of Joyford Hill, off Berry Hill, deep in the Forest of Dean. He was the eldest son of a coalminer. In many ways, these facts alone reveal a lot about him. As he himself put it, the Forest of Dean of his childhood was one of the most remote inward-looking districts of England, heaving up "in half-hidden layers of grey and green between two rivers", the Severn and the Wye.²² Bounded by the distant prospect of the Welsh mountains to the West and the 'blue hills' of the Malverns to the North, the Forest was its own little enclosed world of villages scattered amongst woods and fields which were reachable only by steep and narrow country roads.²³ To a child, it was a fairy tale realm yet also, as Potter attested in interview, a kind of 'Holy Land'. Being green and hilly and grey, the topography of the Forest seemed to him as a boy to be Biblical - no different from any of the illustrations he had seen of the landscape of the Bible. Along with the pronounced rural dialect of the inhabitants, with their archaic use of 'thees' and 'thous', just as in the King James Bible, the very vividness and isolation of the Forest seemed to make it "that landscape": the land the scriptures depicted.²⁴

As this suggests, Potter's upbringing was one steeped in the Bible. The remoteness of the Forest fostered a strong sense of community and one of the ways this was expressed was in terms of a fierce, almost evangelical devotion to religion. While not strictly Puritans, most of the Foresters were non-conformist Christian fundamentalists - chapel-goers who dutifully filed in to cold stone buildings with names like Zion and Salem in order to be ignited, inside, by the hell-fire sermonising of the local preachers. As a child in Berry Hill, Potter attended Salem chapel, a 'free church', twice every Sunday; joining in the hymn-singing from Sankey's Book of Sacred Songs and Solos.

This sense of a tightly-knit community with strong social values expressed itself in other ways too: in village brass bands; rugby football teams; packed and smoky working men's clubs, as well as a fierce sense of English patriotism (particularly vis à vis their Welsh neighbours over the border). Most important was the staunch commitment of the Foresters to socialism and the Labour Movement - a fact hardly surprising, given that the main industry of the Forest during Potter's childhood was coal-mining.²⁵

In many ways, the rest of Potter's early life and career can be summed up as a process of opening out - of being forced to open out - from this tight-knit closeness, into a world less familiar and secure than that which he had first come to know and love. The first signs of this came with the outbreak of World War II, as Prisoner of War Camps were built in the Forest - one for German; the other for Italian prisoners.²⁶ Meanwhile, as a child in the forties, the local village school became a principal focus of the young Potter's life. In interview, he stated he was "cursed" with having a very high I.Q. which marked him out as

different in the eyes of the teachers and his fellow pupils, in a way "that no working class schoolboy wants to be different".²⁷ Not only did such "complicity with those who made the chalk squeak on the blackboard" lead to bullying in the playground, it also meant that when the other children played in the Forest, the clever child would be left to climb trees on his own.²⁸

This sense of separation was further compounded when, in 1945, Potter was forced to leave his beloved Forest for the first protracted length of time, as part of an ill-fated attempt by his father to give up coal-mining. Originally a Londoner, his mother took the family to stay with her relatives in Hammersmith at the very end of the war. The traumatic effect this sudden wrench from the Forest had on her sensitive son cannot be overstated. It comes through strongly in his 1986 work, The Singing Detective (: § 5.3 (c)). For a child who had only known trees and fields, the strange new world of the metropolis - with its noise, smoke and dank Underground system - was literally an alienating experience: a kind of Hell.²⁹ After nine unsuccessful months, the family returned to the Forest but four years later they moved to London permanently "as a whole attempt to leave the pit and everything".³⁰ Already separated from most of his original class-mates in the village school, by virtue of passing the 11-plus exam, Potter now found himself switching schools from Coleford Grammar in the Forest to St Clement Danes, in West London.

It was there that his ode to "The Artist" appeared in an issue of the school magazine. As the evidence of these magazines suggest, Potter was able to be an academic success at St Clement Danes, unhindered by the guilt of being a clever 'scholarship boy' within a rural environment. He

acted in school plays and wrote articles for the school magazine - in one issue, editing its literary pages. In his final year in 1953, he won a private scholarship to study economics at the University of London but chose instead to take up a state one for P.P.E. at New College, Oxford in 1955.³¹

In between, however, in common with all the males of his generation, he had two years compulsory National Service to do. Considered a bright squaddie, Potter found himself posted to the War Office in Whitehall where, at the height of the Cold War, he served as a Russian language clerk within the lower echelons of military intelligence (M.I.3) (: § 2.1). It was during this period he met Kenith Trodd - the man who would later produce many of his best known TV works, such as Pennies From Heaven and the spy drama Blade on the Feather (: § 4.1; 5.0). From similar working class and religious backgrounds, the two became firm friends: both receiving postings to the War Office; both becoming even more politicised in terms of a mutual commitment to the Left, as a result of witnessing at first hand the Cold War antics of the upper-class majors and colonels under whom they served.³²

With political attitudes hardened, both moved onto Oxford. By this period, the university was entering a state of unprecedented political ferment, largely due to post-war reforms in education which had enabled far greater numbers of students from working class homes to progress on to higher education, via the grammar schools, than had ever been the case before.³³ Just as Potter and Trodd arrived at Oxford, working class students had begun to come under the media spotlight, with national interest focused on the figure of the 'scholarship boy' as a symbol of an old class order supposedly giving way to a new, more meritocratic

'classlessness'. All of a sudden, working class students found themselves thrust in front of microphones as spokesmen for a new, post-war 'Welfare State' generation. Sensing themselves to be on the ascendancy, the Oxford network of working class students into which Potter and Trodd quickly assimilated became more and more outspoken of the established political and social order. As Roger Smith, a friend and contemporary of both at Oxford, recalls, what gave this grouping their voice was the impact of John Osborne's Look Back in Anger, in the wake of its première performance at the Royal Court in May 1956. As promulgated by the press to encapsulate the mood of a generation deemed to be in rebellion against a country riddled with class and still clinging to Imperial delusions, the phrase, 'angry young man', quickly became attached to the Oxford 'scholarship boys'. It served both as a media tag from without and a convenient focus for the expression of many of the real disaffections with fifties British life which that group undoubtedly felt.³⁴

With Oxford seldom out of the press, flaunting your working-class credentials and your 'angriness' was thus a valuable means of getting noticed. As Potter admitted much later, "It was a time when being working class was fashionable and I exploited it". Carrying the "class war" before him "like a banner", he threw himself into the general mêlée of student life, rising quickly to become one of the most prominent of Oxford 'angries': Chairman of the Labour Club; frequent paper speaker at the Oxford Union; lead in various university dramatic productions and finally, editor of the distinguished undergraduate magazine, Isis.³⁵ Thus far from the plight of the working class 'scholarship boy' at Oxford being the anxious and forlorn one Potter would later portray in Stand Up, Nigel Barton, for him, as for many of that 'angry' Oxford generation,

ironically it really was the case, in Harold MacMillan's famous phrase of the period, that they "had never had it so good"³⁶ (: § 1.1).

The sense of anxiety Potter would later communicate in Stand Up thus came not from Oxford life itself but from another source. As he himself made clear at the time, it arose from a sense of guilt over the far less privileged lives family and friends were leading back home. In 1958, he wrote that the working class undergraduate "cannot stomach the two languages that divide up the year, the torn loyalties and perpetual adjustments, the huge chasm between the classes."³⁷

These words are taken from Potter's first ever article to be published nationally - the ironically titled, "Base Ingratitude", which appeared in the New Statesman in May 1958, during the term in which he edited Isis. It would lead to even greater opportunities that summer to protest against class in personal terms. That same month, Potter was invited on to BBC Radio to give 'a view of Oxford from Isis' - a broadcast which was quickly followed up by an invitation to appear on TV.³⁸ In the course of preparing a series of documentaries for BBC TV on social class in Britain, entitled Does Class Matter?, the Labour M.P., Christopher Mayhew, invited Potter to appear on Programme Two - to discuss 'Class in Private Life'. Just as with his New Statesman article, the student's function was to talk personally about the 'torn loyalties and perpetual adjustments' of being working class and yet at Oxford.³⁹

The interview was filmed in his rooms at New College, Oxford. This was Potter's first ever television appearance and he used it as an opportunity to discuss class in frank and personal terms. Especially significant was his admission of how class had affected relations with his family,

particularly with his father who was now obliged to communicate with him second-hand, via his mother, almost "with a kind of contempt".⁴⁰ What is significant is that in Potter's famous 1965 play, Stand Up Nigel Barton, the central protagonist, Barton, gives a highly similar TV interview on class which he is later obliged to watch at home with his mother and coalminer father - all the time with a growing sense of guilt and betrayal (: S 1.1). As he confesses to his girlfriend in the play, in talking so intimately about his family, he used them: "I was acting it up a bit, over-dramatizing. I wouldn't mind a job on the old telly..."⁴¹ Sitting at home with his parents, Nigel hears himself say on TV: "Yes. Class does matter to me. It matters intensely... I even find my own father looking at me oddly sometimes, waiting to pounce on some remark, some expression in my face."⁴²

In the play, Nigel's confession that 'class does matter' hurts his miner father and exacerbates family tensions. In reality, according to Potter, the Does Class Matter ? interview only served to strengthen family relations.⁴³ Like Barton, however, it did have negative consequences for him. He later wrote of the "momentary bewilderment" on his father's face when, on the following Sunday, Reynold's News led with the headline: "Miner's Son at Oxford Ashamed Of Home. The Boy Who Kept His Father Secret".⁴⁴ Moreover, private correspondence between Potter and Mayhew in the wake of the interview reveals that reaction to the student's TV appearance amongst villagers in the Forest of Dean was by no means complimentary. His father received jibes at work whilst Potter himself suddenly and mysteriously became quite ill. Prefiguring his later development of psoriatic arthropathy (a disease that is partially linked to stress), he confessed to Mayhew in 1958, "I cannot seem to shake off

my ill-health... I think it is these things [the interview; the criticisms] that have set me back - if that doesn't sound too ridiculous..."⁴⁵

Nevertheless the experience of Does Class Matter ? did not deter him in the years following from making something of a career out of broaching the sensitive subject of class in private life. As is well known, when he came down from Oxford in 1959, Potter was offered a general traineeship with the BBC. What his correspondence with Mayhew reveals, however, is that this was on the specific instruction of the then Director-General of the BBC, Sir Ian Jacob, who, immediately after seeing Potter's TV interview, recommended that he be taken on staff.⁴⁶ As with the fictional Nigel Barton, it was precisely the quality of Potter's performance that landed him 'a job on the old telly'.

With a pedigree in politics and student journalism, Potter was assigned to the Television 'Talks' Department at Lime Grove where he was attached to various of its programmes in order to learn at first hand about television production and technique. He worked as an assistant to Robin Day on Panorama, watched how Tonight was put together and then, in the winter of 1959-60, was assigned to work with Denis Mitchell - one of the BBC's most distinguished and innovative documentary film-makers.⁴⁷ This was significant because Mitchell's highly 'authored', pioneering style, which married recordings of real 'people talking' with impressionistic images of their environment (to give a stream-of-consciousness effect he called 'Think-Tape'), did not have to conform to the requirements of 'objectivity' and 'balance' that characterised almost all the rest of the output of BBC 'Talks'.⁴⁸

Certainly, Potter's time with Mitchell was to be fruitful and decisive to his own career. In correspondence shortly before his death in 1990, Mitchell recalled how the young Potter was assigned to him for two or three months in order to learn by direct observation how films were made.⁴⁹ As Potter has recalled, this was his first encounter with film-making, as opposed to television cameras in the studio, and the whole process of how 'reality' could be manipulated on film (particularly in the editing suite) fascinated him.⁵⁰ If not actually stemming from this period, his later explorations in television plays of the relationship between reality and illusion; his 'non-naturalistic' interest in cross-cutting between objective and subjective versions of events, can at least be related to the experience of watching Mitchell, the 'God-like Artist', reshape the 'reality' of his documentary footage in the editing suite⁵¹

(: § 3.4). The virtue of being an expressive 'author', not a detached reporter; the desire to use television as a medium for tracing the movements of thought; above all, Mitchell's counterpoint style ("the stretch of tension between sound and picture", as Potter has labelled it) - all of these find an echo in the writer's own later work: perhaps most strikingly in Pennies From Heaven's famous concept of counterpointing the optimism of popular songs on the soundtrack with narrative depiction of the painful reality of life in the Great Depression (: § 4.1).⁵²

As Mitchell recalled, however, "Dennis was first and foremost a literary man" - favouring scripts and actors over the other man's preference for the cadences of 'real' people's speech on the soundtrack. Shuttling back and forth between Lime Grove and the BBC's cutting rooms at Ealing, the pair would argue all the way, often talking about the films they would like to make. His old tutor particularly remembered urging his TV apprentice to deal with subjects he knew from his own experience.⁵³ By

the spring of 1960, Potter would get his big chance to do just that. When the assistant head of 'Talks', Grace Wyndham Goldie, had a vacant half hour slot in the June schedules to fill, Potter was invited to make his own documentary film, under the supervision of Mitchell's fellow producer / director in the 'Talks' Department, Anthony de Lotbinière.

The result was his first original work for television: Between Two Rivers, transmitted by BBC TV on 3 June 1960. For his subject, Potter followed Mitchell's advice and turned to the place he knew best - the Forest of Dean. Moreover, his approach had distinct overtones of Richard Hoggart's The Uses of Literacy for his theme was the decline of traditional working class culture in the Forest, in the face of post-war social change and the rise of the consumer society.⁵⁴ His title, Between Two Rivers, described not only the location of the Forest of Dean between the Severn and Wye but also the sense of it caught between old and new worlds. Implicitly, too, it indicated the plight of Potter himself - the working class 'scholarship boy', caught in the chasm between the social classes; torn between home roots and the glittering worlds of Oxford and the BBC.⁵⁵

More an impressionistic rendering of the Forest and its people than a simple documentary description, the film also owed much to Denis Mitchell's style - using editing to counterpoint the thoughts of local people on the soundtrack with carefully selected images of Forest coal-mines, working men's clubs and pubs. These similarities, however, belied one crucial difference. While Mitchell always preferred to let the subjects of his documentaries speak for themselves, the twenty five year old Potter had no such qualms about inserting himself between subject and audience and talking directly to camera; making his opinions and

personality pervasive in Between Two Rivers. Just as with Does Class Matter ?, there seemed to be a strong need for him to speak intimately to the audience; to communicate his sense of a class divide in highly personal terms. Such a decision to ventilate his own feelings directly at the audience was one Potter would later come deeply to regret. Does Class Matter ? may have set tongues wagging in the Forest of Dean but Between Two Rivers created outright hostility. As Potter described it in interview, "Christ, I thought they were going to lynch me..."⁵⁶

The reasons are not difficult to spot from the film itself. Potter stood before the cameras in his home village, telling viewers how, as a student, he had been glad to escape the "drab and untidy" houses of his neighbours into "a far more fertile and richer world" beyond the Forest of Dean. Also, whilst making heavy use of interviews with the Foresters themselves, he would frequently undercut what they had to say. Introducing footage of 'a friend', his voice-over announced that the ambitions of getting on in life which this person was about to express on camera had in fact been "channelled off into mere status-seeking by all the pressures... of our status-ridden society".⁵⁷ Even before the subject himself could be heard on film, Potter's voice-over had already tainted all his hopes and ambitions as that of a 'status-seeker'.

It was in this way that the film aroused deep hostility in Potter's village. As the 'scholarship boy' fresh from Oxford and newly returned with a camera crew in tow, it seemed as if he had pronounced upon and patronised the Foresters, adopting a position of superior knowledge as to what they were and worse, what was good for them. In turn, there is no doubt this experience had a profound effect upon him, colouring the nature of his subsequent career and writing. Looking back nearly ten

years later, he would castigate himself as a 'yob' down from Oxford: "... Saying it's this way and that, drawing lines and hard distinctions, betraying and being cruel and hurting people..."⁵⁸

Underlying the opinionated nature of his voice-over commentary, it had been the strength of his own feelings about his home roots, together with his anxiety about being separate from them, which had caused the problems. Moreover, far from bringing him into a closer relationship with the Foresters, the making of the documentary had merely served to increase his sense of isolation from them. Certainly, Between Two Rivers seems to have engendered in Potter strong feelings of having betrayed his own roots; of being a traitor to his class: themes which would carry on into the later plays. Thus from the evidence, the climax of Stand Up Nigel Barton in which the central protagonist realises he has betrayed his working class roots and his father by appearing on television, seems less a dramatic retelling of a single autobiographical event (Does Class Matter ?) and more a composite - the circumstances of Barton's TV appearance resembling Does Class Matter ?; the virulent reaction of Barton's father more closely in tune with the degree of local hostility which greeted Between Two Rivers. Similarly, as Chapter One will examine more closely in relation to plays such as A Beast with Two Backs and Where The Buffalo Roam, another strong theme that runs through Potter's work of the sixties is that of the outcast, hounded by the local community as a result of others' innate prejudice and desire to persecute those who do not conform (: § 1.1; 1.3) With Between Two Rivers, one seems to find a real-life echo of this theme of a community that threatens those who are 'different'.⁵⁹

If the documentary created feelings of betrayal and guilt, it also taught Potter much about the nature of television. As he summed the experience up in a 1987 interview for Arena:

... Seeing how those scenes with the clapperboard in front of them got turned into that and seeing what was on either side of the camera and wasn't on the film and the way my own voice-over had diminished what this person was saying or what this person was about to say, which was worse, taught me how easy betrayal is, compared to... 'art' which is not concerned with betrayal... 'Art' cannot betray in that sense...⁶⁰

Thus Between Two Rivers taught Potter how, in contrast with 'art' or drama, 'facts' could be 'lies'. The 'reality' of documentaries and current affairs could paradoxically conceal the truth. Far from being the 'window on the world' of fifties and sixties broadcasting mythology, the young Potter learned from the experience of constructing his own film and voice-over commentary, of how it was possible for the truth to be manipulated on television and an audience's view of a represented world distorted. As he put it in 1987: "The process fascinated me and the lies fascinated me and the way in which [Between Two Rivers] failed to deal with what I knew to be there."⁶¹

In retrospect, Potter's work with Denis Mitchell, culminating in the production of his own documentary, can thus be seen as a crucial stepping stone in his development as a writer - beginning his disenchantment with the 'factual' worlds of journalism, politics and current affairs; leading him towards an interest in the other kind of 'truths' of fiction or drama. Certainly, as Chapter Three will explore in detail, the notion of most television as 'lies' seems crucial to his development of a distinctive 'non-naturalistic' dramatic style which consciously seeks to draw the audience's attention to the artifice of television. (: § 3.4) Similarly, the theme of 'facts' as 'lies' is central to a number of key Potter works,

such as his first novel, Hide and Seek and his famous 1986 serial, The Singing Detective. (: § 3.1; 5.3)

Indeed virtually Potter's entire writing career can be viewed almost as an attempt to atone for the damage caused by Between Two Rivers through devoting himself to the very medium, the 'people's medium' of television, on which he felt he had betrayed his own people. If the experience of the documentary taught him how powerful television was and how easy it could be, in the wrong or untutored hands, to distort reality and hurt others, the world of drama and fiction did not carry such heavy consequences because it could not offend in quite the same way ('art cannot betray in that sense...') In Stand Up, Nigel Barton, it allowed Potter to show what was on 'either side of the camera' - the tensions and pressures on a 'scholarship boy' which motivated his television appearance and his burning need to communicate personally with a working class audience. Thus it was only with his third attempt that Potter was finally able to say, in drama, all he had wanted to say about the class divide in his two previous current affairs outings but which the very form of 'factual' programming had prevented him from doing (: § 1.1; Conclusion).

Given his disillusionment with current affairs and eventual switch to writing, it is perhaps telling that the last major assignment of Potter's BBC traineeship involved him not with the world of 'facts' but fiction. From October 1960 to June 1961, he worked on a Sunday afternoon books programme called Bookstand. It was he that proposed the original format to Grace Wyndham Goldie: namely, a programme that would try to introduce the world of books in a way accessible to a mass television audience. If its project of cultural dissemination meshed perfectly with his own need

to reach out to the working class from whom he felt estranged, the way in which Bookstand did this was to prove highly significant for the future direction of his career. As Potter recalled, his suggestion was that instead of relying on the conventional TV format of an interview with an author, the themes of a particular book might be better brought alive if the audience were provided with brief dramatisations of extracts from it.⁶²

In this way, Potter became Bookstand's 'Script Associate' - dramatising scenes from the various books under review each week, which fellow BBC trainee, John McGrath, would then invariably direct. Anticipating his debut as a playwright on The Wednesday Play by five years, these brief dramatisations were very instructive in familiarising Potter with the process of writing scripts for the BBC and the rudiments of constructing dialogue.⁶³

By this time, however, he had been forced to resign his BBC traineeship, after only one of his two years had been completed. This was because he had begun to combine his TV training with writing for the left-wing newspaper, the Daily Herald - a situation which offended BBC strictures that its employees publicly observe political 'balance' at all times. Refusing to give up writing for The Herald, Potter's resignation left him in financial difficulty since he now had a wife and young family to support.⁶⁴ In the meantime, however, whilst working on Bookstand, he had had his own first book published. Its title seemingly an oblique echo of Richard Hoggart's description of post-war consumer society as 'shiny barbarism', The Glittering Coffin was an amalgam of all Potter's views on social class and 'the affluent society' which he had previously expressed on television, radio and in print journalism.⁶⁵ Written quickly in late

1959 to satisfy an offer by Gollancz, it was, as his close friend, Roger Smith, recalls, something of a 'rehash' of all Potter had said before on the subject of class - consciously ticking off its targets in the tone of the 'angry young men' of the day: Oxford; the Conservative Party; advertising and so on.⁶⁶ Nevertheless, being written in frank autobiographical terms, it does provide a unique snapshot of the life and opinions of the young Potter, years before his fame as a television playwright - illustrating once more how deep his need was to speak intimately in a heavily 'authored' mode.⁶⁷

Certainly, it seems Potter used the book opportunity as a means of getting himself noticed (- in one chapter, listing his achievements at Oxford almost like a curriculum vitae).⁶⁸ His reward would come in 1961 when, having left the BBC, he was appointed as a feature writer on the Daily Herald. An ailing left-wing daily, desperate to stem its falling circulation and shake off its thirties 'cloth-cap' image which seemed to be rendering it obsolete in the age of apparent 'affluence', The Herald employed the 'angry young' Potter as part of its strategy to attract a younger, more upwardly mobile readership. From 1961 to 1964, Potter joined the ranks of Fleet Street, carrying out a variety of assignments for the Herald. Significantly, he also managed to retain one foot in broadcasting. Still a frequent invited speaker on BBC Radio (most notably Woman's Hour), in 1962, he joined forces with fellow Herald journalist David Nathan to form one of the many new writing partnerships that were needed to provide scripts for the launch of BBC TV's new late night satire show, That Was The Week That Was.⁶⁹

Allowing him a platform for motivated political comment without the kind of 'balance' he had previously found so irritating at the BBC, Potter,

together with his partner Nathan, became regular free-lance contributors to TW3 throughout the show's famous run from late 1962 until it was finally taken off air in December 1963.⁷⁰ As he was later to recall, however, Potter never felt happy working in tandem with someone else.⁷¹ Thus it is perhaps significant that his second major writing activity during this period, outside the Daily Herald, should be a solo one. As part of a Secker and Warburg series on the regions of Britain (called 'Britain Alive'), Potter was commissioned to write The Changing Forest - an account of contemporary life in his native Forest of Dean. In essence, this second non-fiction book (published in 1962) was an extension of the examination of working class decline in the Forest he had previously conducted in Between Two Rivers, though here, in book form, with the luxury of many chapters worth of analysis, Potter was able to seem less strident in tone, more measured, than the condemnatory voice-overs which had caused him so much trouble with the documentary.⁷²

A glittering Fleet Street career as a journalist, political wit and social commentator thus seemed to lie ahead for Potter in 1961-2. Then, suddenly and unexpectedly, disaster struck. In the Winter of 1961, whilst covering a Young Conservatives conference for the Daily Herald, Potter suddenly felt the first twinges of the mysterious illness which was to dog him for the rest of his life. Listening to the delegates from his position at the press table, he suddenly felt extremely ill. Thinking "the speeches couldn't be that bad", he tried to get up and found he was unable.⁷³ His knees had locked and one of them was swelling up like a balloon. Later, when he had managed to get outside and was crossing the road, he found to his horror his legs had locked again.

These were the first symptoms of what would eventually be diagnosed as psoriatic arthropathy - as its name suggests, a combination of psoriasis and arthritis which enflames the skin and cripples the joints. Though affecting many people in a mild form, Potter's was an extreme case in which his whole body could become one hundred per cent psoriatic - with purple scales and deep lesions forming on the skin, as well as intense arthritic pain affecting the joints. At its peak, the illness could leave its victim completely incapacitated - unable to walk, talk, even move - with the body's temperature soaring out of control. In turn, this could lead to hallucinations.⁷⁴ From the time it struck him down at the age of 26, Potter had to cope with periodic bouts of this disease. Originally, these came twice a year and even later, when treatment with the most sophisticated new drugs became available, he always knew there would be at least six weeks in any one year when he would be completely incapacitated. In the course of his life, he saw countless specialists and tried a succession of different drugs in his attempts to keep the illness at bay, all with varying degrees of success and often with very unpleasant side-effects. There was never any complete cure. All that medical science could do was to try to hold the disease for as long as possible, until eventually it had to erupt once more onto the skin.

Such an affliction and the acute personal suffering he undoubtedly experienced as a result of it are thus crucial facts in trying to understand Potter. In some ways, the play-writing career upon which he later embarked can be seen as his attempt to come to terms with the pain and stress which illness caused. As he himself suggested in interview, having had a childhood steeped in the Scriptures, it was very easy for him, when the disease first struck, to make the connection with the Biblical leper. Assumptions that the sick person was a sinner and that

the poisons of the mind had erupted onto the body were all too easily lodged.⁷⁶

Undoubtedly Biblical in its intensity, Potter's battle to contain his illness came to be seen by him as not only a physical but a 'spiritual' one - a struggle against himself. In many ways, the plays became the battlefield upon which this struggle was waged. As subsequent chapters will trace, Potter's dramatic writing engages far less with social and political concerns about the 'real' external world and much more with the inner lives of central protagonists racked by personal tensions and inner conflict; struggling not only against that outside world but with their own natures. Potter often described his disease as a "'shadowy ally'" - indeed in several interviews, he went further to suggest that far from being a completely alien intrusion into his life, he in fact chose his illness.⁷⁶ In other words, the nature of the affliction which befell him was in accord with his own personality. Disease forced him to turn inwards; its unpleasant eruptions transforming him into something of a recluse, with a preference for withdrawing from the wider world into the private realms of home and hospital. As a product of the remote inward-looking district of the Forest of Dean, he maintained that the event of illness suited his already reclusive, introspective personality.⁷⁷

In turn, this reclusiveness through illness suited the life of a writer. Disease took him out of the 'real' world of politics and current affairs (a world with which, as we have seen, he had already become disillusioned) and made him more concerned with the inner life of the individual and ultimately, with 'spiritual' questions about the nature of personal suffering, death and God.⁷⁸ In that sense, though terrible in its physical nature, Potter's disease performed a useful function for him.

Issues of politics and social class which had preoccupied him as a young man paled into insignificance beside the need to survive and to look into himself in his attempt not only to cope emotionally with the fact of illness but by so doing, possibly to find a cure.⁷⁹ It was in this way that the disease could be said to be his 'ally' for without it, Potter the writer might never have emerged to find his 'voice'. The fact of disease was thus literally the making of both him and his career.

Not only that but its physical effects meant that much of the work was also literally born out of pain. Because of the crippling effects of disease on his hands, as a professional writer, Potter could never type; instead always having to write physically on paper, with a great deal of difficulty and pain. To write at all, let alone to be as prolific as he would later prove, thus required an extraordinary effort of emotional strength, courage and above all perseverance. The very difficulty involved in the act of writing meant it was an activity to which he attached the very greatest value. Particularly in the darkest days of his illness, from the early to mid seventies, writing became not only a job to him but a passion. With the illness biting deeper and deeper, his TV plays became more and more his "life-line" to the world outside: a "way of measuring [his] own dignity" in terms of a refusal to bend the knee to illness.⁸⁰

Certainly, when it struck at the age of 26, the advent of illness knocked all his immediate plans and ambitions sideways. In terms of the Daily Herald, it meant he had to be taken off his existing duties as a feature writer in order to become TV critic, since this was a job he could do from home. Potter would later be disparaging about this, describing the role of TV reviewer as the newspaper equivalent of a

refuge for the sick and the crippled.^{e1} Nevertheless, perhaps because it suited his reclusive temperament, it was the one job in newspapers he most enjoyed. As he was later to recall, when the first crippling effects of illness more or less rendered him housebound, he immersed himself in watching television and not only because it was his job: "The thin-legged box in the corner had indeed become a 'window on the world'".^{e2}

The two years (from 1962-4) which Potter spent watching TV as a critic are undoubtedly important to emphasise in terms of his later writing career. Following on from his basic apprenticeship as a BBC trainee, this period allowed him to engage in a measure of theoretical reflection on the nature of the medium - on what worked well on it, what did not - which undoubtedly helped inform the nature of his subsequent TV writing, particularly the first few plays. For example, the ideal which he carried into his writing of trying to create a common culture through television seems to have a strong foundation in the particular two-channel situation which prevailed when he was a full-time reviewer in the earlier half of the decade (: § 1.3). Similarly, amongst other antecedents, the distinctive 'non-naturalistic' style which characterised his dramatic work right from the very beginning, appears to have had much to do with the condition of the television play, as he found it as a critic in the early sixties. Writing in 1967, Potter recalled how, as a reviewer for The Herald, the days of the studio play had always seemed to him to be numbered because it was too closely wedded to 'kitchen-sink' naturalism. With television continually widening its technical frontiers in the early sixties by means of satellite link-ups, introduction of lighter weight filming equipment, increasing use of video-tape and so on, who needed a 'slice of life' from the boxed-set studio play, when live by Tel-Star, it

was possible to see "Gagarin being effusively embraced by his leaders in Red Square" ?²³

In this light, Potter's subsequent 'non-naturalism' became an attempt to revive the single play by disentangling it from the 'naturalism' which, as a critic, he had seen was threatening its very survival. Moreover, a response he wrote in the theatre magazine Encore in 1964 (only a year before his debut as a TV playwright) illustrates how he was not alone at this time in wishing to progress beyond boxed-set 'naturalism'. As TV critic of The Herald, Potter was one of the prominent figures invited by Encore to reply to writer Troy Kennedy Martin's polemical attack against 'naturalism', "Nats Go Home", which the magazine had published in April 1964 (: § 1.0 b).²⁴ Significantly, in the light of his own development of an alternative dramatic style, Potter was enthusiastic about Kennedy Martin's assault against 'naturalism', voicing his own conception of what a 'non-naturalistic' TV drama should be concerned with - namely, "to present all sorts of evidence, constantly infiltrating all our defences... attack[ing] from all sides at once, out of a mosaic of objects, details, moods and memories and conversations. Pictures in a real fire. Pictures ablaze."²⁵

If this is what he himself would attempt a year later in his own dramatic work, first, an old dream had to die. In September 1964, in a last desperate attempt to attract a new, younger readership, the Daily Herald relaunched itself as The Sun newspaper and made Potter its leader-writer. A month later, he resigned from the paper. Taking advantage of a period of remission in his illness, he had decided to give up journalism to make one last desperate attempt of his own at pursuing his old dream of entering politics - standing as a Labour candidate in the

1964 General Election. Unfortunately, for him, the seat he was chosen to contest (East Herts.) was one with a rock-solid Conservative majority.

Nevertheless, Potter went on the campaign trail - an experience which would prove completely disillusioning to him and provide much of the material for his television play a year later, Vote, Vote, Vote for Nigel Barton. According to Potter's then close friend, Roger Smith, who accompanied him for several days on the campaign, real-life electioneering was very close to the experiences the TV play would later describe (: § 1.1)⁹⁶. As the days of the campaign wore on, Potter became more and more sick and chastened by the reality of the political process - the falseness of slogans such as "Let's Go With Labour" and the utter futility of canvassing housing estates and kissing babies. Far from party politics being, as he had once believed, the means of putting one's ideals into practice and changing things, all he encountered amongst voters was apathy, suspicion and prejudice.⁹⁷

As Smith puts it, the experience of the campaign "really was the end of a dream" for Potter. He vowed never to stand again and indeed never even bothered to vote for himself on polling day.⁹⁸ Needless to say, when the results were announced, the Conservatives, in the shape of candidate Derek Walker-Smith, held firmly onto the seat. At the same time, any further lingering hopes of a political career had been knocked sideways for Potter by the exhausting effect the campaign had had on his health. Ill, with feelings of despair and failure and no longer even having any job, Potter had nowhere to go by the end of October 1964. With a wife and family to support, all he could do was begin to write a novel called The Confidence Course. At this time, however, his friend Roger Smith had found himself appointed story editor of a new BBC slot for single plays

and was desperately seeking fresh new writers to fill the weekly gaps that were looming in the television schedules. As Chapter One will trace in more detail, it was Smith who effectively launched Potter's career as a television playwright, persuading him to adapt his novel into a television play since a play would earn quicker returns, both financially and critically, in terms of building up his reputation as a writer. Suddenly, having abandoned one dream, Potter found himself with a new one to pursue. He grabbed this opportunity with both hands - adapting The Confidence Course into his first television play and writing three more; all of which would be produced within the space of a year: The Nigel Barton Plays (Stand Up, Nigel Barton; Vote, Vote, Vote for Nigel Barton) and Alice, based on the relationship between Lewis Carroll and the real 'Alice' of Alice in Wonderland. From having no clear future, Potter suddenly found himself with a new vocation as a television playwright, involved in what would prove to be a landmark event in the history of British television drama: the birth of The Wednesday Play.

CHAPTER ONE

THE CONFIDENCE COURSE: DENNIS POTTER AND "THE WEDNESDAY PLAY"

1.0) a) Vote of Confidence

DIRECTOR: Perhaps once, and ONCE ONLY, in your life, Opportunity comes... and with it, Redemption... You trudge life's thorny path...

BLACK: Unsure of your destination.

JONES: Unaware of your potentialities.

DIRECTOR: ... But then. Ah, then. The breakthrough comes...'

These opening lines from The Confidence Course may well have had a special significance for Potter himself by the time his first play was transmitted on February 24th 1965:

The Wednesday Play was to prove a breakthrough not only for him but for the whole sixties 'counter-culture' in Britain. Originally conceived as a popular strand of single plays on BBC-1, The Wednesday Play, in its first season under producer James MacTaggart, quickly established itself as a prominent forum for political dissent and bold experimentation in TV drama. Viewing figures climbed as millions tuned in each week to see the latest play trailed as 'controversial' in the press and condemned as 'filthy' by 'Clean-Up TV' campaigners such as Mary Whitehouse. With its reputation for 'permissiveness' and general anti-Establishment bias, the play slot soon became bound up with the fortunes and progress of the 'swinging' sixties. There was a sense, amongst practitioners and critics who championed it, that The Wednesday Play was 'important': a vital

television platform which not only aired but actively promoted the values of the new 'counter-culture' to a mass (predominantly working class) audience.²

The very first play commissioned by Roger Smith set the trend for 'controversy' and 'challenge' that later works would follow. Written by a convicted murderer and depicting the cynical progress of a villain from gangster to baronet, A Tap on the Shoulder (wr: James O'Connor; tx. 6.1.65) marked a conscious break with the conventions of the polite, 'well-made' play. Its determination to break new ground came to characterise the Wednesday Play ethos as a whole - from the first crucial season in 1965 to the last in 1970. The slot also acted as a showcase for new talent. Many well-known practitioners gained their first big breaks working on The Wednesday Play - not only Potter but others like Simon Gray, Kenith Trodd and Ken Loach, whose directorial contributions to the slot not only came to include A Tap on the Shoulder but also some of the most celebrated TV plays of the sixties: the 'documentary dramas' Up The Junction (wr: Nell Dunn; tx. 3.11.65), The Big Flame (wr: Jim Allen; tx. 19.2.69) and Cathy Come Home (wr: Jeremy Sandford; tx. 16.11.66).

If, by providing him with the chance to write for this brand new slot, Roger Smith was the 'angel' who brought "Opportunity" and "Redemption", it did not take Potter too long to sense the possibilities.³ As he was later to recall:

I'd been concerned with forms of television for two years [as a TV critic]. So I didn't want to write just like something that I'd seen. I wanted to use where possible as much of television and certain narrative techniques like addressing the audience directly which seemed to me a possibility in a political play. All these things I thought about for at least four years and I just needed the event...⁴

It was Smith, however, who had to persuade him to seize that 'event'. Despite his previous script-writing experience on Bookstand and TW3, Potter was initially sceptical about his ability to write for The Wednesday Play. As Smith recalls: "He said, 'No, I can't write plays'... He had to be persuaded". It was only when he came back to the story editor with the more modest suggestion of adapting the novel he had half-written, that Smith was finally able to secure from him a script of The Confidence Course, set out in his own "meticulous handwriting".⁵

The resulting play fitted well with the developing Wednesday Play ethos of 'challenge' and 'controversy'. Explicitly political, it mounted an attack on "the Admass society", with all of its promises of success through self-advancement.⁶ In that sense, it dramatised themes and anxieties which Potter had already expressed in his non-fiction writing: his two 'political' books, The Glittering Coffin and The Changing Forest:

Directed by Gilchrist Calder, the plot of The Confidence Course hinges on three confidence tricksters who succeed in luring a dozen victims to a hotel, on the strength of a poster advertising a course in self-assertiveness. There, by a mixture of ruse and rhetoric, the chief fraudster called 'The Director' (played by Dennis Price) sets about trying to persuade his audience of the necessity of their enrolment on the course. Unfortunately, a mysterious thirteenth member of the audience is also present. Calling himself William Hazlitt, this self-styled reincarnation of the famous critic and essayist begins to attack all the values of the consumer society espoused by the Director, until eventually he is bundled out of the room by the Director's two helpers. In so suppressing freedom of speech in this way, the Director has given the lie to his own professed philosophy of the individual. The audience begins

to get restless and when, in his attempts to pacify it, the Director lets slip, "I have to be ruthless sometimes. You see, any business that sets out to help the weak and life's failures...", he sows the final seeds of his own destruction.⁷ Preferring the freedom to remain unconfident, his victims quickly desert him until, at the end of the play, the Director is left alone and abandoned - himself "... a failure".⁸

If, in its denunciations of 'Admass', the play was the kind of work one might expect from any 'angry young' writer given his first break in TV drama, it also exhibits several features highly distinctive of Potter. Most important is the mysterious figure of 'Hazlitt' - the outsider who enrolls on The Confidence Course only in order to disrupt and destroy it:

By 1965, the idea of the outsider as dark destroyer of established values had become almost a cliché amongst the 'post-Anger' generation of British writers. If Colin Wilson began the trend in 1956 with his key 'angry' text, The Outsider, Harold Pinter, in his 1963 screenplay for the film, The Servant, had portrayed a working class outsider reversing traditional master-servant relations in the home of his upper class employer. Meanwhile, David Mercer, in his TV play of that same year, For Tea on Sunday (tx. BBC 17.3.63), had portrayed a polite upper-class tea party, being wrecked by the arrival of an outsider wielding an axe, intent on destroying all it stood for.⁹

Taken in relation to the wider social and cultural currents of the period, it is not difficult to see why this plot device should be so common. It provided a perfect metaphor for what was perceived during this time to be the breakdown of the English class system at the hands of a new post-war generation, alienated by persistent structures of inequality and

radically opposed to dominant values through the articulation of an alternative 'counter-culture'.

In The Confidence Course, Potter, too, attacks the notion of a society based on class and money, yet significantly he does so not in terms of a coherent alternative vision of the future but rather in the name of the past. In particular, it is the one hundred and fifty year old essays of William Hazlitt which are invoked: "If you'd read any of my essays," Hazlitt's apparent reincarnation tells the other course members, "you'd know that there are other and superior values to this shabby little gospel of greed and gain."¹⁰

A similar 'progressive - regressive' uncertainty is also evident in Hazlitt's characterisation. If, on the one hand, he is clearly Potter's hero speaking out against 'Admass', on the other he is a duplicitous Judas figure who infiltrates the group of twelve only in order to undermine it and destroy its leader.¹¹ Indeed, Potter's script likens him to an invading demon escaped from hell. When he first appears outside the hotel conference room, he is described as "a shadow-with-eyes, standing in a pool of gloom".¹² Moreover, running through the play is the suggestion that he may be a lunatic escaped from an 'institution' - though whether an asylum, prison, hospital or even Hell itself, we are never told. When the Director asks him, Hazlitt replies, "I've escaped from the bondage of time".¹³

In many ways, the use of an ambiguous 'mad outsider' as central protagonist articulated the dilemma of those from the working class, like Potter, who had been helped to prominence by post-war social and educational reform. Given unprecedented opportunities by the

'Establishment' to achieve academic and material success, many nevertheless felt obliged to attack continuing iniquities, on behalf of those to whom the system had been less kind. The dilemma which the leaders of the new 'counter-culture' faced was precisely whether they were mad to attack the established order - to bite the hand that had effectively helped to feed them. Was it they who were mad or society? Was the 'sickness' of society they railed against as much a product of their own psychic dislocation and feelings of separation, as the result of any political cause? It is this which seems to link The Confidence Course with other 'mad outsider' works like Mercer's For Tea on Sunday.⁴

At the same time, perhaps the most distinctive feature of The Confidence Course is the fact that it exhibits the first tangible signs of the famous 'non-naturalistic' style ('the concern with forms of television') which would become such a hallmark of Potter's writing. Most important here is the play's use of an off-screen narrator who, intervening at key points in the action by means of voice-over, 'addresses the audience directly'. This allows the play's political message to be explicit - for example, at the very end, when the narrator urges the viewing audience to recognise its power to overturn the existing social order:

NARRATOR: The party's over and the game is done. The weak have become strong and the strong weak. Soon it will be time to turn out the lights and the Director will walk out into the rain... a failure.
(HE BEGINS TO LAUGH)⁵

What is striking is how closely this device resembles some of the 'expressionist' techniques first pioneered by Roger Smith and others on earlier BBC play strands such as Storyboard (1961) and Studio 4 (1962). Undoubtedly, these experiments in 'non-naturalistic' TV drama helped shape

the style and approach of many of the subsequent Wednesday Plays, including Potter's first few works:

1.0 b) "Nats Go Home": A Question of Style

To understand this history, it is useful, briefly, to consider the twin dramatic styles of 'naturalism' and 'realism' against which the term 'non-naturalism' has often been defined.

According to Raymond Williams, 'realism' and 'naturalism' were originally used to refer not to stylistic conventions in drama but to "changed attitudes to reality itself": the replacement of a view of the world as governed by supernatural or irrational forces, with a new emphasis on the presentation of actions rooted entirely in human and secular terms.¹⁶ Gradually, however, in this fundamental shift in representations of 'reality' (which Williams traces to the economic rise of the bourgeoisie in the eighteenth century), a theoretical distinction between 'naturalism' and 'realism' began to emerge. Naturalism as a description of character formed by environment eventually came to be perceived as a passive form. People were felt to be stuck where they were in a kind of trap, with no possibility of changing their social lot. As a result, a counter-sense of realism emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century which insisted on "the dynamic quality of all 'environments' and on the possibility of intervention to change them".¹⁷

At first glance, this might seem to complicate definitions of style in TV drama for if 'realism' can be opposed to 'naturalism', then surely it should, strictly speaking, be seen as a form of 'non-naturalism'? Such a confusion over terms has frequently dogged debates on TV dramatic style amongst practitioners as well as critics. In many ways, the uncertainty

can be traced back to Troy Kennedy Martin's "Nats Go Home": the 'manifesto' for a new TV drama which Potter so enthusiastically endorsed in 1964. Its importance for The Wednesday Play cannot be overstated for appearing less than a year before the launch of the new play slot, it undoubtedly had an influence over the latter's stylistic direction.

In "Nats Go Home", Kennedy Martin attacked naturalism as definitely the "wrong form" for TV drama.¹⁸ For him, this meant telling a story through dialogue and following a strict sequence of natural time (where the time span of the play equalled real time, with very few lapses or jumps in narrative chronology). It was this unhealthy dependence on 'theatrical naturalism' which, in his view, had made the television play "a makeshift bastard born of the theatre and photographed with film techniques" - its directors invariably reduced to "photographing faces talking and faces reacting".¹⁹

In its place, Kennedy Martin called for a "new TV grammar" based upon image rather than word: a freeing up of dramatic structure from real time and of the privileging of dialogue over mise en scène. Lighting, sound and design, he asserted, would all play their part in this new drama, whereby the old boxed sets of naturalistic TV plays would be replaced by "new designs leading to maximum fluidity in the studio".²⁰ The net result would be a "narrative form of drama" in which "visuals [would] not supplement nor restate information, they [would] in fact distil it".²¹

Despite his conscious attempt to make a break with the past, Kennedy Martin's ideas on 'visual narrative' were simply theorisations of techniques that he and a number of other BBC writers and directors, including Ken Loach, John McGrath and Potter's friend, Roger Smith, had

pioneered over three successive play slots between 1961-3: Storyboard, Studio 4 and Teletale, respectively. Together with the 1964 six-part serial, Diary of a Young Man (co-written by Kennedy Martin), these were all varyingly successful attempts to put into practice the "Nats Go Home" principle of telling "a story in exciting visual terms".²²

Crucially for the subsequent history of The Wednesday Play, not only was Smith involved but this loose coalition of 'anti-theatre' dissidents was largely led and inspired by The Wednesday Play's first producer, James MacTaggart. As Smith acknowledges, it was MacTaggart who trailblazed stylistic experiment in the early sixties, launching Storyboard and Studio 4 as a conscious attempt to exploit the resources of the television studio to the full.²³ Though very much influenced by the earlier Langham Group of TV drama experimenters, the live studio plays of Storyboard and Studio 4 were much more populist in emphasis. As Smith confirms, "We took over popular forms. We wrote more available stories".²⁴

It is not only the emphasis on popular 'visual narratives' and 'maximum fluidity in the studio' which makes these early play slots the direct forebears of "Nats Go Home" and the subsequent Wednesday Play. A number of neo-Brechtian techniques later advocated in Kennedy Martin's 'manifesto', such as characters directly addressing the audience and the reminder "we are constantly being told a story", were devices also employed by these early experimental play strands.²⁵ As Smith recalls, Studio 4 dramas used to signal their artifice by deliberately revealing their studio settings and the attendant cameramen. Meanwhile, direct address to the audience via voice-over narration was pioneered as a means of surmounting the problem (inherent in naturalistic TV drama) of how to convey plot detail without reducing the pace of the 'visual

narrative'. In contrast to conventional TV dramatic naturalism which conveyed the bulk of dramatic information through dialogue with visuals supplementary, Storyboard and Studio 4 plays reversed the relationship - visually 'distilling' dramatic information, in Kennedy Martin's terms, rather than 'restating' what had already been rendered through dialogue.²⁶

As the foregoing account illustrates, it is thus possible to trace a history and continuity of stylistic experiment, stretching from the early Storyboard and Studio 4s through "Nats Go Home" and on towards the various innovations of Potter and others on The Wednesday Play. The waning of the 'post-Anger boom' of naturalistic 'kitchen sink' drama helped put the ideas of dissident experimenters like MacTaggart, Smith and Kennedy Martin into the mainstream as one of the few hopes for the reinvigoration of the single TV play within the schedules.²⁷ The crucial year was 1964: the new Head of BBC TV Drama, Sydney Newman, appointed James MacTaggart to produce The Wednesday Play, whilst Troy Kennedy Martin launched his strategically timed 'manifesto' at that same moment.²⁸

It is significant that a few months after the publication of "Nats Go Home" and in response to critical reaction from his fellow practitioners, Kennedy Martin went on to identify what he thought would be the two styles that would replace theatrical 'kitchen sink' naturalism. Restating his belief that visual 'narrative' was the best way forward, he also acknowledged there was:

... interest in moving away from naturalism to a kind of expressionism...[which] presupposes the existence of the TV studio at the beginning of the show. In this way it does not lie to its audience, pretending that it is a 'slice of life'... Once having shown the studio, the expressionist director brings together the actors,

scenic form, sound and light and builds up a dramatic structure within it... 29

Whilst indicating this style was, for him, too close to the theatre "as many... have [said]... 'narrative' draws too much from the cinema", Kennedy Martin nevertheless predicted that TV plays would "develop along these two lines: narrative and expressionist"³⁰

It is striking that these two approaches which Kennedy Martin sought to oppose in 1964 had already co-existed on Storyboard and Studio 4. Hence when the loose 'anti-theatre' coalition of experimenters such as MacTaggart, Smith and Ken Loach, progressed on to The Wednesday Play, it is possible to see a continuation yet also a divergence of approach, as techniques pioneered on the early play slots were allowed to develop into fully fledged alternative TV dramatic styles. For example, as Raymond Williams has argued, the 'documentary dramas' of Ken Loach, though often judged the epitome of descriptive naturalism, are actually much closer to the 'dynamic' qualities of realism insofar as they constantly insist upon the possibility of social change.³¹ Such an emphasis inevitably dictates a 'narrative' (as opposed to a wholly 'descriptive') dramatic style and Loach's increasing moves in his Wednesday Play work away from the television studio towards location shooting on 16mm film, can perhaps be seen as symptomatic of this desire for a greater realism in representation, through ever more 'visual narratives'.³² Certainly, Troy Kennedy Martin, scourge of descriptive naturalism, was later able to write in praise of Loach's Up The Junction, suggesting it had lifted "drama out of the rut" by making "nonsense of the idea that television is only a poor relation of theatre or film".³³ Directly descended from Studio 4 and Teletale, a filmic strain of 'narrative' realism therefore became one of the clearly marked styles of The Wednesday Play.

It is also possible to relate Potter's 'non-naturalistic' style on The Wednesday Play to the 'expressionist' experiments of the early Storyboards and Studio 4s. Rather than an evasion of the 'real', as has sometimes been accused, the armoury of 'non-naturalistic' techniques which Potter later developed to represent the inner life of his protagonists (flashbacks, adult actors as children, characters' direct address to camera and so on), can simply be seen as an alternative means of 'expressing' reality.³⁴ Here it is again useful to refer to Raymond Williams' work on the history of realism and naturalism, in which he states that towards the end of the nineteenth century:

... new methods and conventions were developed to take more account of reality, to include "psychological" as well as "external" reality, and to show the social and physical world as a dynamic rather than a merely passive and determining environment. Between 1890 and 1920 these were often described as breaks "from naturalism" or "beyond realism" but the confusing irony is that most of them were attempts to realise more deeply and more adequately the original impulses of the realist and naturalist movements³⁵

Applying this to The Wednesday Play, it is possible to argue that in seeking to represent "what goes on inside people's heads", Potter's 'non-naturalism' was also paradoxically an attempt at a greater 'realism' in television drama.³⁶ Akin to Loach, there was the same concern to go beyond 'surface' naturalism in order to explore the deeper, more dynamic 'reality' that was thought to underly it. Williams describes the particular modernist impulse to articulate the 'real' in terms of the psyche, as a kind of 'psychological expressionism' and such a label seems useful in relation to Kennedy Martin's aforementioned distinction between 'narrative' and 'expressionist' styles.³⁷ All such innovations, according to Williams, were concerned to represent more fully the 'true' movements of a dynamic, underlying reality. It was simply the methods which differed.

The 'documentary realism' of Ken Loach and the 'non-naturalism' (psychological expressionism) of Potter can therefore be traced to the same basic concern of a whole group of practitioners at this time to question received notions of the real, particularly those of habituated TV naturalism. When stylistic differences became more pronounced on The Wednesday Play, a shared concern to be 'anti-theatre' nevertheless continued.³⁹ As Smith makes clear, the shifts in emphasis took place as The Wednesday Play progressed. Under MacTaggart and he, the first season of 1965 was more 'expressionist' in style than in later years when, with Loach's chief collaborator, Tony Garnett, as story editor and then subsequently one of the producers, "it became much more documentary".³⁹ Prior to the trend for filmed documentary-style narratives, however, those first productions, which included The Confidence Course, were more akin to the attempts of the earlier Studio 4s and Teletales to exploit studio space.

As story editor, Smith states he encouraged Potter in his first play to experiment with 'expressionist' techniques such as the use of a narrator who would be able to distance the audience from naturalistic empathy with the characters, whilst at the same time render essential plot information in the 'visual narrative', without recourse to additional establishing scenes of dialogue between characters. The influence of the "Nats Go Home" tendency was therefore evident in the techniques Potter used to transform for television material that had started life as prose fiction.

What does appear Potter's own is the use of the narrator in The Confidence Course as not only an expositor of information but a Chandleresque cynical commentator with his own opinions to offer on the action. For example, near the beginning of the play:

NARRATOR: The Director is already speaking. Every phrase has been considered. Every pause is calculated. Every attack meaningful. It might almost be a party political broadcast.⁴⁰

Here one can detect the origins of the similar narrator figure in Potter's subsequent Vote, Vote, Vote for Nigel Barton, even down to the reference to party political broadcasts (: § 1.1).

Such comparisons, however, are difficult to test with any great conviction since nothing now remains of Potter's first television play for posterity. While the script still exists at the BBC, in common with no less than three other of Potter's sixties TV plays, the videotape of the production was long since wiped to make room for other material (: § 1.2). Though now regarded by bodies such as the National Film Archive as an almost 'criminal' act of vandalism, the reason at the time was the high cost of videotape which meant that if a tape was reusable, it was reused.⁴¹ Potter, though, did survive as a playwright: The Confidence Course was judged a very "sharp" piece by The Wednesday Play's production team and on the strength of it, he was commissioned to write more for the new play slot.⁴² In fact, three further Potter Wednesday Plays followed in 1965 alone - Alice (tx. 13.10.65), based on the life of Lewis Carroll, as well as two thematically linked works that helped seal his reputation, not to mention his new 'vocation', as a writer: The Nigel Barton Plays.⁴³

1.1) Class Comics

Mr Dennis Potter, being an atheist said: "I think the Gods must be with me at the moment." He was very careful about the plural for he is a good atheist.

And religious questions aside, he seems to be right. Clearly, somebody is with him. Mr Potter, aged 30, a miner's son and an Oxford graduate, stands at present like a study in suspended animation - poised to hurtle, or be hurtled, through a doorway marked "Success". Behind him, last Wednesday, is Stand Up, Nigel Barton, for my money one of the best plays the BBC has presented this year. Ahead, next Wednesday, is the sequel Vote, Vote, Vote for Nigel Barton which, if it lives up to expectations, should put him in the forefront of TV playwrights.⁴⁴

If, as Barry Norman's article reveals, 1965 was the annus mirabilis for Potter, it was indeed The Nigel Barton Plays (tx. 8.12.65 and 15.12.65) which hurtled him "through a doorway marked 'Success'", earning him no less than three top writers' awards.⁴⁵ Truly, a major talent seemed to have arrived - one that was all the more significant because it was entirely a Wednesday Play 'discovery'.

The central theme of Stand Up, Nigel Barton - miner's son (Barton) wins a scholarship to Oxford, only to be confronted with class prejudice at home and university - was nothing new, however, for the period or for Potter. The plight of 'the scholarship boy', physically and emotionally uprooted from his class through education, had become a media commonplace by 1965. As long ago as 1957, Richard Hoggart had devoted a whole section of his The Uses of Literacy to a problem which had become one of the unforeseen consequences of the 1944 Butler Education Act.⁴⁶

Similarly, the plot of Vote, Vote, Vote in which Nigel finds his political idealism as a Labour candidate, undermined by the 'lies' of vote-catching, can not only be related to Potter's experience in the 1964 General Election (: § 0.1). It also dramatised left-wing fears of the time that Harold Wilson's Labour Government was 'selling out' its traditional

principles in a vain attempt to win over an electorate that had voted it into power by only the slimmest of majorities. In the play, Nigel's disillusionment with vote-catching springs from the need to appeal to what his political agent identifies as "the floating voter with his house, his car, his 2.8 children."⁴⁷

If familiarity of theme contributed to the plays' success, what undoubtedly generated a favourable critical response was the plays' highly 'authored' quality: the feeling that television drama was being used as a vehicle for personal expression by a writer who deeply identified with the struggles of his central protagonist. Barry Norman in his Daily Mail article focused almost exclusively upon the fact that "interestingly, both plays are about Dennis Potter", whilst other critics praised this "exciting new playwright" for his "passion and narrative power".⁴⁸ What distinguished The Nigel Barton Plays from previous television drama was their almost complete concentration upon a single central protagonist (- as indicated, even, by the title of each play). Whilst earlier TV plays, such as David Mercer's Generations trilogy and Alun Owen's Lena, Oh My Lena, had dramatised political or class anxieties, the conflict of Potter's plays seemed less an external one between the individual and family or society and more an internal dilemma of self.⁴⁹

Hence in both works, Nigel Barton (played by Keith Barron) is portrayed as a 'torn' hero - "I remember, I remember the school where I was torn", his voice-over intones near the beginning of Stand Up.⁵⁰ A clever child, uprooted from his working class background through education, he finds himself cursed in adulthood by "his blasted conscience" which refuses to abandon old ties, demanding that some attempt be made to build a bridge 'between the two rivers' of his own past roots and his present success.⁵¹

His quest is to heal the social and psychological divisions he feels in his life; his dilemma, how best to do it - is politics the answer or perhaps a career in the new mass communication 'miracle' of television ?

Over the two plays, Nigel tries both. In Stand Up, his debating prowess at the Oxford Union comes to the attention of a BBC producer who invites him to appear on a television programme on 'Class in Britain'. Nigel is easily persuaded yet as the transmission date of the interview looms, he begins to grow worried about what he has said. As he tells Jill, his upper class girlfriend at Oxford: "I was acting it up a bit, over-dramatizing..."⁵² By discussing his relationship with his own father and mother, he realises he used them: "I damn well, bloody well, used them!"⁵³ As previously outlined in the Introduction, Nigel later has to watch the interview at home with his parents, wincing all the time as he hears himself say:

NIGEL [on TV]: Yes. Class does matter to me. It matters intensely... I travel between two utterly different worlds... Yet I even find my own father looking at me oddly sometimes... Watching me like a hawk. I don't feel at home in either place. I don't belong. It's a tightrope between two worlds and I'm walking it.

HARRY [Nigel's father]: You bloody liar, Nigel ! (He is addressing the screen)⁵⁴

The truth hurts. Far from bridging the class gap between Nigel and his miner father, frankness only serves to underline it ("Watch you like a hawk ... What'll they say at work ? Here comes the bloody hawk, they'll say ! With his son on a tightrope..."⁵⁵). Father and son are later shown heading off together to the local working man's club, yet as Potter is at pains to emphasise in the script, there can be no private reconciliation after the damage of the interview; merely a public show of solidarity.

As they walk away from camera in the final shot, his script directions indicate the pair should be "separated by a mutual anxiety".⁵⁶

The bitter lesson Nigel learns at the end of Stand Up is therefore that the truth does not pay. To some extent, this has already been anticipated by an earlier flashback scene (one Potter would rework twenty years later for The Singing Detective: § 5.3 c). In it, Nigel is seen as a child back at the village school where he first became isolated from his peers. Partly to assuage feelings of loneliness on account of his too eager cleverness, he steals a daffodil from the classroom window sill and is later challenged by the disbelieving teacher. Under great pressure to confess his 'crime', he tells a lie, putting the blame on the 'class comic', Georgie Pringle, whom the play has earlier identified as one of those who bullies Nigel in the school playground. Though Pringle protests his innocence, the teacher is more inclined to believe her favourite, Nigel. As she begins to question others in the class, seeking to corroborate Nigel's story, Potter's script directions indicate the other children "sense blood and start to get nasty".⁵⁷ One by one, they all join in the chorus of blame against Pringle - their malice vindicating Nigel but ensuring that his innocent victim is severely caned for a crime he did not commit.

In Vote, Vote, Vote, too, Nigel learns the 'real world' prefers 'lies' to 'truth'. This time, the pivotal scene is at an Annual Council Dinner which the Labour candidate is obliged to attend. With the local mayor, assorted dignitaries and the rival Conservative candidate present, Nigel decides to 'stand up' for his 'blasted conscience', launching an outspoken attack on the Tory myth of "a hitherto prosperous, classless, opportunity-free Britain basking in a rare contentment".⁵⁸ He goes too

far, however. When the Tory audience starts to jeer, he turns, in a sudden spasm of anger, to the Conservative candidate and gives what Potter's script directions coyly term a "two-fingered salute at its most emphatic".⁵⁹ Flash-bulbs go off, as the once-proud "man of principle" finds himself "crucified in every paper as the poor fool who made a filthy gesture at a public function".⁶⁰ Not only has Nigel finished with politics, politics have finished Nigel.

Together, the twin climaxes of Stand Up and Vote, Vote, Vote both suggest the inevitable consequence of honesty is humiliation. As with the daffodil scene, the implication is that 'truth' is punished while 'lies' are rewarded. This is not to suggest, however, that Nigel Barton is simply a hapless victim of the class divide. Running through the plays is a definite subtext which seeks to implicate this 'working class hero' as a self-publicising fraud who is a traitor to his class. Punning here is rife: Nigel's 'class' becomes not only the social grouping of which he is painfully aware in the 'present' but also the one in which he literally sat in at school as a child. Even the very title of Stand Up is ambiguous. It refers not only to the adult Nigel, 'standing up' for one class against another but also the command barked out by the authoritarian teacher at school when she wished to interrogate a suspected wrong-doer or, worse, from Nigel's point of view, humiliate him in front of his peers by holding him up to the class as a paragon of virtue. Heroic 'class' rebel or humiliated 'class' puppet, the injunction 'Stand Up, Nigel Barton' embraces both possibilities and holds them in taut suspension across the entire play.

Ambiguity is even present in the name Potter gives his 'hero'. If the upper-class connotations of the Christian name 'Nigel' contrast with the

working class surname 'Barton' (thus instantly indicating the class tensions within the character), it is also important to recognise that the name 'Nigel Barton' is a 'corruption' of 'Nye Bevan'. Throughout both Barton Plays, Bevan is implicitly held up as the epitome of radical protest against which Nigel is found to be lacking.⁶¹ In Vote, Vote, Vote, the compromises of Nigel's election campaign are unfavourably juxtaposed with edited newsreel footage of Bevan's famous Trafalgar Square speech during the Suez crisis.⁶² Similarly, in Stand Up, Nigel's father, on learning his son is to wear a dinner jacket at the Oxford Union, grumbles to his wife: "Nye Bevan always refused to wear a dinner-jacket, you know that ?"⁶³

On one level, 'standing up' for his class whilst simultaneously betraying it in his haste to 'get on', makes Nigel every bit as much a 'class comic' as Pringle. This reading is strengthened by a scene in which Barton, on holiday from Oxford, accompanies his father to the local village working man's club. There, he watches the club 'comic' on stage who turns out to be the adult Georgie Pringle. Once more, an implicit connection is made between Nigel and Pringle, as the play cuts back and forth between two scenes: one, with the 'stand up comic' Pringle, in the warmth of the club, telling a joke about 'university boys' to uproarious laughter; the other, showing Nigel in his dinner jacket at the imposing Oxford union, 'standing up' to make a speech on his working class origins and being jeered from the gallery.⁶⁴ As this juxtaposition helps to emphasise, Nigel is shown to be every bit as much a 'class comic' as Pringle, except his position is made even more ludicrous by the fact that unlike the real comic, he is accepted neither by his native 'class' nor by his Oxford audience.

A subsequent Potter Wednesday Play, Where the Buffalo Roam (tx. 2.11.66) helps explain why the writer should choose to forge this symbolic link between Barton and Pringle. Coming less than a year after The Nigel Barton Plays and having the same director, Gareth Davies, Where the Buffalo Roam can be seen as the follow-up to an earlier success.⁶⁵ Certainly, in terms of theme and style, it is a companion piece for like Stand Up, its hero is also a social outcast, ostracised by his working class community on account of his educational ability. Unlike Nigel, however, he does not have the luxury of fleeing his background to university since the reason for his isolation is not intelligence but backwardness, as manifested by his painful inability to read. Laughed at by his 'class-mates' in school and later at the adult literacy centre he attends for reading lessons, Willy Turner (played by Hywel Bennett) takes refuge in his imagination where he dreams of being a Wild West outlaw. The richness of his fantasy life forms a stark contrast to the desolate reality of his existence as a young, unemployed labourer in Swansea.

Where the Buffalo Roam therefore investigates the flip side of The Nigel Barton Plays - Turner, laughed at by his peers, is another of Potter's 'class comics'. Like Georgie Pringle in Stand Up, he is unfairly persecuted for something he cannot help: a victim of the 'sins' of the wider group. Unlike Pringle, however, who succeeds in adult life by exploiting his status as the village 'idiot', Turner fails to find acceptance within his native community. This closely associates him with Nigel Barton and in turn helps to explain the Pringle-Barton link of Stand Up. By having the chief character of Where the Buffalo Roam function as a mirror image of the 'hero' of Stand Up, Potter makes a direct symbolic link between the clever child and the backward child as the same type of outcast from the community.

As with Stand Up, there is a similar structure of ambiguity in Where the Buffalo Roam. Akin to Barton, the play questions whether Turner is a victim or a villain: are his dreams of being a Western outlaw a way of escaping a constricting social environment or simply the delusions of a psychotic? Popular culture (the Western genre) becomes the centre of a conflict in the play between progressive and regressive attitudes to Willy's plight. On the one hand, there is the view expressed by Black, Turner's tutor at the Adult Literacy Centre, that the youth is a "young thug", even a "potential psychopath." This is counter-balanced by the opinion of Jenkins, a liberal probation officer, who discovers that Turner was a victim of physical abuse as a child (at the hands of his late father). Jenkins rejects the black and white moral absolutes of the "genuine hero" and the "genuine villain" which Westerns promote, telling Black: "... You know, I've often thought that the traditional Western hero would be categorised as a squalid delinquent nowadays..."⁶⁶

In Potter's updated "Western", the regressive stereotype of the outlaw as 'genuine villain' has to prevail, however, if generic conventions are to be satisfied.⁶⁷ In what has been labelled an "awful descent into early-MGM techniques", Where the Buffalo Roam ends with a cowboy shootout in which Willy goes on the rampage with a loaded gun.⁶⁸ After he kills one of their own, he is mercilessly pursued by armed police. Eventually, they trap him on the roof of a warehouse and while this seems to act as a form of shock therapy, 'curing' Willy of his cowboy fantasies (: "My name isn't Shane. It's William John Turner", he cries to the watching crowds below), it is too late for any reversal of fortune. A police marksman fires and while Jenkins looks helplessly on, Willy falls from the roof into a dam below. As the dead hero is fished out in a straitjacket, "Streets of Laredo" plays on the soundtrack, with its plangent chorus:

"... For I am a cowboy and I know I've done wrong..."⁶⁹ In Potter's 'Western', the liberal approach of Jenkins gives way to a violent cycle of transgression and retribution which has to be followed through to its inevitable tragic end.

Not only does such a violent dénouement satisfy the generic conventions of the Western, it also accords with Potter's theme (raised in Stand Up) of the persecution of the individual at the hands of the wider community. If, as the 'village idiot' who falls prey to the 'blood-lust' of his peers, Turner resembles Georgie Pringle, he is also much like Nigel Barton - the social outcast who, in his failure to conform to community norms, is marked out as different and punished accordingly. Despite the 'reactionary' triumph of the values of the Western over more 'progressive' attitudes to Willy's problems, the villain-victim ambiguity, noted with Stand Up, is also present at the end of Where the Buffalo Roam.

In common with both its 'sister' works, Vote, Vote, Vote, too, exhibits a definite ambivalence towards its 'working class hero'. "Oh, come on now," says Nigel's wife, Anne, when he declares he is standing for Parliament as an act of public duty, "You quite enjoy it in a way. There's a little bit of the charlatan in you."⁷⁰ Unlike Stand Up which leaves it up to the viewer to decide the true extent of Nigel's guilt, Vote, Vote, Vote aids judgement through the authority of a narrator figure - Nigel's political agent Jack Hay who directly addresses the audience near the end of the play, claiming "There's a lot of good in him. But you'd never vote for a Nigel Barton in a million years."⁷¹ Hence while Vote, Vote, Vote also ends with its 'torn' hero racked by guilt and anxiety as a result of his public 'crucifixion', narratorial intervention finally absolves him of all blame.⁷² Instead, it is all the fault of the 'system' - the electoral

machine which turns honest men into charlatans - and as Hay's closing statement implies, the fault ultimately of us, the audience, who countenance it.

That Vote, Vote, Vote should be a less complicated play than the others, both in tone and structure, is hardly surprising for although finally transmitted a week after Stand Up (on 15 December 1965), it was actually the first to be written and recorded. This is why in his Introduction to the published scripts of the plays, Potter describes it as his "first full-length television play".⁷³ According to Roger Smith, because the sixty minute Confidence Course was felt to be "very sharp" and "exactly the sort of piece" The Wednesday Play was looking for, it was immediately decided to commission a full-length seventy-five minute play from Potter, for a projected transmission date of April 1965.⁷⁴ In common with other Wednesday Plays of the period, it was recorded on 35mm film stock a month before it was due to go out.⁷⁵ However, a technical flaw which had spoilt alternate reels in the film necessitated reshooting for a revised screening date of Wednesday 23 June. Transmission details were printed in the Radio Times for that week yet as Potter complained two years later in his Introduction to the published scripts: "... Seven hours before it was due to go out on the air, the BBC announced that the play was being withdrawn. It was, they said, 'not ready' for transmission".⁷⁶

Not for the last time in his career, Potter found himself embroiled in a censorship battle. It also cost Roger Smith his job as story editor of The Wednesday Play. After a huge argument with the Head of BBC TV Drama, Sydney Newman, Smith resigned over the issue.⁷⁷ Although certainly not alone amongst BBC management in his reservations about the play, Sydney Newman admits in interview that he was particularly uneasy

about Vote, Vote, Vote. It had to do with certain "Canadian prejudices" he had about naming real political parties in a work of dramatic fiction:

It posed a problem for me because it was about a Labour Party candidate... I was terribly worried about this and I had some of it modified and maybe incurred the wrath of Potter... The word 'censor' is lousy but if you're running a department, you're making judgements. You can call these judgements censorship or you can call them judgements. My judgement was that we would get into trouble if we alienated the Labour Party... I brought that to England with me, my Canadian, puritanical stuff... And of course I never had it with [Potter] directly - I had the big fight with Jimmy [MacTaggart] and Jimmy defended Potter which was good and so did the story editor defend Potter.⁷⁹

In the end, though changes were insisted upon, they proved not to be too substantial. After much negotiation, the savagery of the political agent's cynicism was toned down somewhat and the character given more 'balance' through motivation. As Potter sarcastically put it in 1967, "His benumbing, politically degenerate cynicism was, visibly, to gurgle out of a broken heart... Sob, sob."⁷⁹. In addition, Potter rewrote the last ten minutes of the play, making it, in his opinion, "more powerful. But because it didn't actually say it in one sentence they could pick on, it was let through". According to Potter, the difference between the first drafts and the second drafts of the play were in fact minimal⁸⁰

As outlined in the previous section, Vote, Vote, Vote's use of a cynical narrator, commenting directly on the action, was an idea developed from The Confidence Course. This time, however, the narrator is an on-screen character in the drama. In that sense, the device is a marked progression for as Potter made clear in 1967, Hay's comments - in close-up and to camera - are designed to be so cynical as to make even the most hard-hearted viewer instinctively recoil.⁸¹ This is clear from an example near the end of the play, when Hay describes his reasons for

taking Nigel canvassing round an old folks' home: "All's fair in love and politics... After all, some of them still had strength enough left to put an ex on a ballot paper... It's about the one thing left which gives them any importance. My job was to [bares his teeth] make sure they realise it".⁸²

Viewers are supposed to judge the savagery of Hay's cynicism and find it wanting, yet equally the intention is they should recognise some of the attitudes he expresses about the political process as their own, albeit heightened and made grotesque. This seems to be why Potter was so scathing about being forced to provide motivation to explain the character's behaviour, since in one sense it lets the audience off the hook: Hay's cynicism is reduced to the level of personal psychology rather than used as a vehicle to unsettle the audience with questions about its own political attitudes. As the playwright argued in 1967, this was the 'point' of the play - to portray a political campaign from the candidate's view in order to indicate that "Party politics in Britain has... almost ceased to be about real issues".⁸³ The intention was to show that disillusion with party politics was not the same thing as total political cynicism "which is surely a dangerous and disreputable position to maintain..." A vigorous assertive attitude, Potter maintained, could step "over the tub-thumper's little box or tear down the big bright poster".⁸⁴

The progression from The Confidence Course to Vote, Vote, Vote is therefore the exposure of such cynicism by bringing into view its founding source, the authorial narrator, in order that the audience can question his authority and motives. Faced with a biased unreliable narrator, the viewer is forced out of passivity in order to work to

understand the play and produce meaning. If, as previously noted, it is possible to trace the non-naturalistic device of a dramatic narrator back to the neo-Brechtian techniques of Studio 4, it can also be seen how clearly Potter was influenced by the Brechtian concept of an active, rather than passive, spectator, politically engaged in the production of meaning.⁹⁵ His advance was to extend the Studio 4 device, drawing upon techniques pioneered by literary modernism - replacing an objective, omniscient 'third person' voice with a subjective, unreliable narrator. Potter's introduction to television of the fractured perspectives of modernism was not confined, however, to undermining the 'dangerous and disreputable' position of total political cynicism in Vote, Vote, Vote. Both the Nigel Barton Plays and also Where the Buffalo Roam employ a range of non-naturalistic techniques; all of which serve to highlight the 'interior' qualities of the dramas and their highly 'authored' nature:

In Stand Up, for example, the emphasis on subjectivity is even greater than Vote, Vote, Vote, the later play clearly having evolved in terms of technique from its sister work. By this time, Potter seems to have learned how to interiorise his plays, constructing them around the memories and emotions of a central protagonist. Rather than being structured, as in the past, by a cynical, distancing narrator, both Stand Up and Where the Buffalo Roam are designed as 'memory plays' whereby the audience is given direct access to the memories and fantasies of the central male protagonist.⁹⁶ Frequent flashbacks lend both plays a highly fluid structure in which changes of scene and location are governed less by narrative chronology than associative psychological connections. A good example is the very beginning of Stand Up when Nigel is first seen accompanying his miner father to the pit gates. Watching his father head off for another day at the coalface, the son murmurs, "There but for the

grace of God and the eleven-plus..." Suddenly, the scene switches associatively to the village school where Nigel was first separated from his 'class'.⁸⁷

Even more strikingly, Potter shows Nigel's memories of his village school to be inherently subjective by specifically indicating in his script that all the children in the class (including the central protagonist) be played by adult actors. Not only does this technique magnify what Potter has called the "pains and terrors" of childhood, so aiding adult identification with events in the classroom, it also reinforces the scene's status as memory filtered through the adult's knowledge of how his former 'class-mates' progressed to maturity.⁸⁸

Together, the techniques of unreliable narrator, flashbacks and adults as children, can be seen as variants of Raymond Williams' label, 'psychological expressionism'. They all derive from the modernist impulse to 'express' individual subjectivity as more significant and 'real' in many ways than external 'reality' itself. Potter's chief achievement in Stand Up was to show, more or less for the first time, that television could be mobilised as a space for this kind of 'interior drama'. In 1976, he summed it up this way:

I'm much more concerned with interior drama than with external realities. Television is equipped to have an interior language... It seems to me very important that television should be concerned with that, because the people watching it are watching it in a very peculiar way, with all their barriers down. You've got a huge audience on the one hand, and yet it's also a series of very informal, very tiny audiences, multiplied X times, and the interior drama, if you like to call it such, can work in those conditions almost better than anything. Most of us bob around the streets with a whole boxful of fantasies, which are actually central to the way we see ourselves and other people...⁸⁹

1.2) Lost Apprenticeship

As the statement overleaf suggests, Potter, no less than Troy Kennedy Martin, had his 'theories' on the television play and its audience. Occasionally, in his career, these were set down in print. One important example is an article, "Cue Teleciné - Put on the Kettle", which first appeared in New Society a few months prior to the transmission of Where the Buffalo Roam.⁹⁰ The piece is important because not only does it give a contemporary insight into Potter's ideas, it also sheds light on why, throughout the sixties, he continued to write exclusively for television:

In the article, Potter maintains, in contrast to Kennedy Martin, that there should be no hard and fast definitions of television drama since these always tend to stultify. Instead he states his approach is that drama "takes its zest and colouring and technical proficiency from the news, documentaries, sports, entertainments and sermons which surround it" in the TV schedule. Viewers watch TV drama as "a television programme like the rest" and no-one bothers much about artificial boundaries in the evening's 'flow'.⁹¹ Much of the "exhilaration and purpose of writing" for the medium springs from this:

... Television drama does not even have to generate its own specific breath of "experiment" or novelty. Since it takes its colouring from the programmes encasing it in the evening's viewing, the TV play can plunder at will...

Styles can be parodied: the "horrible confessions" of Vox Pop can be mimicked; "the direct-to-camera burblings of clergymen and politicians" sent up. Potter cites the use of direct to camera narration in Vote, Vote, Vote as an example of a parody of the party political broadcast (and notes his great good fortune that on the night the play was finally transmitted, it was preceded by a P.P.B. from Edward Heath: "I could never

have had such a gift in the theatre or cinema").⁹² It is also possible to see Where the Buffalo Roam's parody of the Western genre as feeding off the popularity within the schedules of old cowboy films and Western series such as Wagon Train. Each of these styles "give different layers of response and different patterns of dramatic conflict as and when needed". As a result, Potter asserts the television play should be seen "as flexible as the whole thing around it". In marked contrast to Kennedy Martin, he states: "I would rather work on the assumption that [the TV play] does not exist in its own right at all".⁹³

Even more important in Potter's optimistic sixties gospel of 'anything goes' is the special relationship he sees between the writer and the TV audience. He takes Stand Up as an example:

In the theatre - or at least, in the West End - the audience [for this play] would have been largely on only one side of this particular fence. If it had worked at all in the cinema, the sort of tensions which any play creates in an audience might have compromised the effectiveness of the story, which attempted to use the specially English embarrassment about Class in a deliberately embarrassing series of confrontations. But with television, I knew that, in small family groupings, both coalminers and Oxford dons would probably see this play. To know this in advance, when actually getting the dialogue down on paper, is to feel the adrenalin slopping about inside yourself...⁹⁴

The gulf between don and coalminer, of course, is exactly the theme of Stand Up, Nigel Barton. To Potter, in the mid sixties, the desire to write for television was therefore so strong because of the potential it gave the author to leap over established hierarchies and bridge the class gap which Barton (and he) had had to face. Television could reintegrate the social outcast. In short, it offered the possibility of a common culture.

Potter ends his article by declaring that television gives the writer an awesome sort of freedom: "'thank you for letting me into your homes' oozes the comic and the fool doesn't realise the terrible truth of what he has just said as a public-relations cliché".⁹⁵

Aside from the Barton Plays and Where the Buffalo Roam, this almost evangelical vision of the possibilities of the medium can be seen at work in a number of plays from the mid to late sixties which, together, may be termed Potter's 'lost apprenticeship'. The scripts survive but like The Confidence Course, the videotapes of the actual productions were long ago 'wiped' to make room for other material:

Emergency Ward 9 (tx. 11.4.66) was one such piece. Again directed by Gareth Davies, it was written for Thirty Minute Theatre: a series of half hour plays which went out 'live' on BBC-2 every year from 1966 to the end of the decade.⁹⁶ As Potter's title suggests, the action takes place in hospital and indeed within a single set: "a large, long, rather shabby iron-bedsteaded and battle ship grey radiatored general ward (male) of a ramshackle London hospital" is how the setting is painstakingly described in his original script.⁹⁷

Much of the play's comedy (for it is largely a comedy) rests on the dilemma of Padstow (played by Tenniel Evans), a liberal teacher and lay preacher, who finds himself in the next hospital bed to Flanders (Terence de Marney) - an irascible old working class Londoner who exhibits deep racial prejudice against another patient in the ward: a black man called Adzola.

The preacher tries to convert Flanders to the cause of racial equality. He finds it difficult but eventually his message of brotherly love seems to hit home when the old man is delegated to deliver tea to all the patients and hands Adzola a cup, with a smile. His parting words, however, cause a storm: "Here y'are then, Sambo !"⁹⁸ Furious, Adzola lunges at the old man who in turn is flabbergasted. As he later explains to Padstow:

FLANDERS: ...I was only trying to be friendly. Give him a nice cup of tea. Little Black Sambo, that's what it said on the wall at school. Children of all countries. Little Black Sambo. With cokynuts and bananas and the Union Jack. I thought all niggers was called Sambo. I was only trying to be... good.⁹⁹

If Flanders' attitudes are shown to be the product of a bygone age of Empire and institutional racism, Padstow, far from leaving well alone, feels he must try to retrieve the situation. He calls Adzola over and begins to apologise for the old man's behaviour, stressing his is only a minority view. He is in for a shock, however, with Adzola's reply:

ADZOLA: Oh don't worry, man. I take no notice of a thing like him... He's a very common man. Working class... He's low class... I don't work with my hands, like he does. I'm my own boss, I am. He's just scum. I've just got me a new E-type, man, and that man there, he's got nothing, you know that ? Nothing ! (HE BOWS SLIGHTLY) Thank you for your good wishes.¹⁰⁰

He walks away, leaving Padstow's liberal conscience more confused than ever. Who has been the victim of greater prejudice: Flanders or Adzola ? Which was worse - the days of the British Empire with its institutionalised racial prejudice, or the 'glittering coffin' of the new post-war consumer society that holds out the possibility of success, regardless of colour and background, yet creates a new social pecking order based on money and possessions ? By wrestling in a humorous

fashion with this dilemma, Potter's play uses its hospital setting as a metaphor for British society in the 1960s and the idea that increased social mobility may mask a continuing (if transformed) structure of inequality. The ramshackle 'battle-ship grey' hospital comes to symbolise a Britain in terminal decline from an Empire past; a microcosm in which to observe the contemporary social mix - the liberal teacher/ preacher; the aspirant immigrant, as well as the older generation who fought in two World Wars at great personal cost but who now see themselves as disenfranchised. This is indicated not only by the name of the old man, 'Flanders' but also his constant complaints to Padstow: "I don't know what we fought the war for..."¹⁰¹

Potter's appropriation, for his play's title, of a familiar name from the world of popular culture can also be seen in this light. If the intention of his Thirty Minute Theatre offering is clearly to parody the half hour soap opera format, the reduction by one, of the numeral in Emergency - Ward 10 indicates a view that 'reality' in 'Britannia Hospital' never quite measures up to the ideal world of the soaps.¹⁰² Likewise, the ideal of racial and social harmony, it is implied, never quite works out in practice as intended. Padstow, the site of liberal values in the play, attempts to impose his ideals of brotherly love on Flanders but his own good intentions bring latent prejudice (on both sides) to the surface and help to make it worse. Another of Potter's 'torn' heroes, he is described at the end as being more "confused and unhappy" than ever.¹⁰³

Message for Posterity (tx. 3.5.67), another 'lost' Potter play, also explored the social implications of the decline of Empire. This was a full-length Wednesday Play, with the same production team as Where The Buffalo Roam (Gareth Davies the director; Kenith Trodd the story editor;

Lionel Harris the producer). Moreover, because of its 'controversial' theme, Message, like Vote, Vote, Vote before it, had been subject to a censorship wrangle within the BBC, prior to transmission. The reason this time was the similarity of Potter's fictional situation to real-life characters and events:

The play deals with Sir David Browning (played by Joseph O'Connor): an ex-wartime Conservative Prime Minister who has his portrait commissioned by the House of Commons as a tribute. The artist who is chosen to paint it, however, is a political radical who hates all that Browning stands for. James Player (Patrick Magee) agrees to the commission, telling his daughter that his portrait of Browning "will be - must - be brilliant. An indictment of the whole British Establishment. The sag of [Browning's] ageing flesh will be quite clearly the disintegration of a facade".¹⁰⁴

It was this which set alarm bells ringing within the BBC for as one commentator put it, "you don't need to be overgifted to come up with the conviction that the story has a remarkably strong bearing on the life of Sir Winston Churchill."¹⁰⁵ Akin to the fictional Browning, Churchill, too, had had his portrait commissioned to mark his eightieth birthday, yet the finished painting by Graham Sutherland had so displeased him in its depiction of him in old age that the portrait was never shown in public (and in fact was later destroyed).¹⁰⁶ With Churchill dead less than two years, his funeral a state occasion matched only by the death of royalty, this Potter play was inevitably going to be the source of some Corporation unease.¹⁰⁷

In retrospect, Potter's script is chiefly interesting not so much for this fact but rather for its uncertainty of response to its subject matter. Like Stand Up and Where the Buffalo Roam, there is a definite ambiguity running through it yet unlike those plays, it is not entirely clear whether this is the product of the sophistication of the writer or simply bad dramatic construction:

For example, the play incorporates numerous flashbacks to stirring wartime speeches in which Browning is seen urging Britain to cleanse the world of "the Nazi plague".¹⁰⁸ At the same time, the play stigmatises its 'Churchill' figure for his actions in the 1926 General Strike. Though he comes to respect (even feel affection towards) Browning, Player can never forgive him for having sent in troops to break up a miner's meeting "on some common ground in the middle of the Forest of Dean".¹⁰⁹ With this reference to Potter's own birthplace, it is not difficult to perceive a similar ambivalence to Churchillian values on the author's part, as his fictional artist experiences in Message.

As a whole, the play seems undecided as to whether it should be a hard-edged political drama or a celebration of the power of the artist to transcend both political and physical barriers. On the one hand, there is an emphasis on the artist as an omnipotent God able to manipulate others on a timeless canvas - Player at one point quotes Leonardo de Vinci: "The painter is lord of all types of people and of all things".¹¹⁰ On the other, Potter finally opts for a highly political attack on the power of the Establishment to suppress the freedom of the artist.

This occurs in the penultimate scene when, "as if suddenly possessed by a demon", Player violently assaults Browning after the old man falls asleep

posing for his portrait. "I'll 1926 you, you bastard !" Player cries.''' Order is quickly restored. In the final scene, Browning is shown propped up in bed, apparently well, as he is told by his granddaughter and private secretary that no-one will ever see the painting again. Player too will "never paint another picture... Not with his arms strapped behind his back... He won't trouble us again." In response, Browning mumbles the last words of the play: "We always win in the end... Always win... in the end."¹²

The play at its close therefore becomes about the ability of the British Establishment to move against any challenges to its authority, demonising the attacking artist as 'mad'. As such, its pessimism (mirrored in the real-life suppression of Sutherland's portrait) contrasts with The Confidence Course, where a similar challenge to the dominant order by a 'mad' hero, though defeated on the personal level, nevertheless achieved its objective of reversing the status quo.

It is just this despair with the capacity of political protest to effect change that makes Message for Posterity important in terms of Potter's development as a writer during the sixties. In many ways 'torn' between being a play about art and a play about politics, the work marks a moment of transition in Potter's concerns, coming as it does (in terms of chronology of composition) between the treatment of particular social issues such as class or illiteracy in his first few plays and later explorations of more 'universal' themes in A Beast with Two Backs or Son of Man (: S 1.3; 1.4). The fact that in Message, Potter lurches away from an exploration of the relationship between the artist and his subject, towards his usual Wednesday Play territory at this time of an attack on the political 'Establishment', seems to explain why it is only at the

play's end that class loyalty is finally shown to supersede admiration of 'Churchillian' wartime leadership. Like Where The Buffalo Roam, only then, it seems, does the author decide the weight of a repressed past necessitates a violent dramatic dénouement.

This need to attach (however incongruously) a violent climax to each of his plays was a characteristic Potter trait during the sixties. His first two ITV plays, for example - The Bonegrinder (tx. 13.5.68) and Shaggy Dog (tx. 10.11.68) - both exhibit this feature, almost as if the author knew that particularly on a commercial network, his plays would have to fight every second they were on air to satisfy a mass audience reared on a diet of police, western and adventure series. Though a recording of it still survives, The Bonegrinder (written for Associated Rediffusion) was a critical disaster (: § 2.2). If Shaggy Dog was greeted with marginally less venom by reviewers, nevertheless it was the work which became the victim of 'wiping'.¹¹³

Produced by Stella Richman for London Weekend Television (and again directed by Gareth Davies), Shaggy Dog is perhaps the most bizarre of all Potter's single plays.¹¹⁴ A man called Wilkie (played by John Neville) goes for an interview with the Restawhile Organisation, unaware that the company has decided to enlist the services of a management consultant who specialises in testing out interviewees' ability to cope with unexpected situations. This takes the form of his meeting each candidate, wearing a large bulbous clown's nose ! Wilkie goes into the interview and is startled by the clown's nose, yet not as startled as his potential employers when, later on in the interview, he produces a shotgun and threatens to kill them all. This he subsequently does. As he emerges from the office, a young female receptionist goes in, sees the carnage and

faints. Returning, Wilkie places the unconscious girl on the window ledge of this, the top floor of an executive tower block, and begins to tell her about 'the Rarys': mythical creatures of non-violence and innocence that were hunted to extinction by "the bloody, bloody hunters, management consultants, doctors..."¹¹⁵ Finally, the last known rary was trapped by 'the hunters' on the edge of a cliff: "The little thing looked down and knowing they were going to push, it said IT'S A LONG WAY TO TIPPERARY". With that, Potter's script states that "in the way... one might react to a shaggy dog story", Wilkie jumps from the top floor, whilst on the soundtrack, a "brass band compahs 'Tipperary'".¹¹⁶

As both the script and this truly awful pun make clear, Shaggy Dog should be taken at face value - as simply a shaggy dog story. Potter seems to have borrowed the theme of William Golding's 1955 novel, The Inheritors and used it as a metaphor to critique what he clearly saw as the absurdities of capitalism.¹¹⁷ Both at the beginning and the end of the play, the script specifies that shots of executive blocks should be counterpointed on the soundtrack with jungle noises. If the implication is of capitalism as a jungle in which it is either 'kill or be killed', Wilkie's reversal of power relations through violence recalls not only Hazlitt's reversal of the status quo in The Confidence Course but also Player's in Message. In common with the latter, however, there is evidence of increasing pessimism in the possibilities of that victory of the 'mad' hero being ever anything but temporary. As Wilkie makes clear in his own 'shaggy dog' story, there can be no escape from the 'hunters' and as if in proof, he, like the 'rary' with whom he so identifies, has to jump off the edge of Restawhile's temple to capitalism before he is effectively pushed. Pessimism is even built in to the very structure of

the play for by definition, a 'shaggy dog' story is one that can never happen in reality.

It is in this pessimistic light that Potter's subsequent work for the BBC should be evaluated. Although his final Wednesday Plays of the sixties, A Beast with Two Backs (tx. 20.11.68) and Son of Man (tx. 16.4.69), differ considerably from Shaggy Dog in their grappling with more universal 'grand themes', they also both, in varying degrees, continue the thread of pessimism and political disillusion which Message and his ITV work had begun to make visible.''^e

1.3) Who Killed The Bear ?

A Beast with Two Backs (Dir: Lionel Harris) tells a real-life tale, familiar to the writer from his childhood. In April 1899, some miners from Ruardean in the Forest of Dean stoned to death two Russian dancing bears, owned by a party of Frenchmen, after they had heard a rumour that one of the bears had allegedly mauled a child.¹¹⁹ In Potter's hands, this basic source material is expanded and reworked into an exploration of the prejudice, repression and fear that can fester within a closed community. This was the first time the playwright had set one of his plays in 'home' surroundings (a setting which would come to loom large in his later work).

The play begins with Joe (played by Patrick Barr), an Italian who brings a dancing bear into the Forest of Dean with a view to entertaining the children of a nearby village. In the village pub, however, some of the local miners are engaged in their own grotesque parallel entertainment: drunkenly baiting the village idiot, Rufus, who is also the mentally handicapped son of the local hell-fire preacher. Meanwhile, in the Forest near to Joe, two lovers hide in the undergrowth. Michael Teague (Laurence Carter) is carrying on an adulterous affair with the local 'whore', Rebecca but when she announces she is pregnant and threatens to tell the whole village, repressed fears surface. Michael pounds her head repeatedly with a rock and runs off, leaving her for dead.

When Joe and his bear, Gina, arrive in the village, word spreads fast among the locals that "There's a beast about the place".¹²⁰ In the meantime, Michael, the real 'beast', slinks back to his wife. Rufus is also dragged home by Ebenezer (Denis Carey), the Old Testament-like patriarch who guiltily fears his son's handicap is a punishment from God.

Later, the son succeeds in escaping his clutches and flees the village, just as several hours before, those other outsiders, Joe and Gina, were forced to head for the Forest in the face of the racial taunts of the villagers.

Under cover of darkness, Ebenezer goes into the Forest in search of his son and discovers him by Rebecca's body. Immediately, all his Old Testament fears and prejudices against women and his son's condition bubble up to the surface to take concrete form: "My God, I knew this would happen... Thou slut, Rebecca ! Thou slut !" Rebecca, however, is still moving, not quite dead. Fearing the consequences if she should live, Ebenezer tries to repress what he believes is his son's crime by taking its burden upon himself. It is he who finally kills her, lifting up a rock and bringing it crashing down upon her skull.

Word spreads around the village of a murder in the Forest, as 'a detective', a police inspector from nearby Coleford, is dispatched to investigate. Acting on a tip-off, he is led to Michael's house but Michael's wife covers for her husband by providing him with a concrete alibi. Someone must pay for the crime and later, in the village, Michael tries to divert suspicion away from himself by suggesting the killing may all have been the work of the dancing bear. Rather than face the fact of a 'beast' within their midst, his fellow coalminers acquiesce in this more convenient solution.

The drama reaches its climax, as all of the God-fearing villagers pack into the local church to hear their preacher's view of events. Ebenezer, burdened with guilt, climbs into the pulpit and announces "This is the last time I shall be speaking to you. I'm not worthy to be your

minister". He then begins a sermon which constitutes the 'message' of the play, as he publicly attempts to wrestle with his conscience:

EBENEZER: Be not easy. There is a beast inside each and everyone of you... Satan... was walking here about last night... Was it a man ? Or the beast that is inside every man ?¹²²

Michael, in the congregation and also guilty, refuses to acknowledge Ebenezer's agonised implication of a 'beast within'. He tries to displace the monster by calling out to the assembly: "The beast... Aye, the bear !" Eager to embrace this less disturbing possibility, the villagers leave the church to hunt down and kill the bear, as Ebenezer, sensing a way of purging himself of personal guilt, calls out fanatically from the pulpit:

EBENEZER: The Lord said an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. Let us get rid of the beast that festers inside us... Use the evil to get rid of the evil... Hunt down the beast that lurks within !... Hunt it down and burn it out ! Curse it and cleanse thyselfes !¹²³

A lynch party of miners, led by Michael, then head to the nearby quarry, where they overwhelm Joe and club the bear to death. At that moment, down in the village, Rufus listens puzzled from behind a door, as Ebenezer prays before hanging himself: "No, Lord. Rufus is a babe at arms. Do not punish him, God". Entering the room and seeing his father hanging, the boy runs panic-stricken out of the house and out of the village, meeting, to his horror, the returning lynch mob. As he speeds past them in the final shot of the play, one of the miners is heard to remark: "'Tis as if Devil himself was on his tail".¹²⁴

As Philip Purser suggested at the time, A Beast With Two Backs is "a powerful piece of myth-making" which, although set in 1890s Forest of Dean, has "the quality of being transposable to any other place" in

respect of its allegorical theme of 'the beast' that lurks just beneath the exterior of civilised man.¹²⁵ As such, the play shares with its immediate predecessor, Shaggy Dog, a strong similarity with the work of William Golding; in this case Golding's first novel, Lord of The Flies (1954).¹²⁶

On first transmission, many reviewers objected, however, to the play's unrelieved pessimism: "Blackest Wednesday" cried Henry Raynor of The Times whilst a puzzled Stanley Reynolds wondered in The Guardian why Potter had bothered to write this Wednesday Play at all:¹²⁷

The story of an Italian bear trainer who comes to a little village where his dancing bear is falsely accused of murder is loosely based on fact. But for some reason Potter abandoned the... real French bear trainers and their two bears and turned the dead child of the true story into a grown woman who is killed by her married lover when he finds she is pregnant.¹²⁸

In retrospect, these changes, whilst perhaps puzzling at the time, are explicable in the light of Potter's later work. Indeed they are what make this play a highly significant entry in the Potter canon for in A Beast, themes and motifs were introduced which much of the later writing would seek to explore and unravel.

On the surface, the play's topicality springs from its preoccupation with race and the characteristic British fear of 'the foreigner'. Though a theme which Potter had touched on before, for example in Emergency Ward 2, by 1967-8, this had come into much sharper focus as fears about immigration began to dominate the political agenda.¹²⁹ In interview, Potter described how A Beast fitted into this context:

So I just turned [the story] into the one bear: the Italian; the one man; the intruder; the image of the intruder. The image - the way we

see blacks, foreigners, is an animal. Like the Hartlepool people hanging the monkey as a French spy... I remember I wrote a very angry piece about Enoch Powell in the pre-Murdoch Sun. So that was very much in my head... because I'm aware myself of having certain racist tendencies. I know it... Because I think it's instinctive... That Race Relations stuff is a lot of crap: a lot of it, a lot of the time. And people are entitled to feel defensive... - if you were brought up in a street in Wolverhampton and you went back and it was full of mosques and people in saris..., You don't have to be a racist to feel pity about that. Well, I don't. Maybe I am a... racist ! I am in some ways. But then I distrust anyone who says they're not. I distrust people who have pure feelings, automatically and spontaneously. I don't believe it. I believe we have to struggle to get those... ¹³⁰

A Beast can be seen as part of Potter's 'struggle' to confront (and condemn) 'instinctive' racism by literally writing about it on his own doorstep: his native Forest of Dean. The behaviour of the isolated, backward Foresters towards the Italian and the bear symbolises the 'Little Englander' attitudes of Enoch Powell and others, who were seeking at the time to place the blame for their country's own post-war malaise upon a convenient external target.

Important though it is, there is much more to A Beast than this theme, however. The play's title hints at these other concerns for it is in fact a quotation from Shakespeare's Othello ("I am one, sir, that comes to tell you your daughter and the Moor are now making the beast with two backs" is how the villainous Iago reports to Desdemona's father at the beginning of the play).¹³¹ If, like Shakespeare's work, A Beast deals with the tragedy of 'colour' as well as of misplaced suspicion, the appropriation of Iago's bawdy phrase would seem to suggest that at least part of Potter's project is an exploration of sexual themes. It is this aspect which makes the play the direct ancestor of such later works as The Singing Detective and Potter's first novel, Hide and Seek (: § 5.3 c; 3.1). If A Beast is indeed 'a powerful piece of myth-making', an examination of

the play in the light of these subsequent works allows that 'myth' to be at least partially decoded.

As outlined overleaf, the key motifs of the play are:

1. An Italian (with a 'beast') who intrudes into the Forest of Dean.
2. 'The crime': adultery and assault in the Forest; a 'detective' who goes on the trail of the killer.
3. Uneasy relationship between father and son - Old Testament patriarch and his 'crippled' charge; attendant guilt and repression.
4. The sermon on 'the beast within' that leads to the killing of the bear.

As Stanley Reynolds wondered, why should Potter change the real-life story of the frenchmen into the single 'image of the intruder': the Italian in the Forest ? His first novel, Hide and Seek (written in 1972 and published a year later), suggests an answer. In it, the main character remembers a brutal encounter with an Italian Prisoner of War when he wandered alone, as a child, into the Forest of Dean:

Behind him the grass slithered quietly, and he closed his eyes. He could hear breathing, slow and heavy, the sweet breath of God, which made all things come alive.

A hand came down upon his shoulder and he opened his eyes again.

'You with anybody ?' asked the voice, a soft purr of gentleness in it.

'No', said the boy whispering.

'You wanta see nice ring ?'

... Something was wrong. He turned, bewildered and saw a big man with spiky grey hair, a tanned skin and eyes that later always seemed to be the colour of phlegm.

'But you're not God !' he said, almost shouting, relieved and disappointed.

... They looked at each other without moving. They were alone in the middle of acres of oak, hundreds of yards away from the nearest path. It would have been a sensible place to have encountered a loving creator, but it was a wretched spot for a pale and spindly child to fall victim to the predatory hunger of an Italian prisoner of war with a tobacco tin filled with metal rings made in the camp workshop three miles away across the woods... 132

"I was... sexually assaulted when I was ten years of age. That is true. I was", Potter admitted in interview. He added: "...People endure what they endure and they deal with it. It may corrupt them. It may lead them to all sorts of compensatory excesses in order to escape the nightmare, the memory of that." In terms of his work, however, he stressed this traumatic real-life event should not be seen as the main raison d'être but only 'a sidenote': "It's important but it's not that important [because still] you're left with your basic human strivings and dignity..."¹³³

Certainly, in A Beast, it is important to acknowledge since the crime for which the Italian becomes the innocent scapegoat is a 'sex crime': namely, Michael's adultery which blurs into assault. In turn, this casts light on why Potter should choose to replace (as well as equate) the assumed mauling of a child in the real-life incident, with the actual murder in the play of a pregnant woman. Sex and death are consistently linked in Potter's writing - for example, in The Singing Detective where the Forest adultery of A Beast is reworked into a famous scene in which the main protagonist recalls surreptitiously witnessing his mother commit adultery with his father's best friend, around the time of V.E. Day in 1945, when he was ten years old. His subsequent revelations to her about what he has seen become linked in his memories with her death. Moreover, in trying to piece together these clues from the past, the central protagonist, Philip Marlow becomes a 'detective', akin to the similar figure in A Beast. In both works, too, the 'crime' of adultery is specifically couched in dialogue which evokes imagery of the Fall

(: § 5.3 c). In the 1968 play, Rebecca is cast as Eve the temptress, holding out 'the forbidden fruit' of adulterous sexuality to Michael who in turn replies:

MICHAEL: I do feel like a snake every time I look at thee.

REBECCA: Snake's right. Snake in the grass. Who do you want ? Her down there with her red neck and her dolly tub ? Or me up here with my back in the grass ? ¹³⁴

Michael is characterised as both the wicked serpent and the tempted Adam: 'torn' between spirit (loyalty to his wife) and flesh (the 'forbidden fruit' of his lover). As in the Genesis story, this functions as a metaphor for Man's supposed dual nature - the competing claims of animality and spirituality between which he must choose. If he chooses the former (the 'beast'), he transgresses God's law, automatically forsaking access to divinity and heaping eternal damnation upon himself. A form of spiritual 'death' will ensue. He will be literally shut out of Eden. As the 'fallen' Ebenezer makes clear to his congregation at the climax of A Beast: "Man is but an airy beast if he does not walk in the ways of the Lord, your God".¹³⁵ Similarly, the child in Hide and Seek, believing he is approaching union with God in his own 'Garden of Eden' (the Forest of Dean), turns to find himself staring into the eyes of 'a beast' - another 'snake in the grass' who brings what the boy of the novel, with his intense Bible upbringing, can only ever see as a spiritual Fall from grace; from God.

In the 1968 play, the source of Ebenezer's despair is therefore that he cannot approach divinity because he is afflicted with this same 'beast' of human sexuality. Finishing what the other started, his murderous assault of Rebecca links him with the adulterer Michael as one of the 'fallen'. By virtue of the equation of sex with death which runs right through Potter's work, his becomes a symbolic sexual act for which he will later feel remorse.

Crucially, however, in perpetrating this act, he is watched by his son, Rufus - just as the young Marlow watched a similar parental 'sex crime' in The Singing Detective. If Michael and Ebenezer are linked by deed, Rufus, as maligned victim, is implicitly related to the slaughtered bear, both in terms of his Latin name and the blame heaped upon him as a consequence of others' guilt. By virtue of his status as the village idiot, scorned by the wider community and falsely accused by Ebenezer of a crime he himself later commits, Rufus resembles Georgie Pringle in Stand Up. Moreover, the classroom scene in Stand Up, which shows 'a lie' becoming 'a truth' for the sake of another's persecution, echoes the scapegoat theme of A Beast. Just as Potter equated the backward child with the clever child in Stand Up as the same type of outcast from the community, so too does the uneasy relationship between father and son in A Beast seem to echo that between Nigel and his father in the 1965 play. As the repository of Old Testament values, Ebenezer the patriarch literally functions as God to his 'crippled' son. This intricate web of connections becomes revealing when set out schematically:

Joe and bear => related to Italian P.O.W of Hide and Seek = 'beast'

Rebecca => pregnant 'whore' in forest => related to dead Mrs Marlow of The Singing Detective = dead 'mother'

Michael => adulterer / murderer => linked by physical deed to Ebenezer =>

Old Testament patriarch = God-like father

Rufus => 'cripple' => outcast / victim => related to Pringle => linked in Stand Up to Nigel Barton = clever child

This allows an interpretation of the Beast 'myth' for what the play seems to be exploring in coded form is a version of 'the Fall' - the end of childhood 'innocence' through the child's shock of realisation of how it

came ^{to} ~~it~~ be, as the product of sexual intercourse between its parents. In the play, a symbolic sexual act is depicted between a symbolic mother and God-like father which is witnessed by a 'child'. This discovery of 'forbidden knowledge' literally brings death in its wake - to the 'mother' but also to the child's 'guilty' father. A bond of trust and belief in a God-like father is shattered and to the now alienated child, the resulting loss of integration and security represents the end of Eden: an expulsion from the Garden and the arrival of 'a beast' in his midst. God has gone out of his life and a God-like father, with his set of patriarchal absolutes, evaporates to become nothing but 'an airy beast'.

If that 'beast' is ultimately linked to the one brought by the Italian, the play absolves him, however, of all blame. He is shown to be a false scapegoat - simply a 'bogeyman' (: § 3.0).¹³⁶ The real beast is revealed to be much closer to home, within the hearts of the Foresters themselves. Erupting into brutality, it is their repressions that are shown to be the real cause of the 'crime' in the play and it is from their Old Testament world of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth that Rufus, the 'outcast', 'cripple' child must flee at the end, if he himself is ever to confront and deal with his own 'beast inside', as Ebenezer's sermon urged. The message behind the play's bleak ending seems to be that Old Testament bloodshed must give way to genuine Christian forgiveness and toleration, if a taming of the real beast is ever to take place.

Double-edged, therefore, with regard to its themes - a surface concern with racial prejudice, an exploration of a whole cauldron of hidden demons underneath - this play is literally 'A Beast with Two Backs'. One question surely remains. Why should Potter choose to link his sexual

themes with the real-life story of the 'bear'? What prompted the connection in the first place ?

Newspaper research may provide an answer. During the nineteen forties, The Ross Gazette, a newspaper covering the Ross-on-Wye / Forest of Dean area, revived local interest in the bear story. It delved into its files to retell the bear story of fifty years before, under the headline, "Who Killed The Bear ?"¹³⁷ It is the date of this article which provides (at the very least) a remarkable coincidence for the story appeared one week after V.E. day, on May 17th 1945 - that is, on the date of Potter's tenth birthday.

1.4) End of Apprenticeship

In many ways, Son of Man (Dir: Gareth Davies) was a natural progression from A Beast in terms of themes and subject matter. This was Potter's final Wednesday Play (the slot gained a new time and title in 1970) and it undoubtedly sealed his reputation as a major playwright, winning praise and perhaps even more significantly, many column inches in the British press.

The reason for the publicity was Potter's controversial retelling of the Gospels in which Jesus (played by Colin Blakeley) is presented as a wild man - an outcast fasting in the wilderness who is racked by doubts over His own divinity. Like many other Potter protagonists, this Jesus is a 'torn' hero, caught between the demands of the everyday world and those of His spirit. God "burns inside", making Him no longer sure He is simply the son of a carpenter.¹³⁸

As the action of the play widens out to examine the historical context of the Roman Occupation of Judaea, it becomes clear there are many 'agitators and terrorists' claiming to be the Messiah amongst the persecuted Jews who long for such a figure. When Jesus emerges from the wilderness to gather disciples, His claims to be 'the One' are greeted initially with derision by Andrew and Peter who brand Him a "looney".¹³⁹

Soon, He convinces them to join in His mission, yet as He goes preaching amongst the people, Potter's Jesus performs no miracles. The nearest the play comes to one is when He is seen calming one of His audience who has fallen into a fit. Significantly, this is presented as no supernatural event but simply a tried and tested psychological technique familiar to contemporary audiences: 'The Warrendale technique' which involves the

therapist wrestling with the victim in order to calm him or her.¹⁴⁰ To Jesus' dismay, His superstitious onlookers do take it as a miracle.

As indicated by its title, the central assertion of the play, therefore, is that Jesus was less a supernatural entity and more a 'son of man', with all of a man's doubts and fears. This is encapsulated by lines of dialogue which Potter added to the subsequent stage version of the play. When Jesus is asked by Judas if He is from God, He replies: "The son of man must be a man. He must be all of a man... He cannot be other than a man, or else God has cheated."¹⁴¹

If the play is an attempt to demythologise the life of Christ, it is, then, in this way, to emphasise how much more remarkable His martyrdom must have been, if He were essentially a human being opposing His will over His own physical fears and 'animal' instincts for self-preservation. If He had been anything other than a man, Potter seems to be saying, His Mission to be a role-model for the rest of humanity would essentially have been an empty one - a divine deceit.

This links the play with A Beast for if that work emphasised the 'animal' in man, Son of Man foregrounds the ability of the human 'spirit' to overcome the demands of the physical body, with regard to what Potter clearly sees as the dual nature of Man.¹⁴² While A Beast dramatised the terrors of an Old Testament logic and world-view, Son of Man emphasises in opposition Jesus' New Testament message of love and forgiveness. This is made explicit in Potter's handling of the Sermon on the Mount which almost exclusively concentrates upon Christ's injunction to "Love thy enemies" (Matthew 6, 44):

JESUS: An eye for an eye. A tooth for a tooth... So our forefathers have spoken... Love your own kind. And hate the enemy... Love for your enemies. That is what I have come to tell you... Love - your - enemy!' ¹⁴³

Rather than promising Heaven in the after-life, Potter's Jesus is thus a revolutionary idealist seeking it in this one, opposing the "eye for an eye" view of the Old Testament patriarchs (such as Ebenezer in A Beast) with an identifiably socialist vision of a brotherhood of man. In turn, this links in with Potter's treatment of Judas (Edward Hardwicke) who is characterised in the play as one of the Temple Police (laymen who enforce the 'Law' of Judaism). Sympathetic to Christ's message of love, Judas is sent as a spy by the devious Caiphas, High Priest of the Temple, to infiltrate the disciples and note down any of Christ's 'blasphemies'. Rather than for thirty pieces of silver, Potter's Judas thus betrays Christ to the authorities in the mistaken belief this will help clear His name and establish His credentials to the Temple Court as the true Messiah. To his horror, he finds Christ is resigned to the inevitability of the sacrifice He must make. Maintaining His silence in front of Caiphas, He refuses to help Himself. Condemned as a blasphemer, He is handed over to Pilate (Robert Hardy) who is shaken by Christ's eery calm in the face of death. In a clear reversal of roles, Christ urges him not to be afraid. Frightened by what he cannot understand, Pilate immediately orders His crucifixion. As Potter's directions in the stage version then make clear, "the biblical account follows in all its brutality": Christ is beaten, stripped, whipped and crucified by a mob of Roman soldiers.' ¹⁴⁴

Reminiscent of the ending of A Beast in its emphasis on the blood sacrifice of the innocent to appease collective guilt, the television Son of Man concludes on a similar bleak note. Christ is seen on the cross

shaking with rage. His final words are: "Father ! Father ! Why have you forsaken me ?"¹⁴⁵ The play finishes there at the moment of death and extreme despair, with no depiction of the subsequent supernatural resurrection portrayed in the Gospels. That Potter should end his play this way might seem puzzling given the view expressed overleaf that Son of Man is in many ways more optimistic than A Beast in terms of its vision of the triumph of the human 'spirit' over 'animal' instincts for self-preservation. One reason is hinted at in an interview Potter gave to the Radio Times, in which he dwelt upon Jesus' message of 'Love thy enemies': "The thought behind that leaps 2000 years. Today we have war after war, race riot after race riot. We are still no nearer loving our enemies."¹⁴⁶

If the purpose of the television version was therefore to show that in terms of the subsequent path of human history, Jesus' sacrifice was in vain, when the BBC decided to repeat the play only two months later, as a result of the favourable critical reaction to its first showing, the Radio Times ran a follow-up piece examining the responses. It recorded the opinion that many Christians "could only be distressed at the play ending with words of despair... instead of the defiant and victorious 'It is accomplished. Father into thy hands...'"¹⁴⁷ Significantly, when Potter came to adapt his play for the stage, he modified the ending to take account of these objections. After Jesus dies a 'realistic' death on the cross with words of despair on his lips, Potter's stage directions indicate:

The Lights fade, leaving a spotlight on the cross. Calm. Jesus is still, finished. Then he lifts his head in sudden triumph
JESUS: It - is - ACCOMPLISHED !
His head drops. It is all over. The spot slowly fades. Darkness.
No sound.¹⁴⁸

If a 'supernatural' emphasis is therefore put on Christ's life and death in the stage version, unusually, Potter seems to have been striving in his TV play for a believable naturalism. The use in the script, for example, of anachronistic colloquialisms like 'flaming' and 'shut up', together with the casting of Colin Blakeley as an iconoclastic, fiery Christ, underline the fact that Potter was clearly seeking to lend the Gospels an 'earthy' reality to contemporary audiences. Indeed, the request for the Northern Irish, "barrel-chested" Blakeley to play Christ was the writer's own, after he had seen him as De Stogumber in a BBC Plays production of Saint Joan.¹⁴⁹ As Potter put it, Blakeley's performance exhibited such pent-up hatred and aggression: "It was the pent-up quality that I wanted, not of hatred this time but of this other, unprecedented thing that was pent up".¹⁵⁰

The resulting portrayal of Christ made Potter and Son of Man a news event, setting a precedent that later works would follow. The play was heavily previewed by the press prior to transmission and prominent slots were set aside on television for analysis and discussion with critics and theologians.¹⁵¹ If the net effect of all this hype was further to confirm the reputation of The Wednesday Play 'discovery' of four years before, the expected post-transmission controversy never came. Despite some newspapers' best attempts ("Storm over TV Christ" - The Daily Mail; "'Tough Guy' Christ Shocks Viewers" - The Daily Mirror), most were forced to concede with The Guardian, a "Quiet Reception for New Son of Man".¹⁵² As the play's producer Graeme McDonald recalls, much of the reaction to the play was supportive, with only a minority protesting that a Christ with a Northern Irish accent was 'obscene'.¹⁵³ Several churchmen praised the portrayal as "rightly desentimentalised" and "moving" whilst most of the (not outstandingly high number of) viewers' telephone calls to the

BBC post-transmission, were critical not so much of the play's 'blasphemous' reworking of the Gospels, as the violence of the Crucifixion scenes.'⁵⁴ TV reviewers, on the whole, were also extremely kind to the play. Julian Critchley in The Times thought the play a "considerable achievement" whilst James Thomas of the Express described it as "one of the most compelling pieces ever put out by that controversial vehicle The Wednesday Play." It was perhaps The Daily Sketch, however, which put its finger on the real reason for the play's success, with its headline "This Gospel of our Times".⁵⁵

Potter's Christ is indeed a Christ of the late sixties. A long-haired drop-out who wanders into Judaea preaching a message of 'love and peace', He is not only a 'hippy' but as Peter and Andrew make clear, a 'looney' in the sense that He genuinely believes He can change things.⁵⁶ If a determination to overturn the established order links Him with other 'mad' outsiders like Mercer's axeman in For Tea On Sunday or Potter's own Hazlitt in The Confidence Course, it also makes Him, as the son of a carpenter, very much like Nigel Barton: a 'working class hero' Who feels Himself different from His class and Who sets out to challenge 'the Occupying Power' in the name of the poor and oppressed. Moreover, like Barton, He, too, has doubts about His own 'upward mobility'. In one famous scene, widely commented upon by reviewers, Jesus approaches one of the crucifixion crosses scattered across the Judaeian landscape and strokes the wood, commenting "Good timber, this... I could fill a room with tables and chairs with wood like this". For a moment, the anguished Messiah becomes a simple carpenter again, forgetting the terrors of the cross on which He knows He will die. Later, out of earshot of His disciples, He smacks the wood and mutters "Ach ! You should have stayed a tree... And I should have stayed a carpenter".⁵⁷

Potter's portrayal of Christ's age as one of violent revolutionary fervour also carries clear echoes of the period; in this case the year of the play's composition: 1968. As the writer made clear in contemporary interviews, he decided to write the play, after having come into contact with some of the notable 'student revolutionaries' of the period:

I was staying in a flat in London when Danny le Rouge came over that time. All the left-wingers met there one evening - Tariq Ali, everyone - debating away. I listened and felt very lonely and out of it. The same old hates, the same old dogma, the same belief that if only the systems of the world could be changed everyone would be happy. No concern for the sick and the bereft and the lonely and the suffering. Jesus was their man. He was their man the instant He asked himself the terrible question : 'Am I He ? am I the Messiah ?'¹⁵⁸

It was his reaction against the violence of sixties revolutionary politics that prompted Potter to make the 'love your enemies' passage from the Gospels the central message of Son of Man:

This was something completely the opposite of the vengeful Judaic creed of 'an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth'. This is what was really revolutionary about Jesus. I suppose the play represents a retreat from political positions I previously held.¹⁵⁹

In turn, it was this notion of violence begetting violence that gave Son of Man its topicality. Christ is portrayed as the genuine revolutionary (amongst many false ones) on account of His truly novel message of 'Love your enemy'. It is fear of this which makes the political 'Establishment' of His day plot against Him. As some contemporary reviewers spotted, Judas, caught in a larger conspiracy he cannot understand, very much represents the 'anguished liberal' figure within the drama.¹⁶⁰ Sympathetic to the aims of the 'revolution', he betrays it in the end through his earnest attempts to intercede on its behalf with the devious authorities.

Just as with A Beast, public and personal themes also mingle in Son of Man. As Potter makes clear in his statement overleaf, the play was a conscious movement away from 'political' concerns towards a grappling with more private issues of religious faith. Again, this is most apparent in Judas' relationship with Christ which resembles the villain - victim relationship of Barton and Pringle in Stand Up. This symbolic link first becomes clear when Judas arrives amongst the disciples, claiming he wants to join Christ's Mission. In both the television and stage versions, there is instant 'electric' rapport between traitor and Messiah to the exclusion of all the other disciples (- as Potter's directions for the stage play indicate, "The others are out of it; this is between Jesus and Judas"¹⁶¹).

Such a relationship puzzled some contemporary reviewers who correctly identified that "in the Gospel according to Potter, Judas is gentle and Christ violent. A reversal of roles... more topical than true".¹⁶² In contrast to the angry, scruffy Christ, Judas "looked for all the world like an SPCK Jesus, all gently waving locks and sad benevolence".¹⁶³ Given the link between 'traitor' and 'victim' made in previous Potter works, this becomes explicable in terms other than a simple reversal of stereotypical representations. Judas is given sympathetic treatment because he is not only a 'traitor' but a 'victim' of his ideals who closely resembles Christ in intention if not in deed. What makes him a traitor, is, akin to Nigel Barton, his desire that his beliefs should 'stand up' in the Temple Court and be publicly validated. Just like Barton in his relationship with his father, Judas, by proudly seeking to 'broadcast' his ideals, betrays both himself and the site of all his values: Christ his 'master'.

In marked contrast, Potter's Jesus maintains a humble, dignified silence throughout interrogation and thus fails to betray. Judas may appear like a Messiah both in appearance and his wish to campaign publicly on behalf of others but like Nigel Barton, he is revealed to be a traitor because while apparently sincere in intentions, he belongs more to the 'enemy' than with those he seeks to represent. True authenticity in the play resides in the 'earthy' working class Jesus who will not betray His peers because He remains part of them - as Potter put it, 'He was their man'.

If the correspondence with Stand Up, Nigel Barton helps explain the links between Judas and Jesus, it also indicates why both characters are 'torn' by inner conflict. This is true too of the play as a whole. On one level, the portrayal of Christ in relation to His time may unite religion with politics but the play itself seems 'torn' between these conflicting concerns. This is echoed by Potter's two alternative endings for it: on television, a humanistic and politically 'authentic' enactment of the Crucifixion, ending with Christ's cry of despair as He dies; on stage, a greater emphasis on the religious significance of the act ('It is accomplished').

In a number of contemporary interviews, too, it is possible to detect an ambivalence in Potter's response to the Christian story. If, on the one hand, he could describe himself as an agnostic and not religious at all ("I went to chapel as a kid but as soon as I grew up I stopped"); on the other, he could assert he wrote the play as a free thinker who "would like to believe" and who shares a "yearning for there to be something else".¹⁶⁴ It seems the play itself was a grappling with his own personal faith; an attempt to reconcile adult agnosticism with a childhood Christian upbringing, using drama to create a Christ in which he,

personally, could believe. This seems to be what he meant when he described how, out of his own doubts and longings, he tried to create a 'real man' and to write a play "about a man questioning himself".¹⁶⁵ Potter's Christ was made in the author's own image: his uncertainty about his faith became, in the play, Christ's uncertainty over His divinity.

Even at the time, Potter could therefore recognise Son of Man as marking a sea change in his work. In his 1969 interview with The Sunday Telegraph, he described how he had written most of the play whilst in hospital, after having undergone a period of illness and depression. Significantly, he concluded:

Everything I've done till now I see as an apprenticeship. Every time I've seen one of my plays I've felt twinges of shame. With [Son of Man] I think the apprenticeship is over. I begin to say something which I really feel, without the awful barriers and the cheats and the deceits and the deceptions. The feeling that you've done something at last gives you a sense of emancipation. Actually, it somehow got me out of hospital.¹⁶⁶

1.5) Conclusion

As Potter recognised at the time, Son of Man therefore marked the end of his 'Confidence Course' on The Wednesday Play. The 'atheist' of Barry Norman's 1965 profile had turned out to be like his fictional creation, Nigel Barton, after all: "An atheist who is fond of hymn tunes" (- as Barton describes himself at one point in Stand Up).¹⁶⁷

If Potter's move to more 'spiritual' themes is clearly detectible in his later contributions, as this chapter has tried to indicate, it had already been foreshadowed by the earlier plays. All of his Wednesday Play work was distinguished by a fusion of the political and the personal in which topicality of subject-matter often served only to half-obscure the

cauldron of private anxieties, embodied by a succession of 'torn' male central protagonists, that was seething underneath.

Outside, in the wider television world, times were changing, however. In 1968, the Head of BBC TV Drama Sydney Newman had quit his job to become a feature film producer with Associated British Pictures. That same year, James MacTaggart, Tony Garnett and Kenith Trodd had departed the BBC to form their own independent TV production company: Kestrel (: § 2.0 a). Thus many of the protagonists who had made The Wednesday Play possible and helped facilitate Potter's success had left the BBC by the end of the sixties. As a result, some newspaper pundits questioned the survival not only of The Wednesday Play but of the single television play itself.¹⁶⁶ If, by the close of the sixties, its 'golden age' was certainly over, the BBC's original play slot continued on into the seventies as Play for Today and Potter continued with it. As Chapter Two will illustrate, if times got tougher, so, too, did Potter's writing and attitudes. Though consistently engaging with contemporary society, his plays of the seventies became less openly 'political' and more introspective in tone and content. Their author had begun consciously to create an oeuvre rather than (as had perhaps been the case for much of the previous decade) seeking to attack the world.

CHAPTER TWO

ANGELS ARE SO FEW: THE "PLAY FOR TODAY" ERA

2.0) (a) "Wednesday Play" Rebels': Kenith Trodd and Kestrel Productions

"They thought they were buying The Wednesday Play lock, stock and barrel", reflected Kenith Trodd in 1970.' He was recalling the rise and fall of Kestrel - British TV's first independent drama production company, formed long before Channel 4 helped establish the notion of the 'independent' TV producer. 'They' were London Weekend Television - the ITV company which three years earlier had promised to revolutionise commercial television. Both had become victims of their own ideals:

The brainchild of TV presenter David Frost and his business partner Clive Irving, LWT's original aim had been to bring the values of the sixties 'counter-culture' to television. The ambition was to shake up the existing ITV network with a new company that would reflect the more anarchic, anti-Establishment mood of the times. In order to win a franchise to broadcast, Frost set out to persuade the Independent Television Authority (ITV's regulatory body) that LWT stood for programme 'quality', rather than simple money-making. He did so by boldly going to the heart of public service broadcasting and poaching some of the BBC's top programme-making talent. Seduced by the vision of a Trojan horse that was going to breach the walls of ITV, bringing 'culture' to the

masses, many famous Corporation figures, including Humphrey Burton, Frank Muir and BBC-1 Controller Michael Peacock, were persuaded to join Frost in his latest television venture.²

In terms of drama, LWT looked no further than The Wednesday Play. Both Trodd and Tony Garnett were approached separately at the end of 1967 and asked whether they would like to defect to 'the other side'. Meeting over a drink, the pair tried to work out a joint response. Ardent left-wingers, neither wished to work for a commercial company. Hence why not embarrass LWT by saying they would not come individually but only as part of an autonomous collective? According to Trodd, both thought this would put an end to LWT's wooing.³ To their amazement, they found the new company was only too happy to oblige and suddenly what had started as a dismissive riposte became a serious business proposition. As Trodd stated in 1970, "LWT were vulnerable at that time - new and knowing very little about drama".⁴ Thinking they were 'buying' the prestigious Wednesday Play, they were glad to accept any terms that he and Garnett cared to demand.

To an extent, the company was right to believe it had bought The Wednesday Play. In order that LWT could promote itself in its franchise application as a champion of 'quality' drama, Trodd and Garnett enlisted two more distinguished Wednesday Play practitioners, David Mercer and James MacTaggart, to act as partners in their new drama collective. Thus swelled to four, this group, together with Clive Goodwin (Trodd and Potter's agent at the time), formed Kestrel. Appropriately named after a small bird of prey, its principal task was to service LWT with television plays.⁵

Over the next two years, Kestrel produced seventeen plays for the new ITV company, including works not only by Potter but Jim Allen, Roger Smith and Colin Welland.⁶ Trodd and Garnett's collective became a haven for fellow refugees from The Wednesday Play: an apparent oasis of freedom and control from which drama practitioners could cock a snook at what they felt to be the constraints of working at the BBC. In practice, 'the Wednesday Play rebels' (as the press dubbed them) encountered just as many restrictions at LWT as the BBC.⁷ These were chiefly economic and logistic. As the TV critic T.C. Worsley complained in 1969, one of the defining features of The Wednesday Play work particularly associated with Garnett had been its location shooting on film. The Kestrel plays, however, were 'ham-strung' by their need to be recorded on videotape within the confines of LWT's studios - "In the studio", Worsley wrote, "it has proved impossible to capture that very breath and taste of contemporary life which the film plays specialised in."⁸

At the same time, the rebels found censorship pressures were not unique to the BBC. In the course of its two year association with the company, a number of Kestrel's productions became embroiled in controversy with LWT management. The very first play Trodd produced for LWT aroused deep unease, being a satire on the ITV franchise race which the company had so recently won.⁹ Similarly, when Kestrel commissioned a work from the celebrated French director, Jean Luc Godard, this too ran into trouble. Immersed in the revolutionary politics of Paris 1968, Godard delivered British Sounds - an 'anti-Image' film, consisting almost entirely of polemical voice-overs expressing solidarity with British workers. When Humphrey Burton, LWT's Head of Arts, deemed it untransmittable, he provoked a huge, very public, row.¹⁰

The British Sounds affair was undoubtedly Kestrel's and LWT's greatest failure. As Trodd put it, "It did show... the limitations of LWT's liberalism, even in their honeymoon period."¹ It also underlined the difficulties which a left-wing collective faced in attempting to operate within a commercial TV environment. In September 1969, both sets of problems came to a head when, confronted with dwindling audiences, falling advertising revenue and pressure from the other ITV companies, the LWT Board decided to sack its Managing Director, Michael Peacock.

Furious at this coup d'état, many programme-makers, including Trodd and Garnett, expressed their solidarity with Peacock by tendering their own resignations, arguing that LWT would never have won its franchise if it had not been for its staff. Appeals to the ITA to intervene fell on deaf ears since the latter did not wish to embroil itself in the internal affairs of an ITV company. Meanwhile, the LWT Board hired an Australian newspaper tycoon to become the company's troubleshooter - one Rupert Murdoch. With his help, new schedules were drawn up to appease advertisers. These were approved by the ITA and LWT's flirtation with the sixties 'counter-culture' was over.

Looking back on the Peacock crisis, Trodd asserted in 1970 that Kestrel's was a straight choice between survival and honour. He and Garnett felt there was no honour in survival at LWT.^{1,2} With offers of work elsewhere, both decided to go their separate ways. Prior to this dissolution, however, Trodd managed to commission and produce two Potter plays for Kestrel / LWT. Both are interesting in their own right. One is crucial for understanding the writer and his work.

2.0 b) 'Happy Days...'

Moonlight on the Highway (tx. 12.4.69; Dir: James MacTaggart) in many ways marked a watershed in Potter's writing. The first Potter play to be produced by Trodd (for Kestrel), it was also the first to articulate a number of key themes which the writer would later come to explore in more detail in his most famous works, Pennies From Heaven and The Singing Detective. Above all, Moonlight was the first play to foreground what would become a Potter trademark: a fascination with the popular music of the nineteen thirties and forties.

The play revolves around David Peters - a journalist who shares not only the same initials as 'Dennis Potter' but also an obsession with thirties pop music, particularly the songs of the legendary thirties crooner, Al Bowlly. One Bowlly song haunts the play's soundtrack; a 1938 tune called "Moonlight On The Highway", with its plaintive lyric: "Moonlight on the Highway / ... Turn your light on my way / Through Memory Lane ..." ¹³

Juxtaposed with the music are Peters' own memories. There are flashbacks to a funeral, intercut with a child's eye-view of "being sexually assaulted by a man with spiky hair and eyes the colour of phlegm" in a narrow lane, near his home, when he was ten years old.¹⁴ As with clues in a detective story, it is the significance of these images and their connection with Bowlly which the rest of the play seeks to unravel.

Moreover, the way this is done is highly reminiscent of The Singing Detective in which the central protagonist, Philip Marlow, is forced to confront his own repressed past with the help of a hospital psychotherapist (: § 5.3 c). In Moonlight, Peters also goes to hospital and encounters Chiltern - an urbane psychiatrist who believes he has the

answers to all problems. He establishes that Peters' mother died only six weeks before and that somehow this event has become mixed up in the patient's mind, not only with the terrifying childhood assault but with the death of Bowly who was killed in the London Blitz by a buzz-bomb, right at the peak of his career. Convinced by his own diagnosis, Chiltern dismisses the patient with two small bottles of tablets, believing he will eventually open up to someone - a friend or a relative. As the psychiatrist tells two of his medical students, the NHS does not have the bed-space and besides he, Chiltern, is not God. Significantly, however, he is God-like in his certainty about what ails Peters:

CHILTERN: It's very simple, very common, very ordinary... He has a longing for an Eden, before the bomb, before the alley... before that fateful age of ten. The paradisial Eden does not in fact exist but he dreams that it might have done - before the bomb, before the war. Why, this singer, this Bowly... He's a thirties figure ! He sings of the dreams... They're the songs [Peters] might have heard on the radio downstairs while drifting off to sleep [as a child]... Six weeks ago, his mother dies... Grief is the trigger - the depressive is in the tunnel...'⁵

Thus Peters is left alone to solve his own problems. At the end of the play, he is found typically pursuing his obsession - this time at an Al Bowly convention where ageing music fans gather every year to commemorate "that fateful day" (April 17 1941) when the singer was wiped out in the Blitz. As the young editor of a Bowly fanzine, Peters makes his way onto stage to deliver a speech to the faithful but drunk and troubled, his oration turns out to be far from the expected eulogy. He describes how all the songs from the thirties are about love: "Sweet love. Innocent love... But what about making love ?" None of the songs discuss sex. Suddenly he is screaming hysterically: "Wicked wicked thing - bodies on top of each other. Horrible bodies. Painful bodies..." He

ends: "I have to tell you. I have slept with 136 women. Prostitutes !
Yes, you can't buy love... Why are you running away ?"¹⁶

With the elderly crowd stunned at this mention of what can never be mentioned in their favourite songs, pandemonium breaks out in the hall. Peters, however, is sublimely happy: "It's out now !... I've said it ! I've said it !" he shouts. In the final shot of the play, he turns to a poster of Bowly, whispering eternal gratitude to his 'saviour': "Good old Al !" ¹⁷

Psychiatry thus gets its come-uppance at the end of Moonlight. The most immediate source of Peters' guilt is revealed to lie not so much in childhood trauma or the death of his mother but a sexual predilection for prostitutes. Clearly, this 'addiction' can be linked to the nightmare of sexual assault (that 'fateful age of ten' which Chiltern correctly identifies) but in contrast to the professional certainties of the psychiatrist, the play seems to be suggesting that the individual cannot be reduced mechanistically to the level of a few biographical events over which he or she has no control. The implication is that each person has the power to take control over their own life - to cope with their own problems in their own way and as best they can.

Crucially, in this replacement of a view of the patient as victim with an assertion of the power of the individual to transform his or her own destiny, popular music plays the enabling role. The songs of Al Bowly offer the keys to self-knowledge, unlocking a repressed past. Thirties crooner destroyed in the Blitz, Bowly represents a vanished innocence which the central protagonist longs to recapture. Perceived to be the source of his 'Fall' from this earlier innocence, sexuality comes to embody Peters' sense of separation from an idyllic past. It is a 'wicked

wicked thing' - to be repressed and undertaken covertly (in an implicit relationship of dominance) with prostitutes. There are clear links here with A Beast With Two Backs where a similar 'Fall' from innocence coincided with a child's estrangement from its symbolic parents (a dead mother and guilty father). In Moonlight, memories of sexual assault are also directly linked to permanent estrangement from a parent - namely, the death of Peters' widowed mother six weeks before. (: § 1.3)¹⁹

Likewise, the final scene of the play (in which the central protagonist embarrassingly bares his soul in public) has much in common with the endings of both Nigel Barton Plays - though with one major difference. In those earlier plays, public honesty always led to disaster for the central protagonist (: § 1.1). In Moonlight, it becomes the key to psychological redemption. The central character may still be a social outcast who is persecuted by a hostile audience but now 'broadcasting' the truth becomes a means of unyoking the burden of a repressed past: 'It's out now !... I've said it ! I've said it!' cries Peters at the end. No longer at the mercy of psychiatrists, he discovers a new sense of autonomy, thanks to the songs and 'Good old Al'.

Popular culture (the music of the thirties) thus intertwines with the main themes of the play - of Peters' regret for a vanished era; for a loss of innocence. On one level, such nostalgia marks the protagonist out as an absurd figure: a man out of time. On another, it lends him a nobility as he attempts to use the past to come to terms with his life in the present. Such ambivalence is also present in another Potter play that Trodd produced for ITV: Paper Roses (tx 13.6.71 Dir: Barry Davis).¹⁹ Like Moonlight, it examines the impact of popular culture upon the psyche of a central protagonist who is at once both pathetic and heroic.

Set in the world of tabloid journalism, the play deals with Clarence Hubbard - an ageing hack; once the pride of his paper for his ability to find 'human interest' stories but now consigned to writing the obituary columns as he waits out his last days before retirement. Increasingly out of step with the 'sex, sin and sleaze' mentality that sells newspapers in the seventies, the knowledge he is about to be pensioned off from the profession to which he has devoted his life is driving him progressively insane. A 'memory play', Paper Roses takes the audience inside Clarence's head, charting his final day at the office as he plunges towards complete mental breakdown. In so doing, it deploys a formidable array of 'non-naturalistic' techniques:

First, there are flashbacks to past glories. The play frequently returns to the image of Hubbard as he once was: 'Ace human interest reporter', dictating stories from telephone kiosks. As these flashbacks recur, it becomes clear that Hubbard's past copy has something to say about his present:

HUBBARD: She added - colon, quote - 'It will break my heart to give up Paddywhack'. Stop. 'He is very faithful and I hope the council will show some human feeling.' ... A council spokesman said yesterday quote 'The breed of the dog does not matter. Paddywhack must go.'²⁰

Meanwhile, in the present, Hubbard's exchanges with his journalistic colleagues are repeatedly punctuated by sequences of headline graphics. Accompanied, on the soundtrack, by the strains of "Happy Days Are Here Again", these not only satirise the values of the tabloids but provide oblique comment on Clarence's own situation. For example:

BLADDY (on phone): Newsdesk - er, Bladdy. Anything for me ?...
HUBBARD: It's all go.
Headline Captions: ... PARDON MISS, YOUR SLIP IS SHOWING
BRR ! BRITAIN FREEZES...

FAITHFUL DOG FACES EVICTION²¹

These devices come together at the end of the play when Clarence orders all his old cuttings from the press library. To the astonishment of his colleagues, he goes to the window of his top storey office and throws all of his life's work out onto the breeze. Then, striding out of the office for the last time, he heads for the lift shaft, despite the fact that no lift is there. Ignoring the shouted warnings of others, he steps out into thin air and falls headlong down the shaft; his progress significantly accompanied by a series of headline graphics: "DOWN ! DOWN ! DOWN !"; "WHEEEEE !"; "NECKLINE PLUNGES AGAIN!" Haunted to the last by his tabloid headlines, "THE END" superimposes itself on screen, as Clarence hits the ground.²²

It is not quite the end, however. The play has two 'codas' that serve to underline the pathos in Hubbard's passing. First, there is a scene with one of the feature editors of Clarence's old paper. He is seen on the telephone to a colleague, adamantly stressing that the paper can only spare two paragraphs for Clarence's obituary. Still, he remarks, at least the old man's fall might make the bosses do something about "that damn lift-shaft".²³ Then, he quickly moves on to discuss a feature on topless barmaids. Clarence has already become yesterday's news - forgotten by the transient profession to which he devoted his life.

The second 'coda' is even more telling. At various points throughout the play, Paper Roses featured shots of a mysterious viewer, apparently watching the drama of Clarence unfold on his TV screen. Bored and inattentive, this spectator seemed as if he would rather be doing anything than watch the play - at one point, even practising his golf

swing in his livingroom. Who is this indifferent viewer ? All is made clear in the play's final scene, when he is seen on the telephone dictating a few hastily scribbled notes. He is none other than a television critic for one of the national newspapers and the programme he is reviewing is the play which we, the audience, have just been watching: Paper Roses. The critic delivers his verdict:

Last night's TV play, Paper Roses, gave us about as true a picture of popular newspapers as a funfair distorting mirror... We are told the author used to work in Fleet Street but if this led any viewer to think that the sour caricature on the screen was based on real experience of real journalists, he has only to open this morning's newspapers to see how ludicrous the idea really is. Full stop. End.²⁴

By the end of Paper Roses, the joke is thus on newspapers and the casual nature in which TV is reviewed by the press. The ironic last sentence of Potter's fake review invites the audience to measure the truth of the fictitious critic's opinions, not only in terms of the playwright's attested knowledge of Fleet Street but also the viewer's own experience of reading popular newspapers.

Each of these twin 'codas' also invites the audience to judge the significance of Clarence's passing. In this way, Paper Roses is structured like a Shakespearian tragedy. Like some latter day King Lear, Clarence is an old man who loses his 'kingdom' and slides into madness - in the process gaining a measure of self-knowledge. Like Shakespeare's tragic hero, his realisation is that "Nothing can be made out of nothing"; that his life in newspapers has essentially been an empty one, fit only for the breeze.²⁵ Structurally, the twin 'codas' at the close of the play perform a task similar to the supporting players at the end of a Shakespearian tragedy: the lesser mortals who comment upon the

protagonist's passing, pointing up its significance by pointing to the hero's 'greatness' and tragic stature.²⁶

The 'tragedy' of Paper Roses, however, derives not from recognition of the protagonist's greatness but from the indifference with which others treat his demise. The tragedy is one of insignificance, both in terms of the central protagonist and more widely the values of the 'throwaway' newspaper culture he represents. Akin to Moonlight's lament for a lost Eden, Paper Roses thus mourns the superficiality of a tabloid press culture. This elegiac feel is best summed up by Kenith Trodd who sees the play as "a rather sad, neurotic story about... an old Daily Herald journalist who can't survive the onset of The Sun."²⁷ As noted in the Introduction, Potter himself was literally such a person: an old Daily Herald journalist who resigned in 1964 after only one month working on The Sun (: § 0.1). In this light, Hubbard's demise (demoted from 'ace reporter', just as illness forced Potter to switch from feature writer to TV critic of The Herald) becomes symbolic of the demise of an older tradition of popular journalism in the face of a new tabloid culture that saw Potter's old paper, the leftist Daily Herald/ Sun, transformed into an aggressive right-wing daily, after its takeover by Rupert Murdoch in 1969.

As all of this illustrates, Potter is thus highly adept at taking elements of his own life and embroidering them into elaborate fictions which also function as wider social metaphors. Nowhere is this more apparent than in two 'spy' plays which were also transmitted in the early seventies: Lay Down Your Arms and Traitor.

2.1) Spies Like Us

Lay Down Your Arms (tx 23.5.70; Dir: Christopher Morahan) was the second Potter play produced by Trodd for Kestrel. Significantly, it draws on material which Potter would rework over twenty years later for his Channel 4 serial, Lipstick on Your Collar (: § Conclusion). Lay Down Your Arms is set in 1956, at the height of the Cold War and revolves around Bob Hawk - a clever working class youth who is doing his two years' National Service as a Private in the British Army. The drama begins with his arrival at the War Office in London; his progress across the Whitehall courtyards accompanied, on the soundtrack, by the most popular song of that summer of 1956: Anne Shelton's "Lay Down Your Arms".²⁸

Assigned to the War Office as a Russian language clerk, Hawk's task is to assist M.I.3 translate intelligence on Russian troop movements. Significantly, this is no mere fiction but based on fact. As the Introduction noted, both Potter and his producer, Trodd, worked for M.I.3 in the early fifties (: § 0.1). Potter recalls their time at the War Office as simply 'a farce':

It was the height of the Cold War - the Korean War had just ended, Hungary was about to begin. M.I.3's job was basically to draw up the Soviet battle order - where are they, where they move from, where are they going to... - personnel, troop movements; by all the varieties of information that came in... [Trodd] was in another section, M.I.3 C or something. I was in M.I.3 D on the ground floor of the War Office, in this huge office with just the majors and the colonels and a service sergeant who was like a sort of office administrator...²⁹

In the play, memories of national service are linked to wider historical change. Potter moves the action on a year or so to 1956 in order that events coincide with the Suez Crisis and the era of the 'angry young man'. The political and social upheavals of the period are then given symbolic expression in the personal dilemmas of the central protagonist. Like

Nigel Barton before him, Hawk is literally a 'torn' hero - caught between the stuffy upper-class milieu of the War Office and his own working-class roots, particularly his uneasy relationship with his coalminer father.

Like other Potter protagonists (such as Ebenezer in A Beast with Two Backs), Hawk is also 'torn' between the contradictory pulls of flesh and spirit. This is made clear in a key sequence in which he is seen nervously approaching a prostitute in Soho and following her to a dingy room at the top of some narrow stairs. Through cross-cutting, the play explicitly counterpoints this scene - Hawk's first ever submission to the desires of 'the flesh' - with his first ever visit to the theatre that same night. Attempts to nourish his 'soul' with high art are contrasted and undercut by his more basic hunger for sex. Significantly, Potter incorporates within his own play a scene from the play Hawk goes to see: a production of Chekhov's The Seagull. Perched awkwardly in 'the gods', the soldier hears Chekhov's writer character, Trepliov, make a declaration of love to Nina; one which seems to echo his own plight: "I am lonely... I feel as cold as if I was in a dungeon... I want you"³⁰

In this way, 'art' (the 'fiction' of the play) comes to dramatise the essential 'truth' of Hawk's own situation, allowing him to see his own plight more clearly. The inclusion of the Chekhov play within the play thus marks a turning point for Hawk and the drama as a whole. Permitting him to recognise, for the first time, the often blurred lines between reality and fantasy, 'truth' and 'lies', the experience of drama enables him to begin to come to terms with his own inner conflicts.

He does this by transforming himself into a kind of Billy Liar figure. Alone in a London pub, Hawk finds himself the centre of attention when he

mischievously decides to use his knowledge of Russian to re-invent himself into the goalkeeper of the visiting Moscow Dynamo football team: "I Russkie footballist. Dynamo... I like drink." It is only when his friend Pete unexpectedly arrives in the bar from Yorkshire and calls him by his real name that his lies are exposed. The soldier nevertheless remains unrepentant. As he later tells Pete, "It's know your place... That's what keeps people down. Keeps them like they are." Telling tall tales has become his liberation, with everything "kicking away" inside his head.³¹

Imagination (or 'lies') is thus presented as the key to resolving all the conflicts - class, political, generational, sexual - which dog the protagonist in the play. Leaping over the rigidities of each of the battle-lines that separate individuals and 'keeps them like they are', allowing the protagonist to reinvent himself into whomever he chooses to be, it literally becomes, in Potter's drama, the means to bridge all oppositions - the way to Lay Down Your Arms.

From 'the turning point' of the Chekhov scene on, Hawk discovers the power of being a writer. This is made clear at the climax of the play when, amongst assorted low-grade Intelligence material at the War Office, the soldier discovers a letter from a Russian tank driver written to his father - a coal-miner in Magnitogorsk. Insisting on reading the letter out to his superior officers, Hawk tells them it is about the relationship between a son and a father who "obviously haven't gone on too well in the past". The son, however, has come to realise "what it must mean and what it must do to your hopes and dreams to be entombed in black tunnels for all your waking life". The soldier looks up at his superior officers:

"Sometimes, sir, you don't know what you feel until somebody writes it down for you..."³²

'Writing' thus becomes the means of revealing 'truth' in the play. Not only does it finally demonstrate to Hawk the absurdity of fighting a Cold War against an enemy who is just like him, it also expresses what he himself could never say to his own father face to face. Allowing identification with an opposing point of view, it heals wounds and resolves divisions, urging enemies everywhere to 'lay down their arms' and make their peace.

Hawk's personal exploration of the blurred lines between reality and fantasy also connects with the drama's historical backdrop in as much as there seems a clear parallel between the Private's 'lies' and the wider 'truth games' of the Cold War. Just like a real spy, Hawk has to learn to move easily through a number of different worlds and disguises - soldier in the War Office; working class lad in Yorkshire, even Moscow Dynamo goalkeeper in the London pub - reinventing or fictionalising himself as required. As the closet Red who, by education and accident, finds himself 'infiltrating' the British Establishment and working for M.I.3., he shares much in common with a double-agent.

On one level, this 'infiltration' seems symbolic of the position of the working class 'scholarship' boy who, given unprecedented opportunities to rise up the 'Establishment' ladder, nevertheless often felt himself in a kind of secret rebellion against it (: § 1.0 a). On another, however, it directly relates to the actual infiltration of British Intelligence during the nineteen forties and fifties, particularly its utter compromising at the hands of K.G.B. 'mole', Kim Philby. Near its close, the play provides

a humorous reminder that Philby was still very much active during Hawk's (and Potter and Trodd's) time at M.I.3.. Bamboozled by all the information on the Suez crisis coming into their office, Hawk's superior officers at least take comfort from an imminent counter-intelligence briefing. Who is giving it, one officer asks ? "Oh, a chap from the Foreign Office", replies another. "Fellow by the name of Philby. Kim Philby."³³

The reference is a significant one in the light of Traitor, Potter's celebrated BBC Play for Today which followed Lay Down Your Arms a year later (tx. 14.10.71; Dir: Alan Bridges).³⁴ It too exhibits a fascination with the Cold War and in particular the idea of the double-agent as metaphor for the crossing of ideological battle-lines of class and politics in English society:

The 1971 play opens not in England and the War Office but a dingy Moscow apartment where Adrian Harris, the Philby-like 'traitor' of the title - former high-ranking controller in British Intelligence, now defected to the Soviets - awaits the arrival of a group of Western journalists who have obtained special permission to interview him for their newspapers back home. Harris (played by John le Mesurier) is a haunted man - tormented by unhappy memories of public school, guilt over his involvement in the murder of a Russian defector and above all his relationship with his father; an eccentric archaeologist who literally believed in the legend of King Arthur and who instilled in his young son a dream of Camelot which, the play suggests, may be one explanation for the adult's betrayal of his country.³⁵

A 'memory play' like Stand Up, Nigel Barton, Traitor unfolds through a series of flashbacks and like Stand Up, it seeks to build up a convincing psychological dossier on the motives of its central character. In this light, Harris can be seen to betray his country because he is chasing his father's vision of Camelot - a dream of perfection which leads him in adulthood to embrace extreme political ideologies that seem to offer a similar panacea to all the world's problems. Fitting into this picture are the flashbacks to the traitor's time at English public school where he is shown humiliated in class by his teacher on account of his bad stutter. Counterpointed with the adult's wincing remembrance of it in 'the present', this again seems to point to a possible reason why, in his quest for the Camelot of his father, Harris should choose to go against the interests of his own upper class.

Typically for Potter, no such 'easy' explanations of betrayal in terms of personal psychology will quite do, however. Rather, as the play digs deeper into the life of its main protagonist, a series of ambiguities emerge. Constantly interrupting the action of the play is newsreel footage of the Jarrow Hunger Marches - images which seem to suggest that Harris betrayed his class for communism because he believed in the workers' struggle. At the climax of the play, completely drunk, he starts to sing a garbled version of "I Belong to Glasgow". He begins to ramble to the disbelieving press men: "It was an awful shock when I saw for the very first time - ... - saw - for the very first time -... What people lived like."³⁶ One possible implication, therefore, is that he betrayed England and the upper class for communism when he saw the slums of Glasgow for the very first time.

Characteristically, however, Potter draws no hard and fast conclusions in Traitor. As he suggested in a BBC Late Night Line-Up interview, transmitted the same night as the play, perhaps he should "have put a question-mark" after the title Traitor.³⁷ Not only does the play suggest a complexity of motives driving the central protagonist, it also raises the question of whether Harris' betrayal of his country was really a betrayal at all. Asked by the journalists if he is a traitor, Harris replies, "To my class, yes. To my country, no... Not to... the England of the watermill and... gentle faces."³⁸

Thus in the play, patriotism is wrested away from its normal associations with the Right and ironically shown to be one of the possible underlying causes of an idealism on the Left. Harris' treason is linked to too much patriotism, not too little of it - the idealism of his politics arising from the idealism of his vision of his 'motherland'. He is demonstrably, like Hawk in Lay Down Your Arms, a 'torn' hero, caught between the opposing ideologies of the Cold War; pulled by contradictory demands of flesh and spirit. Potter sets up a clear opposition in the play between capitalism as a function of the material and communism as a function of the spirit. On the one hand, there is Harris' view of the 'capitalist press' as being only interested in judging "a man by his material possessions rather than his mind..." On the other, there is the journalists' observation that all Harris' "dreams and hopes of a better world" have been reduced to an "uncomfortable room in an uncomfortable block... in the biggest soul-destroying bureaucracy the world has ever seen!"³⁹

Hence by extension what Harris seems to symbolise is all things spiritual - communism, the need for belief and a search for Paradise (Camelot),

even at the cost of personal self-sacrifice. In this light, the 'traitor' ironically comes to resemble Potter's Jesus in Son of Man - a heroic spiritual seeker after truth; eschewing the temptations of the material world and the physical self in order to follow to its inevitable lonely conclusion his own private vision: the vision of a better world.

Comparison with Stand Up, Nigel Barton is also instructive in this regard. Both it and Traitor are 'memory' plays, taking place largely inside one character's head and tracing an emotional trajectory that involves a central male protagonist being uprooted from and betraying his original social class. If the trajectory of Traitor is the precise inverse of that of Stand Up (away from rather than towards the upper-class), both plays nevertheless reveal that journey to be a one-way ticket to alienation and anxiety. There is the same guilty introspection and suggestion that the protagonist's actions may be motivated by an emotional need to keep faith with a father who is the site of all his values. There is also, in each play, a similar pivotal classroom scene in which the main character, as a child, learns of the wrongful persecution of those who are 'different' from the dominant group - a persecution which fuels his subsequent rebellion against his 'class'. Finally, like Stand Up, there is the same need for Harris in Traitor to 'broadcast' his ideals (and separation from his native origins) to the world: in this case through an interview with Western journalists. Just as with Stand Up, that world is shown as a hostile one which does not want to hear the 'truth'. The journalists are largely out to humiliate the turncoat and to tell their readers what they want to hear, namely that the 'traitor' is wretched and unhappy in Moscow. As a result, all attempts by Harris to have his reasons understood merely increases his isolation, leaving him, like Nigel at the close of Stand Up, more anxious and unhappy than ever.

Hence if, in Traitor, the externals of Harris' life and career seem to approximate to the life of Kim Philby, for the 'internals', it can be seen Potter has drawn on a source much closer to home.⁴⁰ By structuring his 1971 play so that it provides a striking inverse symmetry to that of Stand Up, he seems to be suggesting that whether upper-class or working class, 'betrayal' is the inevitable product of crossing the heavily fortified battle-lines that traditionally have separated one class from another in English society.

As the final few shots of the play make clear, there is, however, one crucial difference between Traitor and Stand Up for Harris, unlike Nigel Barton, is unable even to reveal to others the burden of his guilt. After the climactic scene in which he has drunkenly told of his shock at seeing, for the first time, 'what people lived like', the play cuts back to its beginning, repeating the same sequence of shots of him alone in his apartment, awaiting the arrival of the journalists, which the audience saw in the opening moments. Things, however, are not quite the same - Harris is seen searching amongst the objects in his apartment, as if looking for something. Eventually he finds it: a K.G.B. bugging device stuck to the bottom of a table. The doorbell rings and once more he is seen opening the door of his flat to the Western journalists. This time, as he does so, the image freezes and his voice is heard insistent on the soundtrack: "Remember the microphones and be careful... For God's sake remember the microphone !"⁴¹

Unlike Barton, Harris, at the end of Traitor, has to keep all of his feelings bottled up inside, in peril possibly of his life if he reveals too much. All of the events in the play, including the supposedly real interview with the journalists, have, in fact, been taking place inside his

head, as he waited anxiously for them to arrive. What he allegedly told them is what he would like to confess but in reality will have to repress. Distrusted and unwanted by both sides in the Cold War, his rebellion has come to nothing - even more than Nigel Barton, his great 'stand' has dwindled down to anxiety and paranoia. If the entire play has been a wrestling with himself over whether he should and what it might be like if he did speak out to journalists, the conclusion he finally seems to arrive at is that the 'truth' would only hurt him. With no mechanism of expressing and hence easing his guilt, Harris is fated to replay the events of his past over and over again in his head, perpetually awaiting the knock of 'the strangers outside his door who are really inside his head.'

2.2) Outsiders Knocking on Doors

The phrase is one of Potter's own (the "stranger outside the house who's really inside your head") which he has used to describe a number of his plays that turn on this same basic plot device: the arrival of a visitor whose appearance triggers off intense introspection within the central protagonist.⁴² Significantly, the development of this motif can be traced across a number of Potter plays of the late sixties and early seventies. In this way, it is possible to see how it evolved from basic origins into a fully elaborated structural feature of the work, present for its own sake as a marker of the single play oeuvre Potter was consciously trying to create during this period and which culminated, arguably, in his controversial 1976 play, Brimstone and Treacle. (: § 2.3 b)

As Chapter One noted, the ambiguous outsider who disrupts and overturns established hierarchies was a key sixties archetype; one Potter exploited fully in his Wednesday Plays, The Confidence Course, Message for Posterity and Son of Man. In a number of his other works of the period, one finds, however, a very different conception of the outsider - namely, as in Emergency Ward-9 and A Beast with Two Backs, the outsider as foreigner; 'intruder' (: § 1.2; 1.3).

Both of these conceptions are combined in The Bonegrinder: an ITV play from the same year as A Beast, which was almost universally savaged by the TV critics.⁴³ In retrospect, however, this work takes on new interests, when viewed against other Potter plays:

The Bonegrinder (tx. 13.5.68; Dir: Joan Kemp-Welch) revolves around George King, a respectable English middle-class gentleman who nevertheless decides one day to visit a seedy London pub in search of prostitutes,

whilst his wife is absent caring for her dying sister. There, all he succeeds in doing is meeting Sam, a loud American seaman with a bitter hatred of the English. Immediately, uninhibited 'Uncle Sam' realises he has a perfect target in repressed 'King George'. He quotes some lines from Jack and The Beanstalk that also shed light on the title of Potter's play: "Fe-fi-fo-fum / I smell the blood of an Englishman / ... Be he alive or be he dead / I'll grind his bones to make my bread". Ominously, he adds: "It'll be nice visiting you and your little wife. Very nice."⁴⁴

True to his word, Sam soon succeeds in blackmailing his way into the King household where he begins to take over, ordering the guilty Englishman to fetch and carry for him. As 'Uncle Sam' starts to make life impossible for them, George and his wife Gladys are seen sitting up in bed wondering what to do. It is Gladys who appeals to English national pride, urging her husband that the only way to get rid of the intruder is to kill him. Eventually, George is persuaded to creep downstairs where he bludgeons Sam to death with a coal-hammer - all the time repeating the rhyme: "... I'll grind his bones to make my bread..." When Gladys appears, however, she immediately calls the police, as her husband realises he has been the victim of a cruel trick. The very last scene of the play reveals why, like Sam, she too can never be happy with life in suburbia beside George: "... And you thought you'd go whoring on the very night [sister] Emma choked to death... Daddy always said the worst thing a gentleman could do... was to let the side down..."⁴⁵

Whilst clearly a comic allegory on the post-war decline of England and the corresponding global rise of the U.S.A. ('King George' versus 'Uncle Sam'), this drama, like A Beast with Two Backs, works on a number of other levels too.⁴⁶ In a 1973 Guardian interview, Potter claimed the idea

for the play had come from seeing "a crazy Canadian sailor in a pub one afternoon in Ladbroke Grove."⁴⁷ The resulting situation he develops from this is significant: repressed George goes in search of sexual relief from a prostitute and ends up bringing home what he fears most. Insinuating his way into middle-class suburbia, Sam embodies all the uninhibited values of the sixties 'counter-culture', with its challenge to traditional hierarchies and social hypocrisies. Akin to the 'mad' outsider heroes of Pinter's The Servant and Potter's own The Confidence Course, this 'crazy' working class sailor succeeds for a time in reversing normal power relations (literally making middle-class George his servant), before his rebellion is finally crushed.

Comparison of The Bonegrinder with A Beast with Two Backs from the same year, is also instructive (: § 1.3). In A Beast, one finds a similar intrusion into an insular English milieu by a 'foreigner' (the Italian) which is also finally crushed. As noted previously, the play directly links this suppression to that of the 'beast' of human sexuality. In The Bonegrinder, the invasion of the intruding 'foreigner' is also strongly linked to sexuality, in this case George's desire for prostitutes. It becomes the same guilty secret, the nightmare of exposure of which literally arrives on his doorstep in the shape of an uninhibited American. The embodiment of all George's worst fears, Sam is almost willed into life as a consequence of other's sexual guilt.⁴⁸ The resulting problem is one that both husband and wife have to deal with - significantly, in their bedroom in the middle of the night as their uninvited 'guest' plays havoc with their lives and relationship.

Hence what The Bonegrinder seems to be dramatising, in coded form, is the difficulties of accommodating male sexual desire within marriage. For

the sake of 'respectability', George tries to repress the 'beast' (kill Sam) but the damage to his marriage has already been done. However hard he tries to make amends to Gladys for his furtive 'whoring', normality cannot be restored to their relationship, with the result that she finally abandons him (to the police), just as he abandoned her. As with the close of A Beast, the message seems to be that the logical consequence of repression of the 'beast inside' is isolation and disaster for the male protagonist (: § 1.3). Just as Sam represents the new sexual openness of the 'counter-culture', the suggestion is that if a marriage relationship is ever to work, 'guilty' sexual secrets must be aired in the first instance, rather than allowed to fester until their inevitable discovery.

Two years later, Potter was to return to the 'problem' of sex in suburbia in Angels Are So Few (tx. 5.11.70; Dir: Gareth Davies) - the first of his BBC Plays for Today.⁴⁹ This time, however, the 'problem' is presented not through the perspective of a middle-class husband but a suburban housewife:

Bored and sexually frustrated, Cynthia Nicholls one day receives a visit from a strange young man, Michael Biddle, who announces on her doorstep that he is an 'angel'. Seemingly filled with a sense of 'wonder' at Creation, he begins to tell her of wondrous things - how "We are free... With a great bag full of images... choices... chances... Free to remember, free to change our memories, free to be or to do what we want..."⁵⁰

On one level, this Gospel of Hope echoes the speeches of Jesus in Son of Man and recalls remarks Potter made during pre-publicity for that earlier play about how he had wanted to write "about a man who thought that he might be Christ."⁵¹ Also similar to Son of Man is the initial scepticism

with which others treat the ramblings of the 'mad' outsider. In Angels, Cynthia ushers Biddle quickly out of the door. As Potter suggested in 1969, "If Jesus came today... we would want to shut the door on Him."⁵²

If this is the inspiration for Angels (how would a would-be Messiah fare today ?), in contrast to Jesus in Son of Man, the audience is left in no doubt that Biddle is indeed quite 'mad'. This emerges in a subsequent scene in which he is seen taking tea with an elderly couple, the Cawfers, who live on the same street as Cynthia. A Welsh lady with a strong religious upbringing, Mrs Cawfer begins to tell Biddle of a pulpit banner she remembers as a child from chapel-going days long ago. Embroidered on it was a picture of two little children picking flowers, poised right on the very edge of a precipice: "And this golden-haired little boy... was stretching out his arm to try and pick [one]. It was obvious that [he] was going to fall..."⁵³ Miraculously, however, a beautiful angel was on hand - a hovering guardian to protect the child from falling.

The 'golden-haired' child in peril as a result of its own curiosity and desire; the imminence of a fall from a great height; a protecting angel - the metaphor is of a 'Fall' from grace and a loving God which, as with A Beast and Hide and Seek, can be connected to the idea of a loss of sexual innocence and acquisition of 'forbidden knowledge' (: § 1.3).⁵⁴ In Angels, the sexual connotations become clear through Biddle's shocked response to Mrs Cawfer's assertion that the angel was a lady angel: "You mean with tits ? No, no... There is no sex in heaven..." Besides, he remarks: "I'm protected... I am safe. I am an angel... A celestial being."⁵⁵

As this makes clear, Biddle has fantasised himself into an angel as a means of avoiding his own sexuality. The scene is set for the climax of

the play in which Cynthia frustratedly decides to make a pass at him when the 'angel' shows up at her house once more. Potter's original script directions for the seduction scene are revealing here since the imagery is that of the Biblical 'Fall'. Cynthia is the tempting serpent: "She coils her hands together"⁵⁶; "He watches her like a man watches a snake slithering inexorably towards him..."⁵⁷ Meanwhile, Biddle is "like a man going to his execution"⁵⁸, until finally and literally stripped of all illusions of being an angel, he runs away from her after the seduction: "... A man stripped of all his magic... all his charisma".⁵⁹

In Angels, sex does not bring 'counter-culture' liberation but a kind of blankness and despair. Not for nothing, it seems, did Potter sub-title his play a 'fable for television' for in its ending, Angels seems to have a strong moral resonance.⁶⁰ As the writer suggested to the Radio Times, the play is about "the way we manipulate our fantasies to protect ourselves and what happens to us when they are ripped away."⁶¹ On one level, having his 'wings' ripped off and being forced to shed his illusions might seem a healthy act, a 'cure' for Biddle - likewise, both characters' liberation from sexual repression. By his ending, however, Potter suggests the stripping away of old beliefs is invariably a painful rather than a redemptive process. Forced to recognise his own mortality, Biddle feels only spiritual emptiness at the close. His world has been drained of the 'wonder' he earlier felt - a process in which sex has played the crucial role and which the script explicitly likens to a 'Fall'.

How to recapture that lost sense of 'wonder' is very much the theme of Schmoedipus (tx 20.6.74; Dir: Barry Davis), a subsequent Potter Play for Today and the third in his 'outsiders knocking on doors' cycle. The title comes from the comic Jewish exclamation: 'Oedipus Schmoedipus, what does

it matter so long as he loves his mother !' As this suggests, the play dwells upon the relationship between a mother and long-lost 'son', in a kind of 'psychodrama' which Potter would subsequently rewrite in the eighties as a movie: Track 29 (: § 5.1, 6.0):

The setting for the play is once more repressed English suburbia; the focus on a dissatisfied housewife. Elizabeth Carter is sexually frustrated and bored, not least by her husband Tom's obsession with model railways. One day, when he is out at work, she discovers a strange young man on her doorstep - a Canadian called Glen, who announces that he is her abandoned 'baby boy' from an unwanted teenage pregnancy long ago.

Schmoedipus thus rings the changes from The Bonegrinder - the 'crazy' Canadian; the intruding outsider - as well as Angels - the bored suburban housewife; the doorstep revelation of a strange young man. Here, however, the outsider has arrived for a specific purpose. As he tells his 'mother', he wants to have his English childhood because he is fed up with being a grown-up: "There's no fun in it. No magic... Nothing."⁶²

Thus the 'magic' or 'wonder' which Biddle felt in Angels is here explicitly connected with childhood. Childhood is portrayed as the 'angelic' state which, as with Biddle, all adults must lose when they become sexually aware but which they yearn to recapture. In the 1974 play, this is dramatised through the figure of Elizabeth's husband Tom and his obsession with toy trains: "Probably the happiest time of my life," he sighs, as he swaps childhood memories of train-spotting with a friend from work.⁶³

Juxtaposed with these scenes of Tom at work is the depiction of Glen's suckling behaviour towards his supposed 'mother'. On one level, this functions as a humorous magnification of Freud's notion of the Oedipus Complex, here emphasised by the fact Glen is a fully-grown adult: "I spy with my little eye something beginning with B", he whispers flirtatiously to Elizabeth at one point, staring through her blouse.⁵⁴ Like Angels, however, the final scenes of the play make clear that such seduction attempts are not the product of male but female desire; an attempt by Elizabeth to escape the dreariness of her suburban existence.

This becomes apparent when, after Glen has given a schmaltzy rendition of the sentimental old song 'Mother', Elizabeth falls asleep, only to wake much later to find her 'son' gone. Panic-stricken, she calls over her next neighbour Dorothy as slowly, the story of her teenage pregnancy begins to unravel. She confesses to Dorothy how she was seduced at a fair by the man who ran the dodgem cars, in an encounter that became a rape. Suddenly, she looks up, as she seems to hear a door closing: "He's gone. Gone away," she whispers.⁵⁵

Glen has gone because Elizabeth has at last brought out into the open what she had "kept inside herself for so long" - namely, that he was the product of a rape trauma⁵⁶. As husband Tom arrives unexpectedly from work and begins to take control of the situation, she starts to ramble: "I put the pillow over his face. His little pink wrinkly face... It didn't hurt him or anything... He was only two days old, you see..."⁵⁷

To Dorothy's dismay, Tom is completely unconcerned about these revelations, muttering it is only a 'game'. Panic-stricken, the neighbour runs out of the house, leaving the couple to their private world. Tom

quickly becomes stern, telling Elizabeth she simply must not involve other people in their games. She, however, is sure Glen will return: "He's bound to come back." As long as he does not break the trains, warns Tom, adopting the role of a stern father. Potter's final script directions are significant - "Smiling, he goes out to the kitchen. She chews her nails."⁵⁸

Thus Elizabeth's fantasising of the 'outsider who is really inside her head' has ultimately not been an aid to psychological recovery but akin to Adrian Harris in Traitor, part of an endless mental replaying of past trauma and guilt. Glen is 'bound to come back' because her problems as a bored and frustrated housewife remain. Her attempts through fantasy to escape from her domestic prison have ironically become part of her husband's own ritualised retreat from the adult world into a kind of deluded infantilism; part of the very 'game', that is, from which she is trying to flee.

Taking all three of the 'outsider' plays together, it is therefore possible to see how each mounts an attack, in the name of the sixties / seventies 'counter-culture', on middle class English suburban values. Akin to the theories of R.D. Laing, the entry of the 'mad' outsider hero exposes the real madness as lying at the very heart of the 'bourgeois' home and family (: § 1.4). Each work focuses on the problems of marriage - boredom, frustration, sexual repression - and presents these as almost an inevitability for both spouses. Adultery features in all three plays: explicit in The Bonegrinder and Angels Are So Few; implied and suggested at certain points in Schmoedipus. Each, however, presents sex with a stranger as disastrous. George's (attempted) 'whoring' brings havoc to his home in The Bonegrinder while Schmoedipus and Angels presents two

different versions of sexual assault - the fairground rape that haunts Elizabeth; the 'male rape' of Biddle by Cynthia which the drama equates with 'The Fall'.

Meanwhile, linked across all three plays is the figure of the outsider - the long-haired drifter who is by turns lover, child, intruder. In The Bonegrinder he is principally a combination of the first and third of these - both a manifestation of guilt over a desire for prostitutes and the 'foreigner' who can be linked to the Italian in A Beast. In Angels, the stranger's initial 'wonder' and innocence link him more with a child; one who 'falls' in the course of the play to become a reluctant lover. Finally, in Schmoedipus, the outsider is the memory of sexual assault - the phantom seducer who nevertheless longs to recapture the 'wonder' of childhood and rekindle a 'dead' mother-son relationship. The fact that each of these plays shares the same common plot device ('the outsider who is really inside the head') would seem to imply linkage between these respective themes: connections in the work, therefore, between childhood 'wonder', 'The Fall' and sexual guilt in marriage.

2.3) The Changing Forest: Shifts in the Work; Shifts in the BBC

a) Storms of Faith: "Joe's Ark"

"It is Eros and not Thanatos who mostly cavorts upon our screens and I do not doubt that it is more entertaining to see someone pretending to make love than someone else pretending to die", wrote Potter in 1983 of Joe's Ark (tx. 14.2.74; Dir: Alan Bridges)⁶⁹

First transmitted as a BBC Play for Today only several months before Schmoedipus, in many ways this play functions as Thanatos to the other's Eros, providing a detailed on-screen exploration of the experience of dying (as opposed to the medium's more normal territory, the excitement of violent death). It is also a very difficult work to view now in the light of Potter's own death for this is a play about cancer. Eerily, it was transmitted exactly twenty years ago to the day (St. Valentine's Day) on which Potter learned he was dying of the disease (: § Conclusion). Like Schmoedipus, it too begins with an outsider knocking on a door:

The play opens on Joe, the embittered owner of a pet shop in a Welsh town. Upstairs, Lucy, his only daughter, is dying of cancer. Meanwhile, far from home, his estranged son, Bobby, tours the working men's clubs with his stand-up comedy act and stripper girlfriend, unaware of his sister's illness. Suddenly, with a knock on the door, Joe finds a strange young man, John, on his doorstep. Announcing he is a friend of Lucy's from her time at Oxford University (where she had spent only two terms before illness struck), he tells Joe he has hitched all the way to Wales because he is in love with the dying girl. As the play unfolds, a variety of other characters are introduced - each converging on Joe and the little shop; each reflecting and being reflected by their attitudes to the

same central event, death. Finally, having been contacted at Lucy's request, Bobby arrives just a minute too late to see his dead sister.

As Potter himself has suggested, such a scenario in summary "sounds like a winning entry in a New Statesman Competition parodying gloomy pretension..." and it was generally as an exploration of family trauma, illness and death that the play was received and reviewed on first transmission.⁷⁰ As Potter subsequently observed, however, few seemed to notice at the time that he was really "writing about religious themes."⁷¹

In fact, what the play is dramatising is a crisis of faith caused by the effects of serious illness. This finds its clearest expression in Joe, Lucy's chapel-going father, who cannot reconcile literal belief in a loving God with the physical reality of his daughter's dying. Akin to Biddle in Angels, simple child-like faith in a divine order has been ruptured by personal adult experience. This is most vividly dramatised in his quarrels with Watkins, the local preacher. When the latter visits his shop in an effort to restore his faith, Joe is contemptuous of the other's argument that the variety of animal species in the shop is proof of a benign 'pattern' or 'overall purpose'. As a pet shop owner, Joe is all too aware of the Darwinian, 'survival of the fittest', ruthlessness of the animal kingdom - one cichlid in amongst that tank of fish, he points out, and it would "gobble them up in two seconds flat. Snap ! Swallow!"⁷²

Meanwhile, in chapel, Joe literally 'stands up' and quarrels with the preacher during his sermon. Reflecting on the Old Testament story of Noah, the one just man saved from the flood, Watkins declares humanity to be no less wicked today than it was before the Great Flood: "We are none

of us good enough for this earth." Suddenly, Joe is on his feet, shouting: "No! That's not true !... You've had your life, Daniel... You've got no right."⁷³

Joe's protest is thus against the notion of an avenging Old Testament God (the ruthlessness of 'an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth', noted in A Beast) that could permit such suffering, as that of his own daughter, with no possibility of salvation or redemption (: § 1.3). It is the assumption that she does not deserve to live with which he takes issue; that the sick person is a sinner (: § 0.1).

If Joe embodies 'spiritual' questions about death, Lucy, stripped, as she puts it of all the 'details' of life and reduced to the bare bones of mortal survival, undoubtedly represents the physical. The two protagonists, with their differing perspectives on death, thus resolve themselves into a familiar Potter dichotomy: a division between flesh and spirit. Ironically, however, it is Lucy who signals the potential spiritual turning-point in the drama - the beginnings of a movement away from despair which helps set in relief some of her father's most crushing religious doubts. Receiving a visit from her doctor, just as earlier Joe had received one from his preacher, she begins to ask what happens to people at the exact moment of death. After some hesitation, the doctor replies that he has never seen a person die who, knowing what was happening, did not accept it in peace. Lucy, however, has to know: "You mean - something natural - takes over" - like the dying animals she has seen in her father's shop ? The doctor's response is significant: "Yes, I think that's one of the very few reasons why I personally believe in - well, God".⁷⁴

Ironically, through its observation of the processes of 'the flesh', modern medicine provides a more convincing reason for the existence of God than orthodox religion in the shape of Watkins, since it seems to gesture at the existence of something universal, beyond the individual self. It is here that Joe's Ark begins to move towards a tentative resolution of the fundamental flesh-spirit dichotomy which runs through Potter's writing for in this scene, 'spiritual' is linked to 'physical' through the notion of 'instinct'. In turn, this helps shed light on the very end of the play when, summoned upstairs by the doctor, Joe gazes "astonished, unbelieving" at Lucy's face, "placid, dead".⁷⁵

Spontaneously sinking to his knees, he mutters a prayer in Welsh whilst "from below, like an answer", Potter's script directions specifically indicate the viewer should hear the cry of a big, brightly coloured cockatoo that Joe keeps in his shop. Coming downstairs, Joe meets Bobby, his prodigal son returned: "She's with your mam," he tells him. "A minute ago... I was with her... She sent her love and said she was going home... [As though to a child] That's where your Mam is, see..."⁷⁶

Having apparently witnessed his daughter go to her death 'placid', Joe's simple child-like faith in God has apparently been restored. As a result, he is able to express to his son, 'as to a child', his old simple belief in Heaven, having offered up a prayer to God: a prayer that while clearly an expression of grief and loss nevertheless seems to find its 'answer' in the cry of the cockatoo; the cry of instinct. It is this notion of an instinctive child-like faith, unclouded by adult doubts and questions, that in turn seems to nudge at a resolution to the spiritual crisis in the play. Instinctive faith takes over from intellectual doubt at the end, with childhood functioning as the site of natural belief. The

implication is that one either has to believe or not believe in an ultimate good (God), choosing whether to trust adult intellect or one's original childhood instincts.

What is significant about Joe's Ark is that the play does not so much come down on one side or the other as hold both possibilities in taut suspension. Its ending is almost completely ambiguous, full of questions - did the doctor simply fool Lucy into accepting her death in peace ? Did Lucy appear to die peacefully in order to help shore up her father's faith ??? Is Joe's return to his old faith simply regressive delusion - an easy means of self-comfort; a father's attempt to console his other 'child', Bobby ? Or has he, like some latter-day Noah, genuinely weathered the storms of faith, glimpsing from the storm-tossed 'ark' of his pet-shop an apparently greater good moving behind the rain-clouds??^e

Joe's Ark sustains all these possibilities. In keeping with its questioning religious perspective, it finally leaves it up to the viewer to find significance or otherwise in the events it portrays.⁷⁹ On one level, Lucy's death can be seen as a defeat of every human hope in which all her struggles have come to nothing - as if cursed, brother Bobby arrives a minute too late to satisfy her final wishes. On another, however, it stands for precisely the opposite. Out of her passing comes good - father and son are re-united, both in their own ways having instinctively returned to a natural childhood 'home' of belief and values.

Ironically, therefore, behind the 'gloomy pretension' of this 1974 drama, it is possible to discern a more optimistic view shining through. As Potter suggested in 1983, the play in its resolution "makes more than a

wry nod at possibilities which can comprehend pain or disgust or the implacable presence of death itself..."⁸⁰

It is for this reason that Joe's Ark occupies a crucial place in an oeuvre that by the mid seventies was beginning to shift ground in terms of its attitudes and outlook. To understand why, the play has to be looked at in the perspective of Potter's next three single TV plays - all of which had been earmarked for transmission by the BBC in the same month: April 1976. In the event, one, Brimstone and Treacle, was famously banned but before the history of this is examined in detail, it is worth attempting to resituate it within the context of the sequence of work of which, originally, it was intended to be just one part:

2.3 b) 1976 'Trilogy'

In his 1978 Introduction to the published stage play version, Potter wrote of Brimstone and Treacle: "[It] came at the end of a particular sequence of work which was taking me clear of an in-turned spiritual nihilism and on towards a new and (for me) startling but exhilarating trust in the order of things".^{e1}

Citing Joe's Ark as a predecessor, he went on to indicate how such plays were born not only out of his physical struggles with a painful and debilitating illness but in tandem, a number of "unresolved, almost unacknowledged 'spiritual' questions".^{e2} If these are clearly in evidence in Joe's Ark, Potter explores them much further in his 1976 plays, advancing the 1974 drama's qualified optimism to a more settled conclusion:

Where Adam Stood (tx. 21.4.76; Dir: Brian Gibson) is perhaps the most immediately closest of the three 1976 works to Joe's Ark. A period drama, screened not in the BBC-1 Play for Today slot but on BBC-2, it is credited as 'based on' an external source - Edmund Gosse's famous autobiography: Father and Son.^{e3} In fact, Potter centres his play around only one incident from the Gosse book - a choice which offers significant clues to his own preoccupations at this time and the direction in which they were moving.

The play focuses upon Gosse's account of the ill-fated attempts of his naturalist father to reconcile fundamentalist belief in the book of Genesis with Darwin's emerging theories of evolution in the mid nineteenth century. Like Joe's Ark, the drama thus portrays a crisis of faith in a patriarchal figure, occasioned by the contradiction of literal belief in the Bible by

adult experience. Moreover, in both cases, Darwinian notions of survival of the fittest are revealed as instrumental in shaking faith - both widowers, Phillip Gosse and Joe find their belief coming under severe pressure, as a result of observing the processes of the natural world.

While, for Joe, such a crisis of faith brings only despair and disillusion, Phillip Gosse's response is one of dogged defiance. Refuting the import of Darwin's theories, he invents a theory of his own - the 'Omphalos' theory which is explicitly designed to counter the fossil evidence that seems to contradict Genesis accounts of the spontaneous creation of Man.⁹⁴ Gosse's clinging to religious dogma in the face of the scientific evidence is paralleled in the play by his blindness to the true reality of his son's needs. Edmund is an ailing child, afflicted by a severe cough which acts as a metaphor for his suffocation under his father's piety. Gosse senior, however, is unconcerned, commenting merely that "if it is the Lord's will" that Edmund should be taken to be beside his dead mother, then so be it. As with Joe's Ark, the assumption which the child has to struggle against is that the sick person is a sinner: "All our pains and ailments... are sent by the Lord to chastise us for some definite fault", asserts his Old Testament patriarch of a father, urging him to pray.⁹⁵

Thus Edmund's father and his fundamentalist beliefs are portrayed as potentially life-threatening to the boy, endangering both his health and survival by a fatalism which, in its desire to be gathered up 'in the arms of Jesus', becomes almost a death-wish. Oblivious to the fact he is the cause of the nightmares, Gosse senior cannot understand why the boy wakes up at night, screaming "I don't want to!"⁹⁶ Instead, he urges yet more prayer, suggesting the child's troubles may all be God's punishment for having coveted a toy ship in the window of the local village shop. An

image of desire as well as freedom from the restrictions of his father, the play implicitly links the ship with the boy's yearning for his dead mother. Cut into sequences depicting Edmund's dreams are shots of a painting of his mother in which, clearly visible in the background, is a sailing ship. The desire for the toy ship is thus really a symbol of the child's longing for his mother who has departed for the 'far shore'; something which his father, whose Puritanism forbids toys, cannot comprehend.

The ship, however, also stands for another kind of desire in the play. As Edmund stares at it in the shop window, Mary Teague, a mad woman of the village, approaches him. Asking if he likes the ship, she tells him to come along with her to "Paradise". Curious, the child is led into some nearby woods where, muttering "Ship, ship, ship...", she attempts to interfere with him. The motif is the familiar Potter one of sexual assault which, as with A Beast and Hide and Seek, can be seen as a version of 'The Fall'. (: § 1.3)⁹⁷ If like 'The Fall' in A Beast, the image of the ship seems to link the motifs of a dead mother, 'guilty' patriarch and an awakening from childhood innocence, the crucial difference with Where Adam Stood is that the victim resists and escapes. Crying out "You're mad", Edmund throws a stone in the mad woman's face and succeeds in fleeing her clutches. Thus the child is able to survive and cope with his trauma - a fact which both seems to mark a progression in Potter's work as a whole and within the play, provide the precedent by which Edmund can begin to resist that even greater threat to his health and survival: his father.⁹⁸

This becomes clear at the very end of the drama when, after more nightmares, his father again urges his son to pray. Earnestly entreated to say what the Good Lord has advised, Edmund's reply to his father is

devastating: "The Good Lord says I am to have the ship". Stunned but unable because of his dogmatic belief to broach any argument with the judgements of 'the Lord', Gosse senior exits, troubled, from the room. Having thus gained the measure of his father and his religion, Edmund can sleep peacefully at last. His final actions in the play are telling. Getting out of bed, he carefully wedges a chair against the handle of his bedroom door. No more, it seems, will his well-being be threatened by his father. On the soundtrack, the voice of William Brackley is heard (one of the proponents of the new Darwinism to which Gosse senior is so implacably opposed), spelling out the first principles of the theory of natural selection:

Any creature, any life-form, which can, by however small a degree, adapt to the harshness of its own environment is the one that is going to persist. Extinction awaits those creatures which cannot meet the complexity of the conditions under which they live. The fit survive. The unfit perish.⁸⁹

The proof of Darwin's theories is thus ironically to be found in the home of one of its staunchest enemies. Edmund has found a way of coping with his environment and will persist. His father, unable to take account either of his son or the wider discoveries of science, is, it seems, doomed to extinction. As with Lay Down Your Arms, imagination or 'lies' is shown to be the key to survival. Gosse senior cannot adapt because he believes in the absolute, literal truth of the Bible. In contrast, by using his imagination and telling 'lies', his son takes the first step away from literalism - becoming a storyteller; a writer.

Central to the drama is thus the idea that events in the Book of Genesis are not literally true but at best, metaphor. It is this which helps explain 'The Fall' that does not happen in this play. Unlike previous

Potter protagonists, Edmund cannot truly 'fall' because the play demonstrates such a concept not to be literally true. 'Where Adam Stood' once, notions of a 'Fall' into irredeemable sin are replaced with an emphasis on the centrality of 'story-telling' and metaphor. It is this rejection of the Old Testament assumption of a literal and irrevocable 'Fall from God which seems to mark a progression in Potter's writing towards a new 'trust in the order of things'. As he put it in interview, Where Adam Stood, like Gosse's Father and Son memoir, represents the throwing off of "other people's interpretation" of religion - the fact that "you have to assert something about yourself in order to be yourself. When the child put the chair against the door, that said what the whole book had said - 'I will be me', said the child."⁹⁰

In his banned Brimstone and Treacle play (originally to have been transmitted 6 April 1976; Dir: Barry Davis), Potter takes both the consequences of escape from under the shadow of a permanent 'Fall' and the revolt against 'other people's interpretation of religion' to their logical conclusion. As its title suggests, the remedy which Brimstone and Treacle prescribes is an old-fashioned one, albeit sugared for popular consumption.⁹¹ Potter deploys the familiar plot device of the 'outsider knocking on the door' - only in this case, in a conscious inversion of Angels Are So Few, the young man knocking outside believes himself to be a demon not an angel.

As the play progresses, the visitor begins to transform the suburban household into which he has insinuated himself. His hosts, Mr and Mrs Bates, have a daughter, Pattie, left severely brain-damaged after an horrific car accident. Ostensibly because of his daughter's 'vegetable' condition, Mr Bates is a man who has lost all faith - "There is no God and

there are no miracles" that will bring Pattie back, he tells his wife. Mrs Bates, by contrast, is a woman who believes simply and absolutely: "I'd sooner be dead than think like that", she replies.⁹²

For Martin, the demonic visitor, this unhappy household is the perfect breeding ground for evil. When husband and wife are both out, he seizes the opportunity he has been seeking: the rape of helpless Pattie. On returning, however, her mother senses a change in her daughter, not for the worse but for the better. There is a definite "light in her eyes", she tells Martin - "A real sense of - of something trying to speak to us..."⁹³

To the demon's astonishment, Mrs Bates asks him to help her pray to God for Pattie. The result is "a purple-prosed prayer", by Martin, "ranging through various styles and accents" (Cathedral English, Irish Catholicism, American Evangelism) in "a ghostly reflection of clerical voices we have all heard". In this way, parodying "certain familiar forms of faith", the play tries to draw a clear moral - namely, that a religion which becomes ritualised into cant and dogma provides a perfect camouflage for 'evil'.⁹⁴

Martin's prayer for Pattie prepares for the climax of the play when, in the dead of night, the demon sneaks downstairs to the girl's divan - a second rape on his mind. This time, however, his assault seems to shock her into speech. The whole house having been awakened, the Bates rush downstairs to find Martin gone but their screaming daughter apparently 'cured'. Turning to her father, Pattie asks "What happened - ?"⁹⁵ By way of reply, the TV version of Brimstone reveals in brief flashback what did happen on the night of her accident - the night she discovered her father in bed with her best friend, Susan. The accident followed as a direct consequence. Running tearfully out of her friend's flat onto the road,

Pattie was struck by a passing vehicle. As the play returns to the 'present', a family tableau is revealed - Pattie stares up, confused; Mrs Bates turns to her husband overjoyed, the long-prayed-for 'miracle' a reality at last. Bates, however, simply stares down at his daughter - unhappy, guilty.

Brimstone and Treacle's cure is thus an unorthodox one: sexual assault as a form of shock therapy. As such, it is a direct inversion of Angels Are So Few for here, the supernatural outsider is the attacker not the victim and the forced seduction becomes a kind of Redemption, not a 'Fall'. Exact mirror images, the two plays function as book-ends for the crisis of faith - the 'unacknowledged spiritual questions' - which Potter admitted in 1978 he had been exploring in other works in between.

In interview, Potter called his play "an inverted parable" - the inverted moral of which is that out of evil can come good.⁹⁶ If sexual assault is the 'evil', the play shows it has the capacity to work its own kind of 'good' in terms of releasing repressed memories and guilt. It is symbolically significant, for example, that it is only when Martin rapes Pattie a second time that she is 'awoken' from her catatonic spell. As the flashbacks make clear, the girl relives at the end not Martin's first assault but the sexual trauma involving her father. There is a causal connection between Pattie witnessing this and her subsequent accident and illness. Akin to the similarly handicapped Rufus in A Beast, Pattie is the victim almost of an Old Testament logic of transgression and retribution whereby she is 'struck dumb' by the 'shock' of exposure to a parent copulating - the secret 'forbidden knowledge' that has to be locked away inside her head. (: § 1.3)

In turn, the fact that Pattie's illness arises as a direct consequence of Mr Bates' sexual desires is akin to the sins of the father visited on the child. Moreover, that the 'sexcrime' should be committed with the daughter's 'best friend', yet the sexual trauma revolve around Pattie herself, suggests a metaphor for incest. In this light, Martin the rapist becomes Bates' secret demon self; the embodiment of his incestuous desires for his daughter. Like Sam in The Bonegrinder, he is a projection of guilt - the intruder from the streets who is also inside the head.⁹⁷

If the play shows the demon to be literally at the heart of suburbia, at the same time, it also indicates him to be functioning in the name of a greater good. When Martin thinks he is doing evil, he is actually changing others' lives for the better. The demon lover is paradoxically a transforming angel and while blissfully naïve of the true import of the actions and motives of those around her, the prayerful Mrs Bates is the only one of the characters who is able to sense this.

Brimstone and Treacle can thus be seen as an affirmation of a simple instinctive faith 'in the order of things'. While Martin and Mr Bates go through the play with a variety of hidden motives which finally prove to be their undoing, Mrs Bates simply prays to God for a 'miracle' and is granted one in the end. As Potter put it in interview:

The weakness of the play was maybe that I caricatured her too much but I knew what I was trying to do which was to make the one genuinely good person in it a fool so you couldn't get a handle on it. Just like with religion, you can't get a handle on it. You just have to know or not know. People either believe or they don't believe.⁹⁸

Martin's knowing parodies of religion and Mr Bates' nihilism are both exposed as inadequate in the face of Mrs Bates' child-like faith which

wins through in the end. Sophisticated or worldly adult attitudes thus blind religious truth. According to Potter, 'true' religion is:

... The world behind the world that these forces, Evil, Good, contend. And they don't contend where the Good has all the good lines. It is a mix which is what I believe it is like occupying a religious sensibility... Contending forces fight within and they're not recognisable. You don't know which is which except she knew, Mrs Bates knew, in some odd way...⁹⁹

'Good' can come out of 'Evil' because to Potter, these are not such rigidly defined moral categories as much organised religion would have us believe. On one level, this is a liberation for like Edmund in Where Adam Stood, it allows escape from 'other people's interpretations' of religion and a throwing off of old 'Fall' notions of sexual guilt and sin. On another, however, a collapse in conventional moral categories and an attendant moral relativism bring with them new sets of problems. As with Pattie's return to speech (and accusation) in Brimstone, there are consequences to be faced.

Double Dare, Potter's third 1976 play (tx. 6.4.76; Dir:John McKenzie), points to the dangers that attend a collapse of all sense of categories and distinctions, moral or otherwise. As with so many Potter plays, the title is from an Al Bowlly tune, "I Double Dare You" and the song reflects the themes. In this case, the 'Double Dare' is a) how far will an actress go in the pursuit of her profession and b) how far will a writer go in blurring the distinctions between his fictions and his own life ?

Helen, a beautiful young actress, agrees to meet Martin, a television playwright, in a large London hotel because she has been told he wishes to write a part for her in his next play. As they talk, both, however, cannot help glancing across to another table where a corpulent client is plying a

girl from an escort agency with dinner and wine. Martin is very nervous. He has been ill and is suffering from a writer's block. The object of his meeting her, he tells Helen, is to "release" him from this block since the tension in their real encounter will be "merely anticipating the kind of tension between a man and a girl" he sees in his new play. When Helen points out that the client at the next table tried to pick her up, Martin spills the contents of his glass over the table: "That's what I'm writing about - a girl from an escort agency comes along to meet a client." And it is Helen he has in mind for the part of the girl, Carol.¹⁰⁰

The actress grows increasingly uneasy at these too unlikely coincidences and Martin's line of questioning. As a writer, he is obsessed with the border-lines between reality and fantasy and the question, "How real are invented things ?", yet he is also obsessed with her and where she draws the line as to "how far she will go in the pursuit of her profession ?" He cites some examples of her past work, including a commercial (a parody by Potter of a real seventies commercial) in which she is seen sucking seductively on a chocolate bar, called a 'Fraggie Bar': "All I want to know", asks Martin, is whether "the director of that commercial... explicitly [said] ... this chocolate is a penis ?" Thus Martin is questioning the boundaries between public and private acts. Should the line turn out to be blurred, what would that make a woman whose profession means she has to 'perform' anywhere, any time, with anyone: a prostitute ?¹⁰¹

If this explains the play's linking of Helen and Carol, the arrival of Martin's producer friend, Ben, sheds light on the other half of the 'Double Dare' - how far a writer will go. "Can't you guess ?" the producer asks of Helen. "He's in love with you..." Helen is sickened, even more so when Ben

urges she will get a good part out of it - "Whore, actress, yes ?" she retorts. "They get mixed up, don't they, Martin ?" For her, it is simply the "sneaky way... that writers, directors... want to think about actresses... The logical consequence of the way our society looks at... women."¹⁰²

This prepares for the ending of the play when, after Ben has left, Helen tells Martin, "Well, you did want to know where I drew the line."¹⁰³ She and the apologetic writer leave the bar to collect some baggage she has left in his room upstairs, yet as they head up in the lift, the play cuts between two different scenes - one of Martin and Helen in the lift; the other featuring the client and the prostitute, Carol. Back in Martin's room, he suddenly becomes tense, pressing his ear against the wall. Next door, a murder appears to be taking place: the client, frustrated by his sexual impotence, is strangling the prostitute. Martin turns away from the wall to look at Helen. The play follows his gaze, cutting to reveal Helen lying on his bed; her eyes wide open. Though the director, John McKenzie, frames the shot in such a way it could almost be a seduction pose, there is no doubt Helen has been strangled.

As with the similar crime in A Beast, the murder in Double Dare is a 'sex crime' (: § 1.3). This is made clear by Martin's final actions in the play which are almost post-coital: he lights a cigarette, switches on the radio, lies beside his 'sleeping love'. The play ultimately serves as a warning for it demonstrates that if 'reality' can cross into the imagination, then so too can imagination cross into 'reality'. As a writer, Martin takes figures from life (such as Helen) and fantasizes them into fictitious characters (the prostitute) for the TV play he is writing inside his head. In turn, however, these fictions begin to express deeper 'truths' about

himself than the surface reality of the mild-mannered persona he presents to Helen; to such an extent that they become reality.

Imagination or fiction is more 'true' than everyday surface reality. The theme has emerged before in Potter's writing, particularly Lay Down Your Arms. Double Dare, however, takes the logic of this much further for whilst in the earlier play, Hawk was 'torn' between reality and fiction; life and art; flesh and spirit, the lesson Martin learns in the 1976 drama is that there are no such clear distinctions. The writer and client, actress and 'whore' are one and the same here, not the conflicting impulses of Chekhov versus Soho with which the young soldier wrestled in the 1970 work. Hence though, as with Brimstone and Where Adam Stood, such a collapse in old categories of thought can be a liberation, Double Dare shows that it also carries certain dangers. With no clear-cut boundaries, it is up to the individual to decide where he or she draws the line between reality and fantasy and how far to go in crossing that line. Potter rams that point home in Double Dare by portraying a television playwright, like himself, who goes too far. (: § 3.3) Failing to keep his own dark fantasies in check, Martin blurs them with external reality to such an extent he becomes his own fictional villain. In so doing, he forces the actress, Helen, to cross the line that she had drawn in deciding how far she would go - finally making her act out her sexy screen role for real, by virtue of a sexual assault which, as his name suggests, sees Martin assume the role of demon.

Taking the three 1976 plays together, it is finally possible to see what Potter meant, when, in response to the banning of Brimstone and Treacle, he insisted that although not "a formal trilogy", all three plays had to be seen together because they all "occupy the same territory".¹⁰⁴ What this

loose 1976 'trilogy' seems to represent is precisely that movement from spiritual nihilism to a new 'trust' in the order of things which Potter was later to record in his 1978 introduction to the Brimstone stage play. Each play reflects aspects of that movement. Where Adam Stood traces the collapse of the belief, stemming from the Old Testament, of having somehow experienced a literal 'Fall' from God. In its place is an assertion of both the natural instinct for survival (learning to cope with a hostile environment) and of literature or 'story-telling' which replaces organised religion as a much healthier outlet for spirituality in a relativistic, increasingly secular society. In one sense, both of these bring the individual much closer to God. Brimstone and Treacle extends this collapse of belief in traditional moral thinking and takes it to its logical conclusion. Conventional definitions of right and wrong are shown to be not only inadequate but frequently a convenient cover for evil which finds its natural breeding ground in the unctuousness and sanctimoniousness of many forms of organized religion. A simple child-like faith is advocated instead as the means to God since through it, the individual is able instinctively to feel what reason cannot - namely, that behind all the apparent evil in the world there may be a greater good shining through. Realisation of this becomes a liberation. Double Dare, however, shows that even liberation has its consequences and dangers. A collapse in conventional categories and distinctions begs the question of how do you order your universe and where do you draw the line? If the answer is that it is up to each individual to decide for him or herself, the play also shows how imperative it is that that personal choice be rigorously self-policed. Fiction may be the ideal outlet for 'the spirit' but unless properly controlled, the road to heaven can all too easily, as Martin learns at the end of Double Dare, become the gateway to hell.

2.3 c) Banned !

Given the links between them, it was thus unfortunate that Potter's three 1976 plays were never transmitted close together, as had been originally intended. As Brimstone's director, the late Barry Davis, expressed it: "It's that lovely Zen concept of two hands clapping and you don't make sense of two hands clapping if one of them is not there."¹⁰⁵

The irony is that Brimstone and Treacle was there. Having been commissioned and recorded by the BBC, it was 'pulled' from the schedules very close to transmission on the orders of Alasdair Milne, then Director of TV Programmes with the Corporation. This was the aspect of the whole affair which most annoyed and hurt Potter at the time - the fact that the BBC had had the play since early December 1974 and yet vetoed it only at the eleventh hour, without any consultation or discussion with the writer.¹⁰⁶

Why was the play banned, having been so long in the BBC system ? To understand the reasons, states the 'censor' Milne in interview, one has to understand how, on a day to day level, the Corporation functions largely through a delegation of responsibility. A system of referral operates: if any BBC executive becomes nervous about a particular sequence or scene in a drama, he or she is expected to 'refer' the matter up to a superior. With Brimstone, the finished play was referred to the then Controller of BBC-1, Bryan Cowgill, who in turn referred it to Milne because he could not make up his mind about the play's 'general tone' - the relationship between the demon and the girl; the central rape scenes but also the 'funny' of the play: "Was this actually going to outrage people ? Was it going right over the top?... The incantation scene - is that going to be blasphemous ?"¹⁰⁷

Despite the fact, as the play's producer, Kenith Trodd, later claimed to the press, BBC management had seen a script of Brimstone as long ago as summer 1975, Milne only decided to ban the play on the morning of Friday 19th March 1976, having viewed the finished tape for the first time - less than three weeks before it was due to be transmitted.¹⁰⁸ This caused him some problems. The Radio Times was due to go to press the following Tuesday with a substantial feature in which theatre critic Robert Cushman discussed ten years of Potter's work at the BBC and offered the view that of the three 1976 plays, Brimstone and Treacle was the most interesting. It was the pressure of the Radio Times deadline, claims Milne, which necessitated an instant decision on the play that morning, with no time to consult Potter on changes or cuts before transmission.¹⁰⁹

Why, instead of banning it outright, did Milne not suggest a postponement of transmission to allow for discussion with the producer, director, writer ? What was it that he found so offensive in the play that precluded even the possibility of cuts or rewrites for a new transmission date ? According to Milne, it was 'the actual central construction of the plot' - the rape of a mentally handicapped girl which 'cures' her - that he thought would cause outrage, not 'details of amelioration' here or there:

I thought... actually out of the depth of his own psyche and the depth of his own suffering at the time... [Potter] had written a tortured piece which I thought would outrage people... - I just thought it was too much, actually...¹¹⁰

Milne subsequently wrote to Potter and told him so. In a famous letter, widely leaked to the press by its offended recipient, the only

justification the writer ever received for the ban was contained in one brief paragraph:

I found the play brilliantly written and made, but nauseating... I believe that it is right in certain instances to outrage the viewers in order to get over a point of serious importance but I am afraid that in this case real outrage would be widely felt and that no such point would get across.¹¹¹

A cause célèbre was in the making. With no right of appeal within the BBC against a Controller's decision, all the aggrieved Potter and Trodd could do was to try to generate as much publicity for their cause as possible. To the great chagrin of the BBC, reviews started appearing in the press of a play that had never been broadcast. As Barry Davis made clear, this was because he and others used to invite TV correspondents round to their flats in order to view smuggled copies of Brimstone - it was "our sad little revenge," he stated.¹¹² One important result, however, was that critics like Peter Fiddick of The Guardian and Sean Day-Lewis of The Daily Telegraph were able to argue against the ban from direct personal knowledge of the play.¹¹³

Meanwhile, Potter conducted his own crusade, consulting with lawyers to see if an injunction could not be sought, preventing the BBC transmitting the other two plays in his loose 'trilogy'. He and Trodd also both asked for their names to be removed from the credits of Double Dare and Where Adam Stood.¹¹⁴ Both moves came to nothing. In banning Brimstone less than three weeks before it was due to be broadcast, Milne had to find a play to fill the vacant Play for Today slot on April 6th. Also weighing on his mind was the special Radio Times feature on Potter's work. Consequently, with no other new plays ready for transmission, he decided

to move Double Dare a week forward into the transmission slot that had been originally intended for Brimstone.¹¹⁵

To Potter, this decision merely added "insult to injury".¹¹⁶ The fine thematic strands he had carefully woven between the three plays had been obliterated at a stroke by the blunt instrument of Milne's rescheduling. By the end of that April, with the prospect of any reversal of the ban fast receding, he resorted to using his position as occasional TV critic of the New Statesman to make one last appeal. In his column of 23 April, he described the BBC as "an uneasy confederation" of different interest groups, "each pushing and concealing its product" until the moment of transmission - a place where "memoranda drift up from one floor to another" and programmes get made "in the spaces between". The Corporation was, in short, a "ramshackle anachronism" that offered marvellous opportunities to the artist if "the game" was played with skill. Occasionally, however, a controller would "lose his head, froth at the mouth and expose himself and the whole system to ridicule".¹¹⁷

In many ways, this is how the Brimstone and Treacle affair should be interpreted in hindsight - as an instance where the mutually self-sustaining 'game' that the free-lance artist always must play with the broadcasting institution broke down. John Caughie has touched on the nature of this 'game' in his 1980 article, "Progressive Television and Documentary Drama." In it, he states the single play or play series functioned in many ways "as some kind of cutting edge" for British television in the nineteen sixties and seventies, testing the limits (socially, politically, sexually) of what its regulators would allow to be shown or said on screen.¹¹⁸ Despite its gradual disappearance from ITV, the single play survived in BBC schedules during the nineteen seventies

because, as Caughie puts it, it conferred "a certain cultural prestige, a 'seriousness' on television as a whole".¹¹⁹

It did other things too. By providing an outlet for the expression of a plurality of voices and opinions independent of the Corporation (in practice, almost always those of white male writers), the single play allowed the BBC to proclaim itself as a public servant in touch with contemporary opinion and tastes and free from any Government bias or control. The Wednesday Plays and Play for Todays were not only important to the creative personnel who worked on them (the writers, directors, actors), they were thus valuable to the Corporation too - a point which the former Director-General Milne concedes with reference to Potter: "He was very important to us, not least for causing trouble," he states. "I have always believed people should be stirred up and shaken by somebody of that calibre writing in his own way." Potter was as valuable to the BBC, he agrees, as the BBC was valuable to Potter.¹²⁰

The tensions between broadcaster and artist which the Brimstone and Treacle affair exposed revolved almost entirely around Caughie's notion of the single play as marker of cultural 'seriousness'. Uncomfortably for both sides, it exposed there were limits to the licence which the institution was prepared to give to the 'troublesome' artist of 'calibre'. It demonstrated that however distinguished his reputation, the artist, far from having complete creative freedom on TV, was actually only free to move within a certain limited territory which the institution had prescribed for him.

Thus Brimstone was banned by Milne because he failed to detect any 'serious' point behind the notion of a demon raping a mentally

handicapped girl for the sake of an ultimate good (- as he wrote to Potter, 'I believe that it is right in certain instances to outrage the viewers in order to get over a point of serious importance...' [emphasis added]). In interview, Kenith Trodd states his impression of the whole affair was that much of the problem resided in the fact that most of the BBC Controllers during this period "had come from anywhere but drama". He believes many in BBC management at the time were uncomfortable with dealing with drama, particularly "if it spilled over into current affairs or moral issues of a way that forced it out of the television viewers' page and onto the front page. That was a problem and they didn't want those kind of problems".¹²¹

Clearly, Milne, a former current affairs producer, was simply 'nauseated' that any writer could present an audience with the spectacle of the rape of a mentally handicapped girl. Failing to see any 'serious' point or metaphor behind it, he applied journalistic criteria and viewed the piece as an expression of the suffering of its writer (- ironic if one considers that the play in many ways deals with a liberation from suffering). This seems to explain why no cuts or rewrites were acceptable to him. It was not so much the depiction of the rape scenes themselves but the very idea of them to which he objected.¹²²

As Caughie argues, explicit acts of censorship are always anathema, not only to the artist but to the broadcasting institution as well since "it disturbs its view of itself: a confusion arises between the role of guardian and the role of public servant".¹²³ It is out of just such uncertainties and contradictions, he states, that television drama is created: "the lines between 'conviction' and 'excess', between the

'talented' and the 'less talented', between 'provocation' and 'offence'. It is also along those lines that "the skirmishes take place."²⁴

With Brimstone and Treacle, if Potter and Trodd asserted the right of the artist to be 'provocative', Milne called it 'offence'. If it was held up to be a work of great moral 'conviction', the Director of Programmes accused it of 'excess' - 'too much', 'over the top'. Only on the question of 'talent' did both sides seem to agree yet that could only help to fuel rather than diminish anger over the ban. As Caughie puts it, there are always two discourses circulating in television drama production: the 'creative' and 'the official'.²⁵ On the one hand, there is the broadcasting institution: always trying to curb and restrain; mindful of 'the family viewing context' and insistent on 'referral up'. Policing the schedules, its managers regard themselves as the true 'professionals' of broadcasting, confident in their assumption of what is good and bad for their audience. On the other, there are the drama producers, free-lance writers and directors whose aim (at least in the case of The Wednesday Play and Play for Today) was to attempt to challenge conventional television thinking, extending the boundaries of what was permissible on screen. It is important to note that this was an aim which the institution itself tacitly invited and supported - it set aside prominent slots in the schedules for the single play; it poured time and resources into bringing new writing and innovative drama to screen because it perceived it as being in the best interests of its own health and long-term survival to do so.

As Potter hinted in The New Statesman, the 'game' for the individual writer or drama producer in the nineteen sixties and seventies was thus to manoeuvre 'controversial' single play work successfully through this

BBC system, 'pushing' and 'concealing' it, 'until the moment it gets on the air', from all the managers and monitors within the institutional hierarchy whose task it was to 'control' precisely the kind of 'challenging', 'dangerous' work which the Wednesday Play / Play for Today slots had been specifically set aside in the schedules to promote. In other words, the struggle between 'creative' and 'official' was a struggle enshrined within the BBC system itself: the 'game', in many respects, a veritable 'double dare'. Akin to Potter's own play, the question the individual artist faced in negotiating the system was, having been implicitly 'dared' by the institution to be controversial, how far did one go? When would the blind eye stop being turned and the line be drawn?

This seems to explain why Milne only got to see Brimstone and Treacle less than three weeks before transmission. According to Barry Davis, those involved with the play always sensed it might be 'controversial'. He remembered Kenith Trodd urging him to get the play through the BBC editing suites as quickly as possible, in case of trouble.¹²⁶ It seems the play was still being worked on so close to its transmission date because this offered a means of protection from prying eyes, a chance almost to smuggle it on air before any manager would need to see it. It was, in other words, all a legitimate part of the 'game' between artist and institution. When Milne banned the play, much of the anger and incomprehension may well have sprung not so much from the fact that the 'creative' had been caught out by the 'official' but that this mutually beneficial 'game' of cat and mouse which the two sides had grown accustomed to playing had, to all intents and purposes, broken down. As Potter put it in The New Statesman, 'a controller had lost his head', deciding to draw his own personal, arbitrary line.¹²⁷

2.3 d) Blacklist

There is another perspective to the Brimstone and Treacle affair, however. According to Kenith Trodd: "In 1976, there was a very murky but undoubtedly existing attempt to purge the BBC of some of the 'Lefties'... and the only producer 'Lefty' they could actually get was me."¹²⁸

In September 1976, Trodd's free-lance contract as producer on Play for Today was terminated, despite having been annually renewed for the previous four years. Immediately, his friends and colleagues suspected it was 'political'. As Trodd puts it:

Throughout quite a lot of this period, I and some of the people I worked with, including Roger Smith, [Tony] Garnett in a different way but certainly [Roy] Battersby were all to different degrees flirting with the W.R.P.: the Workers' Revolutionary Party... And there was... quite a lot of media penetration by members of that party of television and the theatre...

Despite attending meetings, Trodd asserts he was never a member of the party, just "one of the sort of in and out fellow travellers" who shared some of the goals and aspirations of active members like the director, Roy Battersby.¹²⁹

Unconvinced by reassurances that the system of free-lance contracts was simply being reorganised to phase out one-year renewals, many of Trodd's colleagues and friends urged him to confront the Corporation head-on and demand some answers.¹³⁰ This need became particularly pressing after supporters unearthed a 'Deep Throat' - an ex-BBC mandarin who was prepared to confirm there was indeed a hidden agenda behind the whole affair. The producer well remembers his repeated visits to Alasdair Milne and Ian Trethowan (Managing Director of BBC TV) in his quest to find out the truth. The latter told him he was "overattached to the

conspiracy view of history". With Milne, however, something curious happened. As he was leaving his office, having been subjected to more stonewalling, Milne urged him to stop worrying: "'You've always stood up for your beliefs', he said. 'You've gone for Parliament...'" Puzzled by the nature of this small-talk, it was only once Milne's office door had closed behind him that Trodd states he realised: "They think I'm Roy Battersby. They think I'm somebody else !"

As the producer puts it, it was one thing for BBC managers occasionally to tolerate a 'controversial' figure like Battersby being invited in to direct the odd play, quite another for them to have on the staff someone they believed was a full-time revolutionary. But how to persuade the Corporation they had got their wires crossed and that he was not a fully paid up party worker ? Trodd states he found a 'circuitous' route to get the message across. The problem was finally sorted out and his contract renewed.¹³¹

In Blacklist, their 1988 account of political vetting within British institutions, Mike Hollingsworth and Richard Norton-Taylor describe how the recently appointed Head of Plays, James Cellan Jones, fought with Ian Trethowan against sacking Trodd. Trethowan had suggested removing Trodd because there were 'security problems' - the producer was a "trouble-maker and suspected by the security people".¹³² Though Trethowan eventually backed down in the face of Cellan Jones' protests, what this episode illustrates is that the Brimstone and Treacle affair was only part of a much wider backlash in the mid-seventies against the so-called left-wing 'radicals' within BBC drama. Moreover, akin to allegations of 'dirty tricks' campaigns against the Labour Government of the time under

Harold Wilson, that reaction was ultimately sponsored by the Security Services in the shape of M.I.5..

As Hollingsworth and Norton-Taylor show in Blacklist, far from being a delusion of left-wing paranoiacs, the BBC had practised highly secretive political vetting of a large number of its employees - from Graduate Trainees through to directors and producers in every department - since 1937. This was done by M.I.5 via the BBC's Personnel Department where the Corporation employed a 'Security Liaison Officer'. In the mid nineteen seventies, however, during a period of great political turmoil, a special desk was set up within M.I.5. itself to look at 'subversives in the media'. One of the targets the Security Services were especially gunning for was BBC Drama.¹³³ It was an obvious target to choose.

As Alasdair Milne puts it, by that time, a general feeling had been put about by right-wing newspapers such as The Daily Express that the entire Plays Department of the BBC was run by "Workers Revolutionary Party people" and that consequently all of its output was slanted to the Left. There was "a certain tension", Milne confesses, between management and staff around this issue. He recalls telling Christopher Morahan, Head of Plays prior to Cellan Jones, that there was an "anxiety here. Keep an eye on it".¹³⁴ This edgy, volatile climate of the mid-seventies is perhaps the context in which the Brimstone affair should be understood.

Though still unrepentant about the ban, Milne admits, "There was no doubt the climate in '76 was difficult... and to some extent that might have coloured my judgement". He cites the pressures the BBC was under at the time in terms of accusations of too much TV sex and violence. Government had picked up on the possible connection between what was on

screen and trouble in the streets, inviting both the Chairmen of the BBC and IBA to discuss new curbs with the Home Secretary. In addition, the Annan Committee was due to report to Parliament in 1977 on the future of TV. Hence there was, states Milne, "that sort of pressure going on round about the time of Brimstone".¹³⁵

Certainly, when the play was banned, many TV commentators and practitioners detected a loss of confidence and a gradual undermining of the BBC from within. Potter himself decried the ban as a loss of nerve and an indication "of the changing nature of the BBC."¹³⁶ In the week following the ban, The Daily Mail reported that Milne faced "an open revolt" from top producers angry at the introduction of a new wave of censorship. This was a reaction not only to Brimstone but also The Naked Civil Servant - a dramatisation of Quentin Crisp's autobiography which the BBC had turned down yet which subsequently went on to win many top awards for ITV. At an angry meeting, the verdict of producers was that "we are in a climate of frightening conformity. Plays which would not have raised an eyebrow five years ago would not be tolerated today. We have capitulated to Mary Whitehouse."¹³⁷

Hence given this context of blacklist and backlash in the mid seventies, is it conceivable that Brimstone was banned not merely out of personal taste but as an attempt by management to be seen to be having teeth in dealing with the tide of 'subversive' drama ? By banning the work of perhaps the most distinguished television playwright to emerge from that 'radical' Wednesday Play generation, was it an attempt to set an example to others, particularly the suspected 'troublemaker' Trodd ? As indicated overleaf, Milne denies the wider context of the time did anything more than 'colour his judgement'. Trodd, however, believes the events were

connected, even though he states he never realised it at the time:
"Brimstone was not a subject I don't think I accused... [as having] to do
with that but clearly, it was part of that."¹³⁸

Certainly, Potter's three 1976 plays formed the climax of his single play
work and association with Play for Today. Only one more BBC play would
follow: Blue Remembered Hills in 1979 (: S 3.1). Was this relative
paucity in single play output the result of disillusionment with BBC
censorship and management ? At the time of the Brimstone ban, Potter
lamented that "a generation of second-rate bureaucrats" was "leading the
BBC down from the heights".¹³⁹ He saw the writing on the wall for the
single play: "It will soon all be done on film and it'll be a director's
medium like the cinema. It only remains an author's medium at the moment
because of British anachronisms." In the same breath, however, he could
add: "But before it ends, I want to make a few defiant noises".¹⁴⁰

Paradoxically, the Brimstone ban seemed to sting him into life, fuelling
rather than diminishing his desire to write for television. By May of
1976, he could tell the Daily Express: "Strangely enough, the [Brimstone]
argument has made me realise afresh the importance of television... If I
can get that kind of reaction to a play, maybe it is saying something
important."¹⁴¹ He also admitted to The Daily Telegraph: "This has
reawakened my appetite. I have got to make some kind of reply".¹⁴²

In many ways, that would come two years later with his highly acclaimed
six part serial, Pennies from Heaven (: S 4.1). Potter's lack of single
play output was thus because he was increasingly turning his attention
towards other TV dramatic forms. If, in retrospect, this seems an astute
move in view of the subsequent decline of the single play, it was one

which his earlier seventies work had foreshadowed: the 1976 'trilogy' of thematically connected plays but also his occasional forays into the realm of the 'classic serial'. In 1971, Potter had written Casanova - an original six part serial, based on the memoirs of the famous eighteenth century lover (: § 4.0). Also, as an established TV figure, he was consistently being commissioned during this period to adapt a number of 'classic' literary works for BBC TV.

His remote rural upbringing in the Forest of Dean and perspective as a writer guiltily educated out of his class made him a perfect candidate to tackle the works of Thomas Hardy. The first of two such adaptations during the seventies was a single filmed drama for BBC-2, A Tragedy of Two Ambitions (tx. 21.11.73; Dir; Michael Tuchner). This formed part of a series of six Hardy short stories adapted by different TV playwrights and transmitted under the umbrella title, Vessex Tales.¹⁴³ A Tragedy was undoubtedly given to Potter because its themes are essentially those of The Nigel Barton Plays (: § 1.2) As Potter summarised them in the Radio Times: "the contradiction between ambition and conscience, the theme of class and the theme of filial shame which is universal to all ages and all times."¹⁴⁴ The 'tragedy' is also of a 'torn' hero, or in this case two: Joshua and Cornelius Halborough (played by John Hurt and David Troughton), a pair of ambitious sons who decide to kill their drunken artisan father in order to preserve their reputations as men of the cloth. Like Barton, however, the upwardly mobile sons can find no escape from the guilt they feel over their working-class father - not even after he is dead. As Potter put it in the Radio Times, "None of [Hardy's] characters escapes conscience or shame. And they seem driven by fate".¹⁴⁵

Three years later, Potter was commissioned to do another Hardy adaptation for the BBC, only this time of a much larger work: Hardy's famous 1886 novel The Mayor of Casterbridge. The idea emanated from the Serials Department of the BBC where script editor Betty Willingale had suggested Potter's name for the task of transforming the tragic novel into a seven part 'classic serial' for BBC-2.¹⁴⁶ The resulting dramatisation of the rise and fall of Michael Henchard (played by Alan Bates) - a man who sells his wife at a fair and by this act brings about his own downfall twenty years later - was widely praised on its first showing on BBC-2 between 22 January and 5 March 1978. Indeed some of the novel's themes may be seen to connect with Potter's own, most notably the idea of a single fatal lapse from grace and the 'commodification' of women by men.¹⁴⁷ In many ways, however, the process of adapting Mayor in the summer of 1976 was much more a chance for Potter to return to writing again after the death of his father in November 1975. As he told Joan Bakewell in an interview the following November, in the year since the loss, he had written no original work: "The grief has been so pitiless I didn't want to turn myself to anything but that".¹⁴⁸ Begun in February 1977, it was Pennies from Heaven which would mark his return to original writing for television (: § 4.1).

There was one other work which Potter adapted for TV during the seventies: Angus Wilson's 1964 novel, Late Call. Transmitted between 1 and 22 March 1975 on BBC-2, this portrayal of life in the emerging New Towns of post-war Britain again seemed perfect material to offer to the writer of The Nigel Barton Plays. Interviewed in the Radio Times, Wilson himself claimed as much. Mapping a changing social landscape and class structure, the novel dealt with "a senior citizen watching young people in the late fifties and early sixties - the years of coffee bars, New Towns

and C.N.D.." As Potter "was in his twenties then... he [seemed] just the man to do it for television".¹⁴⁹

In the TV version, Dandy Nichols plays Sylvia Calvert, an elderly woman who gives up her life as a hotelier to spend her retirement in a New Town, living with her widower son Harold (Michael Bryant) and his grown-up family. A working class woman with unpleasant memories of a brutal childhood incident, she finds herself a displaced person in the new 'classless' Britain, as she wanders around the New Town alone with many hours to fill. After rescuing a young girl from lightning, however, she gradually begins to discover a new raison d'être and sets about rebuilding her life on her own terms. Her private salvation as the saviour of others becomes extended to helping Harold and his family deal with their own personal traumas (: § 3.0).

In each of his TV adaptations in the seventies, Potter was invariably content to remain faithful to the literary source, not seeking to impose his own personal authorial stamp, as he does with original work. One reason why comes from his comments to the Radio Times about his dramatisation of A Tragedy which he said "demanded all of one's technique to remain faithful to the mood and tone of the story... If you're tackling something of that stature, you feel some presence looking over your shoulder. And the more skilful the writer, the more difficult the adaptation."¹⁵⁰

One consequence, however, of fidelity to the text was that in spite of winning praise for his adaptations, there was always some dissatisfaction that these were poor substitutes for the original work on which Potter's reputation was based. This was certainly the case amongst BBC

management. Alasdair Milne asserts: "I don't think adaptation is his game... The Mayor of Casterbridge [was] a well-crafted piece but... there's a 'zing' about Potter's work which is not in adaptations of books he does". He remembers enquiring to the Head of Drama, Shaun Sutton, about Potter and his state of health during the writing of Pennies from Heaven. Was this remorse over the Brimstone ban ? Milne replies: "There was no feeling of guilt. Just an anxiety to see what came next".¹⁵¹

If this illustrates how much the institution needed a celebrated playwright like Potter in the difficult climate of the seventies, it also explains why the BBC were so "badly shaken" (according to Milne) when the writer unexpectedly departed for Independent Television at the end of the seventies.¹⁵² At a press conference held in May 1979, the Director of Programmes at London Weekend Television, Michael Grade, announced that Potter and Trodd's recently formed independent production company, "Pennies From Heaven Limited", had signed a major deal to provide LWT with six Potter plays.

To the astonishment of journalists, Potter declared at the same conference that the only reason he had allowed himself to be 'poached' in this way was to get back at the BBC. In terms of drama, he asserted it was the BBC that was really the place to be. The adventurous mood of the sixties had disappeared, however, to be replaced by a "crisis of management" as a result of which, to many working there, the present time was the worst period they had ever known. The future of television, he concluded, lay not with the established broadcasting institutions but with "small production companies [which] are going to break up these monoliths we have".¹⁵³

Though in reply, Alasdair Milne asserts there was not a word of truth in these very public attacks against the BBC (Potter and Trodd departed for more money, he states), by the close of the seventies there could be no doubt that events had come full circle.⁵⁴ Ten years after Kestrel, the 'independents' were back at LWT. (: § 5.0)

2.4) Conclusion

From Moonlight in 1969 to "Pennies From Heaven Limited" in 1979, Potter's progress had thus been inexorable throughout the Play for Today era. Some measure of the extent to which his own preoccupations as a dramatist had shifted and matured over this period is provided by an interview he gave in 1977 for the BBC TV religious affairs programme, Anno Domini. Looking back on Son of Man eight years before, he commented, "nothing could be easier than to write a humanistic, I think rather evasive picture... of Jesus, in which really many of the central claims were evaded. I am aware of that evasion now though I wasn't then."

He stated that at the time it was written he was beginning to orientate himself towards the "awesome, formidable claims" of the Christian faith but denied that the play was an example of religious television. It was the same assumption, he said, as television's general treatment of religion - "because Son of Man is about Jesus, it is a religious play. That is exactly what the 'God slot' does, you see. It makes you look for religion in the obvious places."¹⁵⁵

In his 1978 introduction to the Brimstone stage play, Potter expands on this notion, commenting that few critics realised that Joe's Ark, for example, was a play with "religious themes". At first, he states, he was puzzled and then pleased because "at least I was avoiding the label-sticking which... assigns religion to its special little enclave... the so-called 'God-slot' - the protected hour in the Sunday schedules which television has traditionally been obliged to devote to religious programmes. To Potter, "a religion that is diminished into a special time and a special (ie narrow) form of address is not much more than a

scandalously privileged pressure group" - the inevitable consequence of a materialist secular society and a natural breeding ground for banality, sentimentality and sanctimoniousness.¹⁵⁶

By contrast, Potter asserted in his Anno Domini interview that it was religion which was increasingly occupying "the central territory" of what he was doing as a writer. The very act of pigeon-holing his work as 'God-slot', he went on, would destroy the "openness and receptivity" of television which had allowed him to communicate these ideas to a public, increasingly hostile or indifferent to traditional forms of religious expression¹⁵⁷ If this makes Potter a 'religious' dramatist, it is not religion in the conventional sense the television schedulers would know it: "The sort of 'religious drama' that I want to write," he stated in the 1978 introduction to Brimstone, "will not necessarily mention the word 'God' at all. Perhaps too, it will be based on the feeling that religion is not the bandage, but the wound."¹⁵⁸

For 'religion' in Potter's work, read spirituality: the totality of an individual's personal response to existence and a desire, not necessarily satisfied, for there to be something beyond "the suffocatingly dead materiality of things". Doubt, for him, is "part of the provenance if not the language of faith."¹⁵⁹ It is in "the tension between those two, the yearning... in the deepest ligaments of my being... and a detached view saying 'Come, come'... religion is there in that tension".¹⁶⁰

Such views leave little room for the Church and established forms of worship. As Brimstone and Treacle showed, religion as public practice can become distorted ritual can become the perfect breeding ground for evil. In a 1976 radio talk, Potter went further, stating that:

Religious people are often horrifyingly dishonest in the way they use concepts because so many of them seem to feel compelled to use one system of signs, one means of knowing, to commend and sustain a different category of discourse. I once wrote a play, using a few chapters of Edmund Gosse's Father and Son to show to myself as much as to others how crippling and ultimately doomed an enterprise it is to suborn and discountenance the facts which our proper search for knowledge will keep bringing into the light. The agony which the theories of evolution brought down upon many Christians showed, as so often before, the frightened contortions and moral dishonesties which follow when the love of God is subverted into worship of a fading shadow.¹⁶¹

Just as with Where Adam Stood, literal belief in a system of symbols must give way to an understanding of the centrality of metaphor in the expression of faith. It is this perhaps which marks the fundamental shift in Potter's writing during the seventies.

Thus as Chapter One noted, Son of Man was an attempt to create a version of Christ that could be believable to modern audiences (and the writer himself). In a 1977 Tonight interview, Potter stated: "[It was] written from an agnostic point of view but in the very writing of it I was suddenly aware that my attention was being fixed too strongly upon something which I could therefore not evade and would have to examine and pay attention to".¹⁶² The distinction between religion and politics was blurring - an overtly socialist outlook on the world was beginning to reveal a wider set of spiritual questions underlying it.

An early indication of Potter's move to a new 'religious drama' was Moonlight on the Highway; a play where neither God nor religion is mentioned. Instead, popular songs function as the outlet for the spirit: not only the 'bandage' for the hero's 'wound' but the means by which he can shape his own destiny and free himself from the deterministic formulations of the psychiatrist Chiltern. As noted previously, there is

ambiguity in the outcome but according to Potter in the Anno Domini interview, that is what gives life its 'edge':

... Doubt is a very double-edged weapon and it ought... to be turned against the mechanistic and materialistic visions of life which predominate where there really is, if we take that materialistic view, mechanistic view of life, there is no area left at all for individual freedom. I mean we are just programmed genes... And that to me in my response to life, in my feelings about my own self, is an absurdity... At very barren times I feel... it is also an absurdity to believe in God. It is a choice between absurdities. That is what gives human life its particular poignancy and pain and edge.¹⁶³

Both heroes of the 'spy' plays, Lay Down Your Arms and Traitor make their choice between absurdities and both, significantly, opt to forsake the material world for freedom of the spirit. In Hawk's case, it is implied that will be a career as a writer; with Harris, it is a dingy flat in the 'largest, most soul-destroying bureaucracy the world has ever seen'. The question which Traitor begs is can absolute unquestioning belief in ideology or creed ever be the right way? If the answer is no - that doubt is 'the language of faith' and what it is to be human, Angels Are So Few demonstrates that a child-like literal belief in absolutes nevertheless still 'tears'. To lose that belief is in a sense to drain the world of some 'wonder'.

Can that 'wonder' be recaptured? Glen in Schmoedipus wants to become a child again, yet like Sam in the earlier Bonegrinder, he is ultimately shown to be a symptom of sexual guilt: 'the outsider knocking on the door' who exposes the rot at the heart of suburbia. Only in Joe's Ark does one begin to get a sense of some kind of resolution to the 'unacknowledged spiritual questions' which Potter admits he was wrestling with at this time. By the 1976 'trilogy', as we have seen, the assertion of an instinctive faith expressed not in literal but metaphorical terms

is what finally renders Son of Man's question of the reality of the historical Christ redundant.

If imagination and 'narrative' thus become the keys to faith, can these be used to recapture the 'wonder' of childhood ? As Chapter Three will show, that was the other spiritual question which Potter's work in the seventies tried to resolve. In fact, the two questions are two sides of the same coin - to re-experience the lost 'wonder' of childhood is to reaffirm a faith in the order of things and vice versa. Each, however, has different implications within the work: 'Angels Are So Few' does not quite mean the same as 'Only Make Believe'.

CHAPTER THREE

ONLY MAKE BELIEVE: TALES FOR CHILDREN AND ADULTS

3.0) Lost Lands

... I am trying to go back into a strange and all but lost land that cannot be traced by any cartographer, but which can suddenly - and sometimes unexpectedly - yield up a few of its shapes, colours, smells and mysteries. I refer, of course, to the land - no, the continent - of our own childhood.'

These are the opening lines of A Christmas Forest: a 1977 radio talk in which Potter tried to recall childhood Christmasses in the Forest of Dean. As we have seen, from Nigel Barton through Moonlight to Schmoedipus, recollections of the past and of childhood are integral to Potter's writing. His central protagonists yearn to recapture the 'wonder' of a lost Eden from which they feel in permanent exile, tracing the roots of their present anxiety back to a single fatal lapse in the past. With his 1976 'trilogy', however, Old Testament notions of a literal Fall from grace were discarded for a new faith 'in the order of things'. Where, then, does that leave the felt reality of exile from a childhood Eden ?

Though an adaptation, Potter's dramatisation of Angus Wilson's Late Call in 1975 indicates the direction in which his own writing was heading at this time. Of particular note is his treatment of the novel's Prologue in which the main character, Sylvia, is first introduced to the reader as a

child, wandering the East Anglian countryside with her friend, Myra, in the long hot summer of 1911. Encouraged by Myra's middle-class Edwardian mother to be 'free spirits', the little girls decide to take off their dresses when it gets too hot, enjoying the freedom of wandering around in their underclothes. Caught by their respective mothers, middle-class Myra's 'free spirit' is tolerated. Sylvia, however, is only the daughter of a poor farmer. Accused of not knowing her place, she is beaten by her father "Till the blood run."² This class oppression sets the pattern for the rest of her life. Chapter One of the novel finds her in old age; a lifetime having been spent in domestic service and the hotel business, catering for her 'betters'. As she retires to a dull New Town existence beside her son, it seems the 'free spirit' she once experienced as a child has gone forever.

In Potter's version, however, Sylvia begins to re-experience the 'wonder' of that day in 1911 through the power of memory and imagination. By rendering 'The Hot Summer of 1911' as a series of flashbacks and counterpointing them with depiction of Sylvia's New Town 'present', he makes central to the drama what was simply a prologue in Wilson's novel. What the novel implied was a psychological 'wound' from childhood is grounded in the serial as the deepest root of the protagonist's current ills. Akin to his own original plays, Potter's Late Call becomes a kind of psychodrama in which the heroine resolves her troubled present by confronting her own repressed memories, searching back to the fatal moment in her past when she was physically abused out of the innocence and 'wonder' of childhood.

In turn, this provides Potter with a structure for dramatising events from the novel. The first two episodes of the TV serial contrast scenes

from 1911 with Sylvia's deadening experience of retirement in the New Town, introducing the audience both to her and the events which have shaped her life. By Episode Three, the gulf between past and present has become so marked, the intrusion of memory so insistent, it triggers off in Sylvia an intense psychological crisis. Breaking the shell of passivity which retirement in the New Town has induced, she begins to take long solitary walks in the countryside that surrounds the town. In the TV version (as opposed to the novel), Potter emphasises how this sudden activity is as much psychological as physical. Walking through some woods, memories of another woodland adventure begin to intrude:

YOUNG SYLVIA: Let's go back through the wood. It'll be cooler there...
MYRA: We'll never get the dirt off, you know.
YOUNG SYLVIA: We're going to feel free...³

In Potter's version, Sylvia's walk through the woods becomes symbolic of her mental retracing of a path that leads to the 'lost land' of her childhood. As suggested by the additional dialogue he writes for the flashbacks, she is trying to shake off 'the dirt' of the past, cleansing herself of its pain in order to try and recapture the wonder of that one day in 1911 when she was able to 'feel free'. Long obscured by the drudgery of her adult life which began with her father's abuse, it is only through remembering the 'wonder' of childhood that she will be able to overcome her present crisis and rediscover what it means to be free.

Her reward comes at the end of this crucial third episode of the TV serial. Caught in a thunderstorm, she rescues a child from under a tree, just before it is struck by lightning. In both versions of Late Call, this acts as a kind of baptism of renewal for the heroine. The TV serial, however, explicitly links present with past. The thunder-storm is

cross-cut with flashbacks to 1911: the screams of the terrified child she rescues becoming mixed on the soundtrack with the screams of young Sylvia as her father beat her.

In this way, the lightning scene in Potter's version not only functions as a rite of passage for Sylvia (propelling her, as in the novel, into a new existence by bringing new friends in the shape of the child's grateful parents), it also brings her in touch with her lost childhood. Through the flashbacks and sound mixes, the serial suggests Sylvia relives the terror of her beating during the terror of the thunderstorm - this time, not as a helpless child but as the rescuer of a helpless child. Akin to the rape in Brimstone and Treacle, the lightning becomes a form of shock therapy: an intense moment of danger in which a repressed memory returns to consciousness to be purged forever. Also like Brimstone, a present terror cancels a past one. Sylvia's good act (the rescue) negates the bad that was committed against her. The psychological barrier which had separated her from the 'free spirit' of childhood is at last removed.

The 1975 TV version is thus a subtle reworking of the original novel. Though remaining faithful to Wilson's text, Potter uses his familiar flashback techniques to explore his own interests in the 'lost land' of childhood. Not so much obscuring the novel, this highlights what was implicit within its structure - namely, the progress of a character from childhood 'wonder' in the Prologue through adult despair in the middle sections to psychological freedom at the close. The importance of Late Call within Potter's oeuvre is thus that it provides an early model for the 'redemption sagas' that would be a hallmark of his work in the eighties. The mental journey of Philip Marlow in The Singing Detective - from a trough of illness and despair through to recovery and personal

redemption - is echoed in Sylvia's own in Late Call. Both have a positive destination which is reached only through the power of memory and imagination (: § 5.3).

Such themes, however, have long been present in Potter's writing. In only his second transmitted TV play, he was already beginning to explore the relationship between childhood, memory and the imagination. Unlike his other Wednesday Plays of the period, Alice (tx. 13.10.65), was a costume drama based on historical record. Directed by Gareth Davies and produced by James MacTaggart, it dealt with events surrounding the publication of Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland, exactly a century before, in 1865.

The play opens in a 'dark tunnel'. The Reverend Charles Dodgson (the real author behind the 'Lewis Carroll' pseudonym) is on a train, travelling to an unknown destination. Suddenly, a young woman, Ellen Rance, recognises him as someone from her childhood who used to enchant her with his stories. When she tells the white-haired old writer she is soon to be married, he grows hostile, retorting that he is not the least bit interested in her affairs. As it unravels in flashback, the rest of the play reveals why:

Alice explores the relationship between the young Dodgson (played by George Baker) and the eponymous Alice Liddell - daughter of the Dean of Christchurch, Oxford and real-life model for the heroine of Alice in Wonderland. Afflicted by a terrible stammer which renders him inarticulate in the company of adults, Dodgson takes solace in the nonsense world of childhood - riddles, rhymes and above all the company of ten year old Alice. To the adult world, this is a source of worry. Mrs Liddell grows suspicious of a man who prefers the company of little

girls, especially when her daughter says Dodgson 'loves' her. The spectre of child abuse thus hangs over the play: is Dodgson's affection for the girl 'pure' or could it be that Alice in Wonderland is the English equivalent of Nabokov's Lolita?⁴ Potter sets up an area of sexual doubt. On the one hand, Dodgson may be channelling his repressed sexual desires into his friendships with little girls. On the other, perhaps the refusal to ascribe any innocent motive to his love of children is an indication not of his corruption but that of the 'fallen' adult world? This is hinted at one point when Mrs Liddell looks out of a window and tells her husband: "I've never liked looking from a lighted room into the dark. You have to be all dark yourself to see into the black out there".⁵

The play reaches its climax with a picnic on the River Thames - one that parallels an earlier trip Dodgson and Alice made six years before. The previous expedition had been the 'golden afternoon' when he had first entertained the ten year old with the story of Alice in Wonderland.⁶ In Potter's play, that event becomes akin to Sylvia's 'golden' day in Late Call - a childhood moment of Eden which almost seems to defy time and any natural laws. "I wish this could go on forever and ever and ever", Alice tells Dodgson. "Perhaps it will", the author replies.⁷

Six years on, after the publication of Alice in Wonderland, time has its revenge. The second picnic finds Alice sixteen years old, almost a woman and with eyes only for Hargreaves - a young undergraduate amongst the party that sets sail up the river in 1868. The onset of adolescence means she has no time for the childish stories of Dodgson; a fact of which he is all too painfully aware. Asked to recite one of his nonsense rhymes, Dodgson gives up, stammering, while Alice and her friends snigger. An embarrassed silence falls over the party. Then, suddenly,

Lorina, Alice's sensitive elder sister, takes a copy of Alice in Wonderland from her picnic basket and begins to read from the closing paragraph:

LORINA: Lastly, she pictured... how this same little sister of hers would, in the after-time, be herself a grown woman; and how she would keep, through all her riper years, the simple and loving heart of her childhood... remembering her own child-life, and the happy summer days.⁹

The reading becomes a cue for reconciliation. Moved by an awareness of the passing of childhood, Alice kisses Dodgson on the cheek but as she does so, the picture freezes, takes on sepia tones and disappears down the 'dark tunnel' through which the older Dodgson's train is moving. By these visual effects, Alice returns to its beginning, with a final image of the bitter old writer hiding behind his newspaper, as Ellen Rance looks pitifully on.

Dodgson's train journey thus functions as a metaphor for the journey of life; one that for Potter in 1965 grows increasingly 'dark' as it hurtles away from the 'wonderland' of childhood. His second transmitted TV play becomes a meditation on the passing of time; an expression of regret that childhood must always fade into a 'lost land' in the face of encroaching adulthood. Note that it is sexuality which marks the end of the child's world: Dodgson's platonic relationship with the young Alice, already precarious through the dark suspicions of others, is finally broken by the onset of adolescence. The only hope the play offers for the preservation of 'wonderland' lies in the immortalising qualities of art, yet as the final image of a bitter, aged Dodgson seems to ask, can that ever be enough ?

Significantly, when Potter came to rework his play into a movie script eighteen years later, it was just this question which was addressed and resolved. Dreamchild, a feature film directed by Gavin Millar and released in January 1986, retains many of the scenes and much of the dialogue of Alice (: § 5.2). Importantly, however, events are rendered in flashback - not from Dodgson's perspective but that of Alice as an old woman of eighty, recalling her childhood seventy years before.

The premise is based on fact. In 1932, to mark the centenary of Dodgson's birth, the real Alice set sail from England to the U.S.A. to receive an honorary degree from Columbia University. Dodgson's 'dream-child' had grown up to become respectable Mrs Hargreaves.⁹ In the film, eighty year old Alice (played by Coral Browne) is the "perfect Victorian" and as out of place in twentieth century America as it is possible to be.¹⁰ Echoing Potter's 1982 movie version of Pennies From Heaven, she finds an America reeling from the Depression (: § 4.2 d). As she soon learns, "All of Me", the song playing on board the ship which brings her to the New World, sums up the mood of the time - a time in which everyone must sell all of themselves if they are to survive. Despite her years, the old lady quickly sees the profit potential of exploiting her connections with Lewis Carroll, yet as she begins to sell 'all of herself', she finds this conscious manipulation of her past forcing her to confront hitherto repressed memories of her childhood and of Dodgson.

The memories of Victorian childhood which Dreamchild then renders in flashback are essentially the events of Alice: the 'golden afternoon' on the river; Mrs Liddell's suspicions; scenes between young Alice and Dodgson (Ian Holm).¹¹ There is one crucial difference, however, between the film and the TV play of twenty years before. In keeping with the

clear progression in Potter's writing, noted with the 1976 plays, life and art do not merely come to reflect each other in Dreamchild, they intersect. Akin to Double Dare, fantasy and reality blur and merge. Alone in her New York hotel room, Mrs Hargreaves begins to hallucinate scenes from Alice in Wonderland in which she herself becomes the fictional 'Alice'. Suddenly in Dreamchild, it is an old woman, not a young girl, who is debating 'change' with a caterpillar:

CATERPILLAR: So you think you've changed, have you ?...

MRS HARGREAVES: I'm afraid I am, sir. Very changed... I - I can't remember things... Perhaps - perhaps they are things best not gone into. Best forgotten... '2

The nonsense world of Lewis Carroll becomes the only way the old woman can make sense of her memories. Inserting herself into the imaginative world Dodgson created for her as a child, she confronts her guilt about using the author for commercial gain, her own fears about her senility and above all, the suspicion of her mother that the writer's feelings for her were less than 'pure'. Akin to Sylvia in Late Call, the film suggests it is only the adult self which can make sense of what the child could not properly understand. In an echo of the lightning scene of the 1975 serial, the elderly Alice has to relive her childhood if she is ever to come to terms with it. As this suggests, Dreamchild bears more than a passing resemblance to Late Call - not only in its choice of an old woman as heroine but in this central concern of an individual trying to find a shape to her life by mentally returning to the lost 'wonderland' of her childhood.

The film reaches its climax at Columbia University where Mrs Hargreaves is to be honoured. As the university choir gives a musical rendition of one of Dodgson's nonsense poems, the old woman's mind drifts back to the

picnic where she and her teenage friends had sniggered at his stammering. As with the 1965 play, Lorina's reading of the closing paragraph of Wonderland prompts the teenage Alice to kiss Dodgson. As the film returns to 'the present', Mrs Hargreaves begins reading out the same paragraph to her Columbia audience, telling it: "... At the time, I was too young to see the gift whole, to see it for what it was, and to acknowledge the love that had given it birth. I see it now. At long, long last. Thank you, Mr Dodgson. Thank you..."³

After seventy years, Alice finally makes her reconciliation with Dodgson, acknowledging the depth of the 'genuine love' which had gone into Alice in Wonderland. In marked contrast to the 1965 Alice, the teenager's kiss becomes not a parting regret for the end of childhood but a symbol for the psychological recapturing of that 'lost wonderland'. Akin to Sylvia in Late Call, the elderly Alice comes to terms with the past by confronting and then dismissing a dark suspicion about Dodgson which she had long repressed. In so doing, the mental journey back to her childhood allows her to see the shape of her life anew. This seems to be 'the gift whole' for which she thanks him so profusely at the end. By immortalising the 'wonder' of her childhood in literature, Dodgson has provided her with the chance to remain permanently in touch with her childhood and to undergo a perpetual spiritual renewal.

As her speech indicates, this is why the 'gift whole' can only be properly appreciated in later life, not as a child. Echoing Late Call, it always has to be the adult who rescues the child from within. The progression from Alice is thus marked. In Dreamchild, the journey is not away from the light of childhood into a permanent 'dark tunnel' of old age and death but in keeping with the more optimistic tone of Late Call and the

1976 'trilogy', towards a fresh light at the other end. When Alice's ship docks in the 'New World', it symbolises her own spiritual journey to a renewed 'wonderland'. Triggered off by the pressure of her new surroundings, her inner search for meaning unearths a cure for her own 'Depression blues'; one found not amongst the glitter of her sudden status as media personality but behind in another land from which she thought she had departed forever:

That is the land of lost content,
I see it shining plain.
The happy highways where I went
And cannot come again.¹⁴

These lines from A.E. Housman are quoted at the very end of Blue Remembered Hills - Potter's famous final Play for Today (tx 30.1.79) which is also perhaps his most definitive evocation of the 'lost land' of childhood. Produced by Kenith Trodd and directed by Brian Gibson, it remains Potter's best-known single TV drama: the winner of a 1979 British Academy Award and his most oft-repeated play.¹⁵ Its success is partly due to its simplicity. There are no flashbacks; fantasy sequences or even long speeches - nothing "to ripple the surface of 'naturalism'" very much¹⁶. Instead, it deals sparsely with one summer afternoon in the lives of seven West Country children in 1943: a 'golden day' that will end in tragedy.

Potter permits only one 'ripple' to the surface naturalism of the drama and that is to insist each of the children be played by adult actors. It is the same device he used for the classroom scenes in Stand Up and the effect here is similar. Just as the device in Stand Up reinforced the classroom scenes' status as memory filtered through an adult imagination, so too in Blue Remembered Hills are events made to seem mediated yet

also immediate. Adult actors underline the 'remembered' quality of the title and the fact that in memory, it is always the present self which is superimposed upon the past. They also help magnify the world of the child and make it identifiable to an adult audience (: § 1.1).

In a 1979 interview, Potter hinted at another important reason why the play has to have adults as children when he asserted: "I don't believe the common adult assumptions about the world of children." He stated that for him, childhood is the "adult world writ large, not small." It is "adult society without all the conventions and the polite forms which overlay it".¹⁷ In Blue Remembered Hills, childhood is therefore presented as but a magnified reflection of the adult world, with all its imperfections. In turn, this can be related to the progression in Potter's writing, noted with the 1976 'trilogy', where literal Old Testament notions of a 'Fall' from grace were discarded in favour of a general blurring of conventional categories and distinctions, moral or otherwise. In Blue Remembered Hills, similarly, no clear 'Fall' from childhood is depicted. Instead, there is a general blurring of distinctions between the child's and the adult's world. To Potter in 1979, the 'fallen' nature of adults is there right from the very beginning in their child selves. Childhood becomes not a pre-lapsarian state but one of original sin.

The play makes this clear right from the very start, as it opens on seven year-old Willie (played by an adult, Colin Welland) who is seen meandering through some woods, pretending to be a spitfire shot down in flames: "Them be all dead... Burnt to nothing", he mutters of his imaginary air crew, as he bites into a large cooking apple.¹⁸ Sin is thus present in the child's Garden of Eden right from the very outset. As symbolised

by the biting of the apple, it is already a 'fallen' world of temptation and death which the child inhabits. There is no real innocence in him at the start from which the rest of the play could trace a lapse. World War Two is raging in the adult world outside and he knows it. His behaviour reflects this, as he revels in the excitement of the destruction.

The significance both of the apple and 'burnt to nothing' becomes more apparent, as the rest of the play unfolds. Soon, Willie is joined by his mates, Peter, Raymond and John and together, the four trap and kill a squirrel in the woods. The scene recalls the killing of the bear in A Beast with Two Backs - the persecution of an innocent animal serving only to highlight the real 'beast' inside the boys (: § 1.3). Crucially, this killing is juxtaposed with a scene in a near-by barn where two girls, pretty Angela and plain Audrey, are teasing a "timid [and] anaemic looking" child, on account of his nickname: Donald Duck.¹⁹

As the play progresses, details about the 'weakling', Donald, begin to emerge from the conversation of the other children. His father is a Prisoner-of-War under the Japanese. He is also literally an "abused child" since his mother beats him with a poker.²⁰ Though unaware of the significance of the remark, John reports he has overheard his mother say the bedsheets of Donald's mother "could tell a pretty tale".²¹ Ostracised by the other boys, Donald is always going off on his own, "like a looney".²²

Comparison here is instructive with the other child protagonist of Blue Remembered Hills. Though he never appears in the play, the name 'Wallace Wilson' is mentioned frequently by the other children. He is the "cock of the class" - the cleverest child of their year in school.²³ He is also

the best athlete: he can "pee the highest" and punch the hardest.²⁴ In stark contrast to Donald Duck, he is 'Number One', yet like Donald he too has a tendency to voluntary reclusiveness. Asked by Peter where Wallace is, Willie replies: "Down the quarry, I'll bet. Mooching about".²⁵ Akin to Stand Up and Where The Buffalo Roam, Blue Remembered Hills thus makes a link between the clever child and the backward, 'abused' child as the same type of displaced person vis à vis the dominant group (: § 1.1).

This is important in helping to understand the climax of the play. Left alone in the barn by the other children, Donald begins to vent his frustrations by striking matches from a box of "England's Glory". Suddenly, a flame catches the straw and a little fire begins. Meanwhile, the other children are hatching a cruel practical joke. A few minutes earlier, a siren had sounded through the woods, filling them all with fear for it had seemed to signal the escape of an Italian prisoner from the near-by P.O.W. camp. This ultimate image of childhood terror quickly gives way to a desire to take out their fear on the 'weaking', by pretending the Italian is outside the barn, with a 'knife'. Mimicking his accent for the benefit of Donald inside, they slam the barn door shut. Only as flames begin to gut the barn, do they realise, too late, the consequences of their action. Re-opening the door, the last image of their victim is of him "briefly glimpsed through the flames, gesticulating, then wholly engulfed".²⁶

The killing of the squirrel and the girls' baiting of Donald have thus been rehearsals for a much more horrific persecution at the end of the play. Akin to A Beast with Two Backs (as well as Golding's Lord of the Flies which this play echoes in theme), the 'beast' is shown not to be outside in the Forest but within all of the children (: § 1.3). It is the

children themselves who become what they fear most: the 'bogeyman' Italian, the physical reality of whose threat is revealed as illusory in this play. As with A Beast, the real danger is shown to lie much closer to home, within the hearts of the Foresters themselves.

The play's links with A Beast are thus tangible: the threat of an Italian roaming the woods; a remote rural setting evocative of the Forest of Dean; a 'remembered' quality that suggests an Edenic 'mythic land'. As persecuted outcast, Donald Duck also bears a strong resemblance to Rufus, the 'looney', 'cripple' child of A Beast. Both significantly have an adulterous 'mother' and an 'airy' father': a prisoner-of-war like the elusive Italian, Donald's father has also, like the Italian, vanished into thin air. As Peter tactlessly asks Donald at one point: "Your Dad's missing, ent he ?"²⁷

The difference between the two plays is that in keeping with the progression in Potter's writing and thinking, noted with the 1976 'trilogy', Blue Remembered Hills depicts no clear 'Fall' from innocence into permanent exile from Eden. Like Rufus, Donald may be finally separated from his peers and his background, consumed in a kind of hell-fire but as the play makes clear, this is brought about by the fault of others' actions and his own. The child sows the seeds of his own destruction. External events (an Italian with 'a knife', symbolically linked to his father, who turns out to be an illusion) may contribute to Donald's downfall but he is shown to be no angelic innocent. Instead, he shares with the other children a natural propensity to sin. Constantly putting themselves and each other in danger, each of the children is always threatening to destroy their own 'Eden'. This is what the play means by 'original sin' - not that Man is "irredeemably corrupt" but that

in its very intellectual curiosity and capacity to get embroiled in trouble, "the human animal is potentially extremely dangerous".²⁹ However serious his persecution, it is Donald himself who helps bring about his own exile from his childhood 'Eden', significantly with a box of "England's Glory". Through the final image of the burning barn which separates him from his peers forever, Potter suggests that in spite of the mitigating circumstances, it was his own curiosity and mischief which made the child play with fire and get burned.²⁹

The play ends with Potter (or is it Wallace Wilson ?) inserting himself into the drama by means of voice-over to read the lines from Housman quoted earlier. Given the play portrays the many cruelties of childhood, such nostalgia for a 'land of lost content' may seem ironic. Certainly, Blue Remembered Hills does not romanticise children and its demonstration of how the 'fallen' world of adults reflects the 'original sin' of childhood might render any notion of it as a 'lost land' inherently suspect. In interview, however, Potter asserted childhood is to everyone a 'lost land':

The loss of Eden is experienced by each and everyone of us as we leave the wonder and magic and also the pains and terrors of childhood... Whereas the discipline is imposed by an adult, when children are amongst themselves, it's all continual fidget and movement, exploration, speculation, wonder, which in a sense to lose that is to lose Eden, is to be expelled from the Garden. And I only use that metaphor as a continuous one because I believe that... when Jesus said 'Be as little children', that is what is meant. In other words, be as open as you like... The knowledge that we have about what it is to be human that we have as a child is something that we necessarily must lose but we don't have to lose it totally if we can remember. We remember an Eden even though it wasn't perfect... but it was an Eden in terms of its possibilities and potentialities...³⁰

The 'loss of Eden' thus becomes universal rather than denoting a unique, individual lapse from grace - a metaphor for a general fading of 'wonder',

common to all. Importantly, that 'Eden' comes to encapsulate not only the joys of childhood but as in Blue Remembered Hills, its terrors as well.

In short, for Potter, the 'wonder' of childhood that is Eden is the ability of children to experience life intensely (both the pleasure and the pain), without the staleness of custom and habit which he sees as corroding adult responses to the world. To lose that ability to see the world as if for the first time is, for him, to 'lose Eden'. In a 1978 radio talk for Lent, The Other Side of The Dark, Potter expanded on this, suggesting that children's ability to live in the present tense presupposed an "immense trust in the order of things". Apply this to an adult, he suggested and you would immediately notice "the immense degree of concentration and attention" required in which once again all things would be "as new".³¹

This echoes the 'dark tunnel' out of which Sylvia and Mrs Hargreaves travel in Late Call and Dreamchild. Old women, staled by habit and convention, they come to a different sort of 'attention' by remembering the long summer afternoons of their childhood. By recalling how it was to live in a moment that seemed to go on forever, they learn once more to look at their lives as if for the very first time. In Blue Remembered Hills, it is an imperfect world which is remembered. Nevertheless it is an Eden too 'in terms of its possibilities and potentialities'. All of the children may be afflicted with original sin but they are never cynical or jaded. Each of them experiences life (and death) as if for the very first time and each possesses the childhood 'wonder' of living in the moment. In The Other Side of the Dark, Potter went on to suggest that:

It was from a starting point something like this, pieced together with an urgency rather too close to panic out of the need to do more than dumbly endure or complain about what I took to be a particularly

humiliating illness that I found that I was able, in time, to concentrate or pay attention to what was happening to me and in me and in front of me. I sought to inhabit the present and the actual sting of the moment became a point of such unexpected clarity that I could use it, if not as a window, then certainly as a widening chink of light through which I could look. I was attempting simply to deal with the distortion of pain and what I admit to be a considerable amount of anger and fear - the predictable old 'Why me ?' of the afflicted - and I found instead that I was facing something other than my own beleaguered self and gradually experiencing something other than an introverted locked-in anguish³²

In terms of his writing, Potter's first novel, Hide and Seek (published in 1973) can be seen as that 'starting point': the beginnings of his attempt to arrive at the different sort of 'attention' which is clearly evident in his work from the mid-seventies onwards. Written at the time of his own greatest crisis of illness, this novel is undoubtedly important in terms of understanding how Potter's writing began to shift - from despair to hope.

3.1) Into the Woods

According to Potter, Hide and Seek is "an obsessive piece of work". Completed in January 1972, the author was to experience his worst period of illness a month later. His hands became so buckled and twisted that to the end of his life he only had the movement of four fingers in one hand - "There was a torrent of something moving through me" was Potter's verdict on that time.³³

As Chapter Two noted, this was the period when previously unacknowledged 'spiritual' questions were beginning to surface in the work. Hide and Seek certainly reflects those. There is a spiritual nihilism - a despair and disgust with the world which the writer would later attribute to illness: "the spreading of my own disease, so to speak".³⁴ The novel, however, is a highly self-aware piece of writing. It manipulates its despair and takes it to a kind of resolution:

The book is divided into six sections. Part One ("Into The Forest") introduces Daniel Miller, a character with a problem. As he tells his psychiatrist, he knows he is a character in a novel. Moreover, it is a dirty novel, written by "a malignant and sex-obsessed Creator"³⁵. He is trying to escape this feeling of "being written about, pinned down, by some vastly superior force or person"³⁶. It is the 'Author', Miller believes, who has made his wife leave him; who makes him use pornography and prostitutes; who has caused his illness (psoriatic arthropathy) and cost him his job as lecturer at a London polytechnic. His only hope is to retreat to the Forest of Dean of his childhood - to a place where "the Author was not there".³⁷

The religious parallels are clear. Like Joe in Joe's Ark, Miller is a character whose own experience of suffering has led him to question the reality of a loving Creator. Childhood belief in a benign presence has given way to an adult view of Man tormented by a ruthless Old Testament God. The return to the Forest becomes an objective correlative for a mental retracing of the 'lost land' of his childhood. If Miller can recapture the 'wonder' of that past, perhaps he can recapture the sense of a loving God too.

Driving round the Forest in circles, memories of childhood churn in his mind: "An Italian showed him a tobacco tin filled with chunky rings. A boy cried alone in the bracken."³⁹ He recalls his shy coal-miner father and the name, 'Rumpelstiltskin', which he used to mutter like an incantation whenever he found himself frightened and alone in the Forest as a child. Now, the Forest seems like a fairy tale wood, exactly the place "a sour hobgoblin sang and danced round his evening fire of spitting branches".³⁹

It is one of Miller's oldest memories which occupies a crucial place in the novel. He recalls the words of an old dance band song he heard playing on the radio when he was four years old: "When deep purple falls/ Over sleepy garden walls..." This puzzled the boy. How can a colour fall over a wall ? And do walls go to sleep ? The child realises the words are about something else. They mean more than they say. They are not the same as chairs, tables and other objects: "The song hinted at words with disguises in them... words too complex... the thing grown-ups whispered about together, heads leaning in towards each other as though he was or should not be in the room..."⁴⁰

Emerging from his reverie, the lecturer realises he has come upon his country cottage retreat: the external object of his night's drive and search. Switching off his headlights, he is plunged into darkness once more. He recalls lashing out violently at his wife. Touching his cheek, he discovers it to be "as cold as a corpse, as when he had last touched his mother's flesh." In his head, Miller begins to mix up 'dead mother', separated wife and his furtive liaisons with prostitutes: "How many times had he woken with the wrong name in his mouth ? How many, many times had he stretched out alongside the wrong woman in the wrong bed ?"⁴¹

Part One is undoubtedly the most important section of the novel. Each of the other five sections unravels the implications of "Into The Forest". Thus in Part Two ("Acid and Lollipop"), the reader learns that Miller was far from mad. There is indeed a malevolent Author. At the beginning of this second section, he even introduces himself:

Addressing the reader directly in the first person, this Author asserts he has decided to emerge from behind "the misleading radiance" of third person omniscience for the sake of literary honesty.⁴² As his narrative proceeds, however, it becomes clear that he has sent Part One of his first novel (the 'Daniel Miller' narrative) to his literary agent. Now, he fears the outside world will assume Part One is autobiography and that Miller is him.

It is for this reason he has decided to devote Part Two to a long apologia, listing the differences between himself and Daniel Miller, in order to try and distance himself from his 'sick' character. As he admits, the reader must by now be puzzled:

... You have in your hands a book which starts clearly enough with a character trying to escape from his author and which has now reached the opposite pole with the real author (myself) trying to escape from his own character.⁴³

He begins to list the points of similarity and difference between himself and Miller, yet as he does so, his own assertions are constantly undermined by the weight of the evidence he presents. Like Miller, he was born in the Forest of Dean; is the son of a coalminer; went to Oxford University and had ambitions to write a critical biography of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. He denies, however, that he suffers from the same illness as Miller: psoriatic arthropathy. The reason he wears gloves and uses a walking stick, he claims, is habit: not because of a crippling skin disease.

It is when he turns to comparing Miller's attitude to women with his own that the Author's status as an unreliable narrator becomes increasingly exposed. His defence turns into a kind of confession: "Women. They are the root or the flesh of the problem..."⁴⁴ He recalls seeing a beautiful black-haired girl in a seedy coffee bar called "The Lollipop" and asks who would want to 'soil' such a figure:

I am disgusted by the thought of spoiled human flesh. Mouth upon mouth, tongue against tongue, limb upon limb, skin rubbing at skin. Faces contort and organs spurt out a smelly stain, a sticky betrayal. The crudest joke against the human race lies in that sweaty farce by which we are first formed and given life. No wonder we carry about with us a sense of inescapable loss, a burden of original sin and a propensity to wild anguished violence... We are implicated without choice in the catastrophe of the copulations which splatter us into existence. We are spat out of fevered loins, or punctured rubber and drunken grappings in creaking beds...⁴⁵

He asserts that he adores women: "It is a holy impulse in me to worship and to cherish them". Echoing the familiar flesh-spirit dichotomy of

other Potter works, the Author asks how such a 'soul' as he could possibly have fornicated with prostitutes ? "I could not have done these things any more than I could have killed my mother", he asserts.⁴⁶

By the end of Part Two, having got all this down on paper, the Author is rewarded by a strange feeling of an "indefinable presence of something greater than or beyond myself and my body, something sustaining me, feeding me, encouraging me."⁴⁷ His thoughts return to Daniel Miller, still stuck in the Forest where he had left him. He decides he will allow his character to enter the fictitious cottage he had reached at the end of Part One since he does not "lack mercy". As for the other 'presence' he feels in the room, all the Author can say is that "it or he or He is not hostile"⁴⁸

After Part Three ("A Sort of Ending") in which the Author finally allows Miller to retreat into his cottage, Part Four ("Oak and Attic") shifts from the character's to Author's point of view once more. Now, however, it is not only Miller but the Author himself who is being 'written about' - his thoughts rendered in the third person. Hence is the Author himself the creation of that non-hostile presence he felt at the end of Part Two and if so, does this mean this new 'meta-Author' is as similar to him as he so clearly was to his fictional Daniel Miller ?

What is certain is that detached third person omniscience enables the reader to judge the veracity of the Author's first person account in Part Two. It is true he worships women and places them on a pedestal but what he did not tell the reader was that while sitting in "The Lollipop", he had wondered how much it would cost to 'buy' the beautiful black haired girl. As this makes clear, the allegedly factual first person

account of Part Two is in reality a heavily edited series of lies and evasions. Part Four reveals that the apparent spontaneity of the Author's confessional prose has masked a careful process of re-reading, re-writing and erasing. By contrast, it is the Author's fiction (his Daniel Miller narrative), not his factual writing, which communicates the 'truth'.

As he looks across at the girl in the café, the Author begins to remember how as a boy in the Forest of Dean, he would perch on top of the oldest oak in the Forest and stare out over the tops of the trees.⁴⁹ Up there, the Forest seemed "a Holy Land" - a complete integrated world in which the boy was aware of "a protective grace, moving above, beyond and yet within itself". The child realised God was not a great figure in the sky but "in and of things, every sort of thing, breathing through them" and that if you took that presence away there would be "no point". The thought almost makes him 'fall' out of his tree until, steadying himself, he "put God back into the world, holiness back into the Forest".⁵⁰

Experiencing a "total illumination", the boy thinks he can hear God walking below on the Forest floor. Climbing down from the oak, it is not, however, a loving God he discovers but an Italian Prisoner-of-War from the nearby camp. As previously indicated, he 'falls' victim to the adult's "predatory appetites", with "an innocence never to be reclaimed, a shock which changed even the ways of looking at the ferns and fox-gloves... "⁵¹ (: § 1.3).

The 'trust in the order of things' which he had experienced up in the oak vanishes to be replaced by disgust for a malevolent deity that could perpetrate such a cruel trick on a boy. Tormented by the thought that at the very moment he had turned to face a loving God, he "fell" instead

"into the hands of the Devil", he comes to think that what he had once felt in the tree were only "mocking illusions and treacherous visions of grace".⁵² This is why he had made his character, Daniel Miller, try and escape from a malevolent Author in Part One. The memories of the Italian and the 'boy crying in the bracken' were his own.

As the Author sits in his flat, re-reading his apologia, the question he now faces is whether he can recapture that sense of unity with the 'presence' he felt in the Forest and which now seems to be with him in the room, "sustaining, feeding him, encouraging him" to write.⁵³ He begins writing again, this time giving an account of his liaison with his one hundred and fifty sixth prostitute. Significantly, the third person narrative states the Author is "getting nearer to himself, travelling on a long loop of bumpy path through the trees."⁵⁴

In Part Five ("The Education of Children"), the reader learns how the Author / Daniel Miller (the two are now synonymous) followed a black prostitute back to her attic room, only to discover, with horror, that a child was sleeping in the corner. Immediately, the Author/ Miller felt he must protect the child from suffering the same psychological scars which had led him to the mother's room, yet as he turned back to the prostitute, ready to vent his indignation, he saw her standing naked. Biology took over: "Of course I forgot about the sleeping child. Of course I did."⁵⁵ How, his narrative asks, "can a man do such a thing" as "jerk up and down" on a naked woman within a few strides of a sleeping child?⁵⁶ The narrative abruptly switches from first to second person as the Author begins to address his wife, Lucy: "You do not know about these things"⁵⁷. His apologia becomes an apology as he confesses how for long periods the only way he could make love to her was by secretly

pretending she was "a tart... picked up... on a street corner". He cites the evening he picked up the black prostitute as a concrete example of this fundamental flesh - spirit, sex - love schism in his life. It was also the night Lucy left him, tired of his preference for reading Coleridge in bed rather than making love. Part Five of Hide and Seek closes with the Author's description of his sexual climax with the black prostitute. At the moment "where exultation turns to disgust, the moment of spilling, of defilement", he had shouted:

A shout loud enough to wake the child. The child began to scream... Did you expect me to tell you that, Lucy ? You, who wanted me to enter you on the same night, with the same sound still in my head, a sound that I knew I had somehow, somewhere heard before.⁵⁸

As this implies, the screaming of the prostitute's child recalls his own screams during the sexual assault he underwent as a boy. The past victim has become a kind of abuser but similar to Brimstone and Treacle, has one 'bad' act purged another ? Has the moment of 'release', both physically and on the page (as he confesses this), enabled the Author to let go at long last repressed guilt and fear ?

In Part Six ("Trying To Begin"), the Author stares down at his night's work. He has ripped it to shreds. He thinks again of his character, Daniel Miller and wishes he too could be out of London and in the Forest of Dean: "Better... if it could be. Better to be his own character". Suddenly, his own wish makes him realise this need not necessarily be beyond his grasp:

He could make Miller wake up now. He could heal Miller's skin... Bring back his wife. He could do anything with, to or for this fictional character, simply by lifting up his pen... Why not ? What were novels for? He was the narrator. The Author. Creator of All !⁵⁹

He starts to write: "It is, of course, no accident that redundant theological speculation about the death of God should run parallel with an equally tedious literary preoccupation with the death of the novel". A thrill runs through him as he prepares to take the only way he knows how to escape to the Forest of Dean. For him, this is the "beginning... and starting here he was both fucking and getting back into the tree".⁶⁰

With that, the novel at its close playfully returns to its opening (Part One) as a character announces to his psychiatrist that the Author "knows I am trying to escape". This time, however, events are recounted in the first person. The character declares it ought to be "wholly forbidden to children". What should, he is asked? "Sexual assault" is the reply.⁶¹

Now that he has 'got out' the hitherto repressed facts about his sexual assault and liaisons with prostitutes, the Author feels a liberation from guilt, as he reaches "the open air on the far side of the back of the cover".⁶² Note that it is fiction which has played the enabling role. As a lecturer and literary critic, he has spent most of the novel worrying about the relationship between his fictions and the 'facts' of his own life. Suddenly, in Part Six, he begins to think about the value of fiction for the first time: 'What were novels for?' As the close of Hide and Seek makes clear, the answer is that they allow the imagination free play, enabling the Author to become his own God - 'the Creator of all'. This is how he can transform himself into his own character at the very end and how too a character can finally escape from an Author, disappearing off the page into 'the open air on the far side of the back cover'. Through fiction, the Author suddenly realises he can do anything he wants. He can reshape reality. The implications of this are worth exploring in detail for they are important not only in terms of

understanding Hide and Seek but also the later Singing Detective and Blackeyes serials, both of which draw heavily on the themes of this first novel (: § 5.3; 6.1):

There are three key questions which Hide and Seek explores and finally resolves. In Part One, Miller is terrified by an omnipotent Author - a relationship which clearly functions as a metaphor for that between Man and God. As Part Two indicated, there is another presence, however, behind the Author-God, feeding and encouraging him in his act of creation. Hence if 'God' Himself is a creation, who created God and in turn, who created His Creator ? The answer to the question simply throws up the same question at a deeper level. It is a recursion which goes on ad infinitum.

The other dilemma involving God has to do with a loss of integration. As a child, the Author had experienced a sense of harmony between God, the world and the self. On top of his favourite oak, the child felt he was God - a part of all things through which His Spirit breathed. The intrusion of sexuality, however, brings about a 'Fall' from this position of divine grace, draining his world of 'wonder', until there seems nothing and 'no point'. Related to this are the numerous references in the text to a dead mother. As with A Beast, acquisition of the forbidden knowledge of sexuality breaches the child's sense of absolute security and trust in his parents, resulting in the 'death' of the special bond with his mother (: § 1.3).

By the end of the novel, discovery of the possibilities of fiction has resolved both the recursion dilemma and the loss of integration. As the novel progresses, it becomes clear character and Author are the same. In

terms of religious metaphor, Hide and Seek collapses the distinctions between God and Man. This is why the Author finally writes the death of God can only ever be 'redundant theological speculation'. Suddenly, through fiction, he has discovered he can be his own God ('the Creator of All'). This solves the recursion problem. By its close, the novel shows the chain of recursion (character, Author, 'meta-Author' and so on) is not infinitely linear but circular. The character is his Author; the Author can become his character: Man is a part of God. God is a part of Man. God creates Man. Man creates God.

Potter's various radio talks during the seventies help throw light on the religious conundrum. Describing his journey back from despair to a different sort of 'attention' (a journey of which Hide and Seek is clearly a part), he indicated in 1978's The Other Side of the Dark the importance of the belief that "the world is being made right in front of us... and in living out our lives [we] give back piece by piece what has been given to us to use and work with and wrestle with. We shape our own lives..."⁵³ Two years earlier, in his Christmas broadcast, And with No Language but a Cry, he stated that what is given back is "what is given in the minute upon minute in which the mystery I call myself is making and being made."⁵⁴

To Potter, the world is 'made' but so too are we making it minute by minute: Man is his own Author. There is a God without but also a God within and He is completely dependent on Man for survival. Man creates Him. This, he asserted in 1977, was the true meaning of the Nativity, with its image of the helpless baby Jesus through which God is "seen as utterly dependent and completely helpless, manifest in human culture".

The cradle song of Christmas "celebrates the birth of God in the
hungering soul".⁶⁵

In Hide and Seek, the Author likewise comes to realise the death of God
is greatly exaggerated. He learns that far from having disappeared, God
and 'the truth' have been there in front of him all the time. Both are
waiting in himself to be born. By rediscovering this, the Author can
begin to reshape his own destiny. Recognition of God within as well as
without restores the sense of integration which he thought he had lost
forever. As Part Six indicates, he feels a heightened 'attention' can be
permanently his: it is both 'fucking and getting back into the tree'. The
world of the adult and the world of the child, separated by a 'Fall', are
brought together again through a renewed intensity in the perception of
experience.

In this way, notions of a 'Fall' become redundant. As the reference to
'fucking and getting back into the tree' seems to indicate, the idea of
sex as the means of separation from God is discredited by the end of the
novel. Identical to Where Adam Stood, the implication is that this 'Fall'
which the Author thought he had experienced was really the product of a
strict Bible upbringing and literal belief in the Old Testament (: § 2.3).
As a child in the Forest, the Author had convinced himself he was about
to meet God as an external object or person. Disgust and disillusion set
in when, instead, all he encountered was the brutality of an Italian
P.O.W.. Implicit in this is the suggestion that it was not so much a
cruel cosmic trick but the failed expectations of his own literal belief
which made him think God had disappeared from his life.

This seems to be the significance of the 'Deep purple' passage in Part One. Listening to the lyric "When deep purple falls...", what the child discovers is the distinctness of language and metaphor. It hints at an unknown world behind the material world of objects. The idea of a non-material 'spiritual' realm is territory which the child's curious mind feels he has to explore. A quest for knowledge - for God - has begun; one that culminates at the end of the novel, with the Author's triumphant discovery that far from being a literal entity, God is a metaphor of his own making. In contrast to Old Testament accounts of Adam's 'Fall', the novel finally vindicates desire for hidden knowledge as not sinful. Words, language, metaphor - the original reason for his quest - become the Author's salvation.

If metaphor reduces the death of God to 'redundant' speculation, it also solves the parallel problem of the death of the novel. Part of Hide and Seek's enquiry is clearly the question which the Author articulates in Part Six: 'What were novels for?' By making him a lecturer and literary critic, Potter allows his 'Author' character not only to conduct a quest to find out about himself and God through his own writing but also to discover the nature of fiction. In this way, by scrutinising his own life and work, the critic eventually succeeds in transforming himself into a writer ('The Author. The Creator of all !').

Amongst its other themes, Hide and Seek seems to be a TV dramatist's interrogation of the contemporary novel. In interview, Potter stated much modernist and post-modernist innovation in the novel is concerned with asserting the idea "that creative writing has its own category and its own right and its own truth" in a world where old moral certainties have been displaced in favour of a greater relativism of values.⁵⁶ Certainly,

this seems to be one of the reasons Potter chose in 1972 to write Hide and Seek as a first novel, rather than a TV play. Having a longer pedigree of formal experimentation than TV drama (as well as a smaller 'audience'), a novel meant there was less danger the 'truth' of the fiction would become confused in the public mind with the writer's own life. In Hide and Seek, Potter chooses to live dangerously by creating a tormented Author character who shares many of the biographical details of his own life - illness; Forest of Dean upbringing; Oxford education - 'facts' which by 1973 were in the public domain, not only through countless TV and newspaper interviews but also Potter's own use of them in TV plays such as The Nigel Barton Plays and A Beast with Two Backs. Hence in Hide and Seek, is Potter exploiting his TV dramatist celebrity and playing his own game of 'Hide and Seek' with the reader? Is this first novel 'art' or autobiography?

Potter, in interview, vigorously denied any direct similarity between his life and fiction, insisting Hide and Seek "is a novel... It's all about characters. They only live between those pages." At the same time, he asserted "autobiographies are a complicated series of lies", full of self-justifications and evasions.⁶⁷ This is borne out in the novel by the Author's apologia which is exposed as fraudulent. It is important to note the metaphor behind this - that it is always through fiction that the 'truth' is revealed. When the Author claims to be putting down the 'facts', he is shown to lie. Only through his Daniel Miller narrative does he tell the 'truth'. In Potter's hands, fiction becomes more true than 'fact'. Implicit is the message that one must always look to the work of the writer for truth, not to what he says about it.

Indeed the whole dynamic of Hide and Seek is the possibility of using fiction to discover the 'truth' about oneself. The novel portrays a writer, fearful of the connections between his fictions and the 'facts' of his own life, who begins to probe those links, delving down through layers of fact and fiction and gradually 'getting nearer to himself'. Crucially, relief from his guilt comes only with his discovery of the power of fiction to liberate him from the 'facts'. This is made most apparent when, having transformed himself into a fictional character at the close, he freely admits his sexual assault to his psychiatrist. Suddenly the 'facts' he had previously wanted to conceal become an irrelevance. He can casually confess the most intimate details of his own life because his discovery of the deeper 'truths' of fiction have made the 'facts' redundant. In Hide and Seek, 'truth' is unyoked from 'fact' and reassigned to fiction. As the 'Creator of all', the Author has realised he can re-invent himself and so change the 'facts' of his own life.

Prefiguring Double Dare, Hide and Seek thus blurs all distinctions between fantasy and reality at its close. Suddenly, the Author discovers the transformation of fact into fiction which he has spent the rest of the novel worrying about, is actually a two-way process and that fiction can be turned into fact. In this way, he discovers the possibility of altering his own situation and reshaping reality. Hence Hide and Seek itself answers the question of whether it is autobiography or artifice. Like the question of the death of God, it does so by rendering it redundant by means of an emphasis on the power of metaphor. Wilfully blurring the boundaries between autobiography and fiction, the novel suggests such distinctions are ultimately meaningless beside the deeper spiritual 'truths' which imagination and metaphor can access.

In turn, this throws light on Potter's use of the 'facts' of his own life in his work (including the 'fact' of sexual assault). In interview, he claimed the reason his own biographical details frequently appeared in the work was because they lent the writing "a present tense kind of immediacy". It makes it come "across as true, as characters you can't beat off... like somebody coming up to you." The autobiographical genre, he asserted, is an "extraordinarily powerful one" because of "audience expectations of a certain ritual form of behaviour about 'the narrative'." By playing with the conventions of autobiography, the writer can make the audience believe "This must be the truth'. And of course it isn't."⁶⁸

Seen in this light, Hide and Seek lives up to its title. Its intimate confessional tone manipulates the reader's expectations that a first novel should be autobiographical. As Potter maintained generally of his writing, the work is more self-exposing than it actually is: "I'm a reclusive character and I don't expose myself. I appear to."⁶⁹ The external biographical 'facts' which seem so revelatory are really part of a literary ruse, hiding a complete fabrication. The 'facts', as his Author character discovers at the close of the novel, are an irrelevance. They only conceal 'lies'.

Such a view seems unsatisfactory on several counts. Hide and Seek's obsession with autobiography and self-exposure; the fraudulence of the Author's public apologia as opposed to the private 'truth' of his fiction; his clear identity with Daniel Miller - all of these seem to cast doubt on the notion of Potter as wholly divorced from the products of his own imagination. He himself hinted there was something more by quoting Nabokov: "Of course, it's not me but if what I was writing was not in some sense true other than my imagination, it wouldn't come across as

true." 'Facts' may conceal fiction but fiction expresses the 'truth'. This is one of the manifestations of the religious sensibility that informs Potter's writing. Akin to Hide and Seek's recursive narrative strategy, it is the idea of delving down through layers of surface fact and underlying fiction in order to reach a deeper 'truth' and so get 'nearer' to oneself. This seems to be why the writer was always so keen in his life to distance himself publicly from the autobiographical resonances in his work. Because of his use of details from his own background, he faced the constant danger in a contemporary media culture ever more obsessed by journalistic 'facts', that his work would be reduced to the level of simple autobiography, thus obscuring its fictionality and the deeper 'truths' he saw as underlying it. As he expressed it in interview: "People want to know 'Is this true ?' which is a very curious question to ask in that sense about a play or a novel. It should be true in another sense:... I mean 'art' and 'truth'..."⁷⁰

Hide and Seek is thus not simple autobiography. Potter certainly weaves his own biography into the novel, blurring it with fiction to such an extent that like Martin in Double Dare, it becomes almost impossible to decide where 'fact' ends and fantasy begins. This, however, is precisely the intention for the aim is to show that such distinctions are irrelevant beside the deeper 'truths' fiction can access - "the truth of the content, the truth emotionally, the truth socially..." in Potter's terms.⁷¹ It is only at this deeper level of 'truth-telling', where events described in the novel may or may not be literally true but nevertheless express a genuine feeling or longing on the part of the writer, that the work can be labelled autobiographical (- perhaps emotional or spiritual autobiography). For Potter, "creating... obsessed and tormented people means there must be some truth in one's own imagination that is complicit

with that."⁷² The tormented Author in Hide and Seek is not him yet at a deeper level it is him. Potter was always constantly aware, however, of the dangers of creating characters who mirrored the 'externals' of his life so closely:

... The closer writing approaches to therapy, the worse it becomes. I believe that passionately. So you've got to have that ruthless discipline about whether you're doing this to ease and soothe or as a balm to your own soul - I mean I've destroyed lots of things where I felt that was happening... because [of] the very delicacy, the very danger, of both dealing and not dealing with what are certainly medically, geographically, age terms, socially, all those things true of myself and also some of my fantasies which I believe every adult person has which is a mix. Your head is a kind of warring with and battling with all sorts of things that the normal social self represses which a writer cannot or can only do so at a great cost. On the other hand, 'just letting it out' is one of the definitions of bad art. So there's always that monitoring eye...⁷³

Double Dare is a warning of what can happen when the 'monitoring eye' is not used and a writer allows his own dark imaginings to take control of him. Hide and Seek, on the other hand, demonstrates the advantages of creating characters who are so 'close' to the writer. According to Potter, every writer instinctively weaves "emotional truths and... actual geographical facts, certain real things" into their own work but by choosing to do so in such a self-conscious way, this allows for the forging of connections, not only with his own life but with "everyone's lives".⁷⁴ A personal voice emerges from the work, creating the impression that the audience is being directly addressed in intimate confessional tones. It is a voice with which they are invited to identify (: § 3.4).

If Hide and Seek is the most definitive example of this intimate voice, it seems highly appropriate it should have been in the novel that Potter first chose to experiment seriously with the conventions of autobiography

since his manipulation of the 'genre' is essentially an extension of the standard self-reflexivity of much modern literary fiction. In Potter's case, however, not only does his first novel deal with itself (the writing of a novel), it deals with the personality of its 'Author' who becomes its main character. In this way, the novel about a novel becomes a novel about the Author of a novel, searching for the 'truth' about himself and hence a pathway out of his spiritual crisis. As he eventually comes to realise, fiction is that pathway. It enables him to create a new reality for himself and thus propels him on to a different sort of 'attention'.

3.2) 'The Play We're In'

Potter's first novel is so important because the legacy of its experimentation is tangible within his TV work. Indeed two contemporaneous television plays, Follow the Yellow Brick Road and Only Make Believe, share many of its themes, techniques and even plot devices. Together, they function almost as a televisual equivalent of the novel.⁷⁵

Like Hide and Seek, Follow the Yellow Brick Road (Dir: Alan Bridges; tx. 4.7.72) opens with a tormented character visiting his psychiatrist.⁷⁶ As with Daniel Miller, fading actor Jack Black (played by Denholm Elliott) believes he is a character in a work of fiction - in this case, a television play. Moreover, it is a dirty play in which the cameras constantly hound him, zooming into big close-ups at all the wrong moments. His psychiatrist, Whitman, wonders if his talk of "The play I am in. The play you are in" has anything to do with God⁷⁶. He coaxes the patient into revealing how, as a child, he had been riding a tricycle near his home one day when suddenly the clouds seemed to take on a "radiance." The child sensed "God was too near".⁷⁷

The description echoes the Forest scene in Hide and Seek where the 'Author' once sensed God walking nearby. In the TV play, however, Black proceeds to describe a much more recent spiritual encounter. Kneeling down one morning to pray, he had waited for 'the word' to drop into his mind. The word was: "Slime !... That was the message I got. No God... nothing else but slime."⁷⁸ He rushes from the psychiatrist's room, choking back the vomit.

In his 1983 Preface to Waiting for the Boat, Potter admitted the writing of this scene to be his own personal 'low point':

Naturally, no-one who gasped out such things in such a manner in such a place would be capable of one modicum of the detachment, let alone the discipline, needed to write such a scene... And yet I am afraid to concede that the excess of disgust jerking out from Jack Black's mouth more closely represented what I felt about the cold or faithless world, and its suffocating materiality, or my cold and faithless self...⁷⁹

In the play, Black's own spiritual crisis is translated into disgust with television drama. 'Filth', he declares to Whitman, is what oozes out of all the television plays: "They turn gold into hay, these people. Angels into whores. Love into a s-s-sticky slime - and Jesus Christ into an imbecile bleeding and screaming on a cross".⁸⁰

As the allusion to Son of Man indicates, Follow the Yellow Brick Road is partly a self-referential play about television.⁸¹ This becomes clearer as Jack contrasts the plays with the commercials. These are 'clean'. No-one mocks goodness or wallows in vice: "There's laughter... and sunshine and kids playing in the meadows."⁸² As Whitman realises, his patient is himself an actor in these commercials, having significantly tried but failed to get work on the single plays. In his own play, Potter illustrates Jack's work, punctuating the action with mock TV commercials.

Thus the audience is treated to the spectacle of Jack acted off the screen by a Great Dane, eager for its can of "Waggy Tail Din Din". He is also seen creeping downstairs in the dead of night where a packet of "Krispy Krunch" biscuits lies behind a kitchen door. Recurring throughout the play, these mock adverts gradually come to reflect Jack's 'real-life' worries and concerns. For example, the second time he is seen creeping downstairs, it is not "Krispy Krunch" he finds behind the door but his 'real' wife in bed with a younger man. The fantasy of the commercials and the reality of his life thus become mixed up in his head as he tries

to deal with the domestic crisis that has finally led him to a psychiatrist. Like the Author in Hide and Seek, his wife has left him because of his disgust with sex. It was his refusal to make love to her which led to her adultery.

Later, as the play progresses, Black learns his actress wife Judy (Billie Whitelaw) has also committed adultery with his agent, Colin. Contemplating revenge, Jack arrives at the latter's flat, only to discover Colin's beautiful young bride, Veronica, there all alone. Potter uses their encounter to explore Jack's sexual tension. Veronica becomes to him an image of purity in a fallen world - a living embodiment of the 'radiance' he once felt gazing at the clouds. This is made explicit when Jack tells her of the many letters he has written to her but never sent. He weeps: "I was writing to God".³³

As this makes clear, despite the most secular of themes - advertising, 'filthy' TV plays, the sight of an attractive woman - Follow the Yellow Brick Road is really a religious play. The title hints at this tension: is the 'Yellow Brick Road' material or spiritual? Is it the capitalist route of the commercials the hero is following, the road to Heaven or both? The title also carries a whiff of despair. At the end of the original 'Yellow Brick Road', Dorothy found no Wizard of Oz, simply a watery-eyed old fraud. Does the same apply here, in the case of either God or Mammon?³⁴

Looking back on the play in 1978, Potter asserted organised religion differs little from the 'Holy City' of perfection that Jack glimpses in the commercials. Both offer "'New and Improved Pie in the sky'". As he put it:

But I wanted, half mockingly, and with an extremely grudging acknowledgement of what I was myself beginning to understand, to show how the human dream for some concept of 'perfection', some Zion or Eden or Golden City, will surface and take hold of whatever circumstances are at hand - no matter how ludicrous. Even in a future land of Muzak, monosodium glutamate and melaminated encounters, the old resilient dreams will insist on making metaphors and finding illumination in the midst of the surrounding dross. There is, then, no place where 'God' cannot reach.⁸⁵

Whether in the false promises of the commercials or simply the image of a beautiful woman, the 1972 play implies spirituality - a yearning for something better than the present - will always outcrop. The theme is that of Hide and Seek: God, 'radiance', grace are all metaphors for the same 'human dream for some concept of 'perfection''. We create our own Wizard of Oz.

This is borne out by Veronica's actions in the play. She is not the 'angel' Jack has created in his imagination. When he tells her he loves her, she, a child of the 'permissive society', mistakes it for something else, replying "O.K. we've got an hour... Unzip me, Jack".⁸⁶ Black's spiritual yearning is immediately consumed by the flames of his own sexual desire. Like the 'Author' in the room with the sleeping child, he finds, to his own disgust, he has to submit to that desire.

By the end of Follow the Yellow Brick Road, Jack's disgust with the world (that is also the play) is thus complete. His only recourse is a return to his psychiatrist, yet this time it is not Whitman he encounters but a younger man, Bilson: a new breed of psychiatrist who is far more certain of the answer to Jack's problems. It comes in a bottle and is called Mogabrium. Bilson tells him no-one today needs to be burdened with a sense of disgust: "If Mogabrium had been available two thousand years

ago... I can think of at least one wild man who would have stuck to carpentry..."⁶⁷

As this second Son of Man reference indicates, the brave new world of 'happiness' pills cannot be the answer to Black's problems. They may cure him of depression but they will probably steal his soul at the same time. The clear implication is that it is better to recognise and be disgusted by the 'filth' of the world than to blot it out by chemicals. Like Moonlight on the Highway, a deterministic solution to emotional or 'spiritual' problems is rejected by the play. Significantly, however, it is not rejected by the central protagonist himself. Jack's mental torment is so great he will try anything to gain peace of mind. Swallowing the capsules, he asks Bilson if they are "like the ads ?"⁶⁸

The play's final scene suggests they do indeed offer the same false paradise. Jack is seen acting in yet another advert. This time, it is not dog food or biscuits he is selling but Bilson's panacea - Mogabrium. He quotes from the Bible (Epistle to the Philippians 4:8): "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are lovely...", stumbling, as he does so, on his lines. The camera pulls back to show the wider scene, as a voice cries "Never mind, Jack. Try again. Keep it punchy !"⁶⁹ Pulling back still further, the camera reveals all the electronic paraphernalia of the TV studio in which the actor has been performing, while the final credits roll.

As this self-referential final image makes clear, Jack's convictions were absolutely right. It was indeed a TV play he was in (and by implication a 'filthy' world). Thanks to Mogabrium, however, he will never know. At the end of the play, life for him has become one big long commercial. As

also indicated by the Biblical quotation, the false paradise of capitalism (advertising) is shown to be the same as the false promises of established religion. Both eschew complexity of thought, preferring the simplicity of selling 'New And Improved Pie In The Sky'. Sweeping the 'dirt' and pain of the world under the carpet, they are the same sort of 'lies'.

A play about TV plays, the ending also hints at Potter's changing attitudes towards television itself. In his introduction to the published edition of the play a year later, he wrote:

The once-named 'window on the world' of brave old promise (or dishonest prospectus prose) is now much more like a silvered mirror sending back features we already know and do not wish to change. It sells aerosoled reassurance during the programmes and aerosoled deodorants in between.⁹⁰

This casts light on the final image of Jack peddling his wares in a TV studio. Just as the pills have purged him of independent thought, so too, it seems, has television been purged of any honest engagement with the world. Even the TV plays (the very play *Black is in*) have become one long commercial, selling false dreams. The window on the world has given way to the yellow brick road of consumer capitalism which prefers to reassure the public with 'lies' than disturb them with the uncomfortable truth about the 'filth' of the world. The view offered by this 1972 play is thus a bleak one - despair and disgust with a world which has become a veritable 'glittering coffin'. Undoubtedly, Follow the Yellow Brick Road marks Potter's lowest point in terms of his desire to write for the medium.

If it was not until 1976 and the Brimstone controversy that that desire would be fully reawakened, Only Make Believe (tx 12.2.73) highlights the problems which Potter clearly felt in the early seventies as a writer who had made television his chosen medium. Directed by Robert Knights and produced by Graeme McDonald, this Play for Today is in many ways a companion piece to Follow the Yellow Brick Road. It deals with the second major narrative strand of Hide and Seek - not a character who knows he is a character but an ill writer, beset with problems and searching for creative inspiration in his dingy London flat:

The play opens on Christopher Hudson, a TV playwright who is hard at work on his latest play for the BBC. Much to his frustration, he has burned his right hand which means that instead of writing in his usual longhand, he has been forced to employ a secretary to type the lines as he 'composes'. This frustrates him. The presence of another person in the room feels like someone sharing his private fantasies. Even more frustratingly, he is attracted to the demure girl sitting at the typewriter. She, however, is interested neither in him nor his play. To her, the process of writing is not a personal act, simply a mundane job for which she is paid by the hour. Essentially, this is the drama - an exploration of the sexual and creative tensions between these two very different personalities as they find themselves locked up in a room together, bound only by the need to finish the all-important play. Where Potter creates added interest is by interpolating dramatised extracts from this TV play into the action of his own for it soon becomes clear that the play Hudson is dictating is none other than one of Potter's own: his 1970 work, Angels Are So Few.⁹¹

As with Follow the Yellow Brick Road, the self-reference is partly an opportunity for Potter to explore attitudes to television itself. Pouring all his energies into the writing of Angels, Hudson begins to experience doubts about the whole enterprise. As he tells Sandra, his secretary, it is only a Play for Today: "Just today... Something easy, undemanding. It's all part of the commercial ! It's all 'pass the time' !" ⁹²

The sentiments are those of Follow the Yellow Brick Road - television (and even life itself) has become one big commercial. Sandra's attitude only adds to his misery. She tells him she never watches TV plays. They are always too 'gloomy'. Hudson, however, does not give up writing Angels in despair. The very disadvantages of the medium become a challenge to him to create characters who "come up close" and cannot be shaken off so easily. ⁹³ As previously noted, the vividness of characters 'you can't shake off so easily' is one of Potter's reasons for playing with the conventions of autobiography. Turning the plays in on themselves and having them seem to be about his own life, his aim is clearly that of Hudson - to make a distracted TV audience sit up and take notice.

The connections with Hide and Seek are thus palpable, not only in terms of the self-reflexiveness and manipulation of autobiographical conventions but also the recursive narrative strategy: the idea of a play about a writer writing a play. Exploring the links between Hudson's life and his TV play, Potter teases the audience with questions about the links between his own life and work (- especially when it is realised Hudson's play is also one of Potter's). Like the novel, the 1973 play also offers the audience apparent insights into the creative process: the thoughts and feelings, stops and starts of a writer as he writes.

There are other links too. Like the 'Author' in Hide and Seek (and Jack Black), Hudson's wife has left him for another man. This is the source of his sexual angst and the reason he starts to beg Sandra to have sex with him. A stranger 'hired' for the purpose of helping him to write, she becomes like Helen is to Martin in Double Dare - a kind of prostitute, holding out the possibility of 'healing release' not only creatively but sexually as well (: S 2.3 b). Sandra, however, spurns his advances, telling him flatly: "I'm only here to do some typing".⁹⁴

As with the 'Author' and Jack Black, Hudson is therefore a figure racked by his own sexuality. A flesh-spirit dichotomy runs deep through his life, impelling him to seek sexual 'release' with 'hired' figures like Sandra, whilst being unable to make love to his own wife. This helps to explain the significance of the play within a play. If, as Chapter Two noted, Angels can be read as a metaphor for the moment of a 'Fall' from sexual innocence and the loss of a child-like faith, Only Make Believe portrays life 'after the Fall'. Biddle, the male victim of Angels, contrasts with the male manipulator or abuser, Hudson - the writer who pushes his fictional characters into bed, sexually harasses his secretary yet who is 'torn' by a guilt that can be connected to feelings of a loss of unity with God. Stripped of his own wings, he burns in a kind of hell. This is the symbolism behind his damaged hand. In a series of short recurring flashbacks, Potter shows how Hudson came to injure it; how he deliberately mutilated himself by pressing his hand down on a hot gas ring. Far from being an innocent in his own 'Fall', the symbolic inference is that similar to Donald Duck in Blue Remembered Hills, Hudson was a victim of his own curiosity and desire for self-destruction.

By the end of the play, it is clear the writer is searching for the integration he feels he has lost - a way back from 'The Fall'. His TV writing and his attempted seduction of Sandra are but manifestations of his desire to reach out towards some greater communication or union beyond the isolation of himself. This is made evident in the climactic speech of the play in which, dictating furiously to his secretary, Hudson strips away all pretence of writing Angels, leaving only his own very personal memories of childhood:

When kids cry out at night..., there comes a big tall teetering adult with a light to say 'shoosh', it's alright... It's only a dream... But what if it's not only a dream ? What if everything's not alright. Sandra ?... Who is going to come with the light and say it's alright?... Only God Himself. Only God. And he won't. He can't. Too late...

Reaching out towards Sandra, he breaks down as she comforts him. With the Angels play within a play complete, she has been his 'ideal audience', allowing him to unburden his feelings of having 'fallen' from God. As she leaves his flat, closing the door behind her, he mutters the last words of the play: "It's alright. It's only a dream. Everything's alright."⁹⁵

The question which the play begs at its close, however, is whether everything is alright ? Is there a loving God and a benign order or is it all, like the play itself, 'Only Make Believe' ? Conversely, with its self-referential quality and autobiographical connections, can the play really be said to be 'Only Make Believe', or is it that like Hudson's notion of God and a 'Fall' from God, drama and fiction contain their own hidden kinds of 'truth' ?

3.3) The Uses of Enchantment

If we hope to live not just from moment to moment, but in true consciousness of our existence, then our greatest need and most difficult achievement is to find meaning in our lives... Like many other modern psychological insights, this was anticipated long ago by poets. The German poet Schiller wrote: 'Deeper meaning resides in the fairy tales told to me in my childhood than in the truth that is taught by life.'⁹⁶

This is the opening of The Uses of Enchantment, Bruno Bettelheim's famous study of the 'meaning and importance of fairy tales'. First published in 1976, the book argued stories such as "Sleeping Beauty" and "Snow White" had survived and been passed down through the generations because they contained their own wisdom and their own 'truth'. Implicit in the argument was the idea that 'modern psychological insights' were only restatements of old 'truths' about humanity, long ago recognised and embedded within the tales themselves.

Significantly, Potter was aware of the Bettelheim book and of the potency of fairy tales:

Bruno Bettelheim's book about fairy tales and the archetypal structure of the fairy tale [shows] how powerful, potent they can be... As a structure in the back of my mind, some of those stories... first hit me, whether... Jesus' parables or the Brothers' Grimm or Hans Christian Andersen (all of which of course become almost the same thing in the mind of a child), as structures of narrative... Though I'm not going to tell you if you haven't found them - I'm not going to tell anybody - there are some of my plays that follow the structure... or that started with the structure of some of those Grimm stories. So as a source, what one first reads and broods and thinks about becomes terribly important. What is it that made one want to be a writer? It's exactly that response to those things - those myths and stories and parables. And they itch in your brain in some odd sort of way. In another sort of way, they tell you how to live.⁹⁷

Looking back on the work which this and earlier chapters have covered, it is possible to see the influence of the fairy tale structures which Potter hints at here. In The Uses of Enchantment, Bettelheim argues one of the

key fairy tale motifs is that of "the usurper [who] succeeds for a time in seizing the place which rightfully belongs to the hero".⁹⁸

The Bonegrinder, Angels, Schmoedipus and Brimstone all feature such usurpers. As Chapter Two indicated, they are the intruding strangers who take over the bourgeois suburban home, displacing its male head (: § 2.2). Indeed both The Bonegrinder and Brimstone employ fairy tale endings in their dénouements. The 1968 play is a version of "Jack and The Giant-Killer" in which brave little 'King George' stands up to the mighty invader, 'Uncle Sam', with an axe at the very end. Meanwhile, Brimstone and Treacle closes with a variation on the "Sleeping Beauty" story. If Pattie is the sleeping princess, Martin is the black Prince who awakes her from the 'spell' of her passivity, not with a kiss but with what the original tale meant it to symbolise - rape.⁹⁹

Schmoedipus, too, is a variation on "Sleeping Beauty". As her demon son and lover, Glen 'awakes' Elizabeth at the close, releasing what she had 'kept down' for so long - the memory of rape and an unwanted child. Though in all three plays, a release from guilt is shown to bring its own problems, nevertheless confronting fears and repressions, 'naming the demon', becomes the key to resolving the central dramatic problem of the 'outsider who is inside the head'.

In this respect, one fairy story stands out as crucial to Potter's writing: "Rumplestiltskin".¹⁰⁰ As previously indicated, it features in Hide and Seek - when Daniel Miller, driving through the Forest, imagines a 'sour hobgoblin' singing and dancing around a fire of twigs and branches.¹⁰¹ Grimms' fairy tale of a miller's daughter forced to spin straw into gold connects not only with Miller's surname but with the

plight of 'the Author', locked up in his London flat, trying desperately to turn the 'straw' of his memories into literary 'gold'. Similarly, the attempts of the heroine in the tale to banish the demon by trying to name him, echoes the 'Author''s own delving down through layers of fact and fiction in Hide and Seek, as he tries to name and banish his own 'demons' of sexual assault and sexual guilt. As with the fairy tale, the very naming of evil takes away its threat. In Hide and Seek, words - writing - are the means by which 'the Author' eventually liberates himself from the 'sour hobgoblins' of his past.¹⁰²

Fairy tales are thus a powerful ingredient in Potter's work. By making them the narrative foundation of many of his plays, Potter lends his writing an emotional power and a quality of universal 'truth'. Covert use of archetypal plot structures allows audiences to identify with characters and situations more easily - hooking their interest in stories which seem both powerful and familiar. At the same time, Bettelheim's insistence on the struggle for meaning is enacted in Potter's own 'modern fairy tales'. In works like Schmoedipus and Brimstone, the 'wonder' of a child's way of seeing the world (the fairy tale) is transposed onto the very epitomé of the reined-in conventions of adult living (suburbia). Potter's message to his predominantly adult and suburban TV play-watching audience is clearly that of Biddle's to Cynthia in Angels: namely, that in order to see the 'truth' of one's own life and so live it properly, the world has to be perceived anew with the eyes of a child.

Aside from fairy tales, there are other common structures running through Potter's work. What may be termed a 'Hamlet structure' recurs in a number of plays. Determined to 'stand up' for his working class roots, Nigel Barton is haunted, like Shakespeare's tragic hero, by the 'ghost' of

his father. As Chapter One indicated, both his climactic speeches (on TV in Stand Up; at a council dinner in Vote, Vote, Vote) revolve around the figure of his miner father and the stunting effect that social class has had on his life and his relationship with his son (: § 1.1). As the idealistic young student 'prince', Barton's attempt, like Hamlet, is to set the world to rights in the name of an injustice done to his father. In so doing, he is also, like Shakespeare's tragic hero, 'torn' by doubt for should he stand up for his conscience or simply acquiesce to the status quo ? His problem is the same as that of Jesus in Son of Man - is he mad to want to change things 'in the name of the Father', or is it the rest of the world that has gone mad ?

Across a range of Potter plays, this common Hamlet structure of a 'torn' hero, opposed to the status quo in the name of an older set of paternal values, can be seen to recur - for example, not just in The Nigel Barton Plays and Son of Man but also Traitor and Lay Down Your Arms (: § 2.1). To this list can also be added Where The Buffalo Roam in which the main protagonist is literally haunted by the 'ghost' of his dead father. Inhibited from learning to read by the memory of his father's taunts, the 'torn' young hero "take[s] up arms against a sea of troubles" in order to try to alleviate his situation.¹⁰³ In this way, transformed from a victim into a villain, he is led by his ghost from the past to a tragic end.

Significantly, these connections with Hamlet are only part of a much wider structural relationship that links together many Potter plays. What many have in common is their concentration on a single male central protagonist who is 'torn' by conflicting impulses - whether that be home and Oxford, reality and fantasy or more generally, flesh and spirit.

Around this agonised Hamlet figure flutter two main supporting players, one male, one female, who, pulling him in different directions, come to embody his own inner conflicts. In Stand Up, Nigel's tensions between home and 'selling out' at Oxford find expression in the competing claims on him of his miner father and his upper class girlfriend, Jill, who keeps urging him not to worry so much about the class divide. In Double Dare, Martin's inner conflict between reality and fantasy (the 'real world' and that of his own imagination) finds an external echo in the figures of Ben and Helen: one, the worldly-wise producer 'pimping' for a friend; the other the source and inspiration for all his deepest fantasies as a writer. Meanwhile, in Traitor, though he is tormented by journalist interrogators in the present, the real source of Harris' inner 'flesh-spirit' conflict is shown to lie in the past. What haunts him is the incompatibility between chasing his father's dream of Camelot and leading a 'normal' life, embodied in the play by his mother's more down-to-earth concerns for his development.¹⁰⁴ (: § 2.1)

The dilemma is thus the same as Hamlet's: follow the airy vision of a ghostly father or conform to an unhappy status quo; cling to a spiritual ideal or compromise with the material world. The Hamlet comparison also shows how frequently Potter employs trios of characters: like that of the son, 'torn' between the claims of a fleshly mother and ghostly father in Shakespeare's tragedy.¹⁰⁵

In his film version of the play, Olivier famously described Hamlet as "the tragedy of a man who could not make up his mind".¹⁰⁶ Another common feature of Potter plays is their ambiguity. Many of the plays (particularly the early ones) are decidedly ambiguous towards their own central characters, making it unclear, for example, as to whether Nigel

Barton should be seen as a rebel or a fraud; Willy Turner a victim or a villain. (: S 1.1) Quizzed about this aspect of his writing, Potter asserted: "It's out of ambiguities that we make choices. But there's something very cruel about a choice that's made without doubt." He related this to a distinction between political writing and 'art':

It's easier to show political drama if you're naturalistic or if you're an issue writer - ... and you say this is a scandal and so on. I believe that is the role of journalism and the essay and political polemic... It's difficult to put into words but I don't believe that that is the category [of]... 'art' ([in] quotation marks). The truth-finding - for example, in Brimstone, using the woman [Mrs Bates] whose prayer is answered as an absolute suburban canting humbugging fool and yet right. Now if you had made that a political drama, you would be tempted to make your message explicit and I don't believe 'art' (again [in] quotation marks) can be explicit. All it would do is buck up and cheer up those who support your side and it will not drop an ounce of the alternate view into those who oppose...¹⁰⁷

Thus the early plays in particular were so ambiguous because, though far more concerned with 'political' issues than some of his later work, Potter wished to avoid didacticism, believing it to be inappropriate for drama. This is why in both Stand Up and Vote, Vote, Vote, Nigel Barton's inner conflict is mirrored in the plays' wider conflict of attitudes towards him. His dilemma is explored from two contradictory points of view rather than any simple solution proffered or made explicit. For Potter, 'truth-finding' in 'art' is complex and not reducible to a single political stance.¹⁰⁸

This too is why, in many Potter plays, there are always two different versions of the central protagonist struggling to get out - the hero and the villain; the victim and the fraud. Not only are the audience left to make up their own minds which version to embrace, so too are the protagonists themselves. Indeed it is the root of their inner conflict. If this is so for The Nigel Barton Plays and Where the Buffalo Roam, it

is also the case with Son of Man and Lay Down Your Arms. Jesus' struggle with Himself is in order to decide (like the audience) whether He is the Messiah or mad. Similarly, Hawk may be a liar, user of prostitutes and a traitor to British Intelligence but his inner struggle to remain true to his (and his father's) ideals shows him to have genuine moral courage.

Thus Potter's protagonists are never all good or all bad but always both and. Each always has to confront a moral dilemma in their play: one that is invariably a variation on the central flesh-spirit dichotomy that runs through much of Potter's writing up until the mid seventies. Their choice is always whether to capitulate to the material world (the 'animal' half of their own natures) or else to try to struggle against it in the name of a 'higher' spirituality (the 'angel' side). This is so whether that struggle takes the form of a political or religious ideal or simply, as with Where the Buffalo Roam, an assertion of the freedom of the individual to fantasise escape.

Since each work is about the conflict that goes on 'inside a person's head', there are always two versions of the same character, struggling within for dominance. One is the public self the protagonist presents to the external world; the other, the inner or secret self that inhabits its own private spiritual domain. The flesh-spirit dichotomy which each of Potter's protagonists has to confront in the plays is internalised as a battle between warring aspects of the same personality. Hence in Where the Buffalo Roam, there are two 'Willy Turners' - the young unemployed Welshman which the external world sees and the Wild West outlaw he dreams of being inside his head. Each version of the self is shown to be incompatible with the other. In Stand Up, there are two opposing Nigel

Bartons - the heroic working class rebel at Oxford versus the swot of the village school who, as a child, once sneakily betrayed a fellow 'class-mate'. If the first is the present-day public persona, the other is a private self living within: a 'secret friend' capable of being reawakened by an object or event in the present triggering off a sudden renewal of feelings from childhood. When the adult Nigel watches his miner father head for the pit gates at the very beginning of Stand Up, he murmurs "There but for the grace of God and the eleven-plus..." and suddenly, the scene associatively flashes back to the village school, where, as a child, he was first emotionally separated from his class background and his father'⁰⁹ (: § 1.1).

The events of Stand Up are thus 'triggered' by an external event impinging on the consciousness of the central protagonist. The rest of the play takes place inside his head as a series of flashbacks, alternated with scenes depicting him in the present. This is a characteristic trait of Potter plays. In Traitor, Harris' memories of public school and England are triggered by the arrival of a group of well-heeled Western journalists to his Moscow flat. In Paper Roses, it is the prospect of imminent retirement which prompts Clarence Hubbard to look back on his life. The 'outsider' cycle of plays presents a variation on this in as much as it is the intrusion of a stranger within the suburban home that 'triggers' a conflict within the central protagonist between their public, domestic self and a secret, private one. Morally upright husbands like George King and Mr Bates, as well as the seemingly conventional wife Elizabeth Carter, are all forced to confront old guilts. The outsider represents an externalisation of what is inside their heads and will not go away until that private 'truth' has been more closely reconciled with the public 'lie' of the domestic facade.

This holds generally true of the single plays: external events trigger memories in the central character at a moment of personal crisis, when the disparity between the public and the private self grows too wide. Taking place largely inside their main characters' heads, the plays chart the attempts of protagonists to bring external reality closer to their own internal reality in order that these two conflicting aspects of the self may be integrated. This is clearly what lies behind Nigel's attempts in Stand Up and Vote, Vote, Vote to 'stand up' for his class. His deep desire to change the political realities of class in Britain springs from his need to bring the external world more in line with his own internal reality, in terms of the disjunction he feels between his new life as an upwardly mobile student / politician and his own working class roots. Triggered off by the realisation of the widening status difference between himself and his father, his drive in Stand Up is to heal the division he feels between his life in the present and the way it once was in the past.

Similarly, at the close of Where the Buffalo Roam, Willy's rampage as a cowboy can be seen as one last desperate attempt to reconcile a fertile inner life with the grim reality of his existence in Swansea. Becoming a real outlaw is the only way he can see of bridging the gap between the richness of his own imagination and the poverty of his external world. If, as Chapter One indicated, Potter's plays of the sixties suggest the world ultimately does not want to know of the struggles of protagonists to reconcile themselves honestly with it, as later works demonstrate, such a reconciliation between material reality and the spiritual self need not necessarily manifest itself in overtly 'political' attempts to change the external 'facts'. Barton and Turner both fail at the end of their respective plays and are left worse off than before yet as the later Hide

and Seek makes clear, such a transformation can be achieved internally, through the power of memory, imagination and fiction.

Hence because it offers the possibility of new ways of seeing and being, it is the 'enchantment' of fiction - myth, fairy tales and other cultural archetypes - which has, for Potter, many 'uses'. Certainly, these are present in his writing, hidden deep within its structures. The writer himself, in a 1979 interview with the Radio Times, summed up one reason why:

... Human beings are story-telling creatures. We need - myth is the noble word for it - we need myth to contend with the absurdity of being here. The most beautiful part of being alive is our capacity to shape our lives by language, by stories. We can't live without them. We tell them to each other all the time. The world is full of the murmur of human beings trying to reshape reality.'¹⁰

3.4) 'Style is Truth'

Because they offer other ways of seeing, stories thus provide us with the ability to reshape our reality. Nowhere is this more clear than in relation to Potter's distinctive 'non-naturalistic' style which is inextricably bound up with his personal beliefs. In Chapter One, it was suggested a more precise label for this 'non-naturalism' was 'psychological expressionism' (: § 1.0 b). The phrase, borrowed from Raymond Williams, seemed to encapsulate Potter's concern with 'expressing' the mental life of his protagonists ('what goes on inside people's heads'). It also fitted Williams' view that since the eighteenth century, the broad trend of drama history has been towards greater representation of the 'real'. As a form of 'psychological expressionism', Potter's style could be classed as an offshoot of realism - one more way of taking "account of reality... to include 'psychological' as well as 'external' reality".¹¹¹

While such a view seemed ideal for locating the early work within a broader Wednesday Play context of "agitational contemporaneity", it cannot so easily be extended to Potter's later exploration of 'spiritual' themes.¹¹² As Williams points out, characteristic of a greater dramatic emphasis on 'reality' is that the actions of plays become contemporary but also secular. 'Realism', he states, was originally conceived as a conscious reaction:

... against the characteristic presentation of the world in 'romance' and 'myth' - seen as including extra-human, supernatural and in these terms irrational (non-comprehensible) forces. It was also an emphasis against 'theatricality' and 'fictionality': against the presentation of 'substitute worlds', based on earlier writing and on the past, on the separation of 'fancy' from 'fact'...¹¹³

Clearly, the presence in Potter's later plays of angels and demons; his use of myth and fairy tale; his probing of the realms of 'fancy' and 'fact', all mean that arguments about style have to be advanced somewhat from Chapter One.

It is perhaps ironic that the key to making sense of the problem lies not with Raymond Williams but in a second paper entitled "Realism and Non-Naturalism", which was also delivered at the Edinburgh International Television Festival in 1977. This was by Potter himself.

In it, the writer lays out his reasons why 'non-naturalism' is his preferred TV dramatic style. He also sketches a view of television far removed from his upbeat vision of the sixties. Licenced like a dog, the task of TV, he asserts in the paper, is to supply a constant flow of images into the home. Much of that output is designed merely to pass the time. One programme trickles into another until it comes to feel that the same sort of 'experience' is on offer. There is also a complex exchange of mutual values between types of programmes. The best analogy, he maintains, is with 'the yellow brick road' of the commercials. Not only do most programme styles ape those of the commercials (and vice versa), it also feels as if they are all selling something. That is, just as the effect of more competition in the market-place paradoxically narrows choice rather than widening it, so the need of producers to have their programmes stand out from the crowd as more distinctive and exciting, results in each of their offerings coming to look more and more like any other part of the schedule. Potter states, "the reason, I think, is that they are selling much the same thing: a particular view of Reality".¹⁴

Faced with all this, the writer has a choice - either confirm and strengthen the prevailing values of society or else let "the movements of his imagination take him in the opposite direction". In television drama, the problem is particularly acute since a play can be sucked into the general context of the programmes surrounding it in the schedules and so be drained of much of its meaning. According to Potter, much discussion about TV drama is characterised by the need to mark it out as separate and special from the news, entertainment and ads which surround it. Unfortunately, the debate amongst practitioners tends to reduce itself to the relative merits of various technical aspects of production. The result is that TV plays and drama series come to merge with the rest of the programmes - trying to 'sell' themselves as technically innovative or exciting and in the very process, losing all sense of distinctiveness from the rest of the schedule.

By contrast, Potter asserts there should be a genuinely alive debate not about styles of production but about the choices between 'naturalism' and its alternatives.''⁵ The distinction is highly significant. For Potter, the choice between 'naturalism' and 'non-naturalism' is not simply a question of which dramatic style to use but between two fundamentally different ways of seeing.

If this suggests a connection between the deeper 'truths' he sees in creative writing and his own 'non-naturalistic' style, Potter goes on in his paper to define the relationship as being that between "the word and the world". Advocates of 'realism' and 'naturalism' confidently assume there is a stable and generally agreed idea of external reality - of the world 'out there'. In their work, they seek to represent that world, holding it up for the audience's inspection and telling them this is how

things are. As a television writer, Potter states he feels increasingly drawn towards other modes. Importantly, he relates this not only to his view of television but to his own personal beliefs:

... [And] my need to relate the changes and the anxieties and the yearnings of my own personal belief to the world as I now apprehend it. I am not yet sure whether I love God or the idea of God, and I am not going to stand up here and baldly announce all the force that makes me translate the human need for order, for justice, mercy, pity and peace into a yearning for God. But that is what haunts me...

He also sets his choice of 'non-naturalism' against a wider historical context of modernist thinking and practice: "As the still underrated H.G. Wells put it, the frame within which the writer sees 'reality' has splintered and got into the picture".¹¹⁶

'Naturalism' has thus come under pressure from awareness of a relativity of perspective - that 'reality' is as much a question of the observer as that which is observed. Extending his argument to television, Potter asserts the single play "is virtually the last place on the box where the individual voice and the personal vision is central to the experience." This is important because amongst TV's bombardment of images and messages, most of which serve to reinforce rather than challenge the habits and attitudes of society, a play has "the chance to show that the world is not independent of our making of it and, more, that the other programmes, too, are engaged in making the world even as they purport merely to reflect it". Hence the first task of a TV play is to be a play, not an imitation of something else: "It can step out of the flow and back onto the bank only by drawing attention to its status as drama and by demonstrating its own workings".¹¹⁷

Potter ends his paper by suggesting that television practitioners should concentrate more on the activity of drama rather than just take 'realist' or 'naturalist' forms for granted. By definition, he thinks the 'non-naturalist' writer is inevitably going to be more wary of those forms and conventions because "he often wants to examine them and lay them bare, in the structure of his play. He wants to show the workings. He wants to look at our way of looking even as he is looking". Potter closes with a summary of his arguments for 'non-naturalism':

Most television ends up offering its viewers a means of orientating themselves towards the generally received notions of 'reality'. The best naturalist or realist drama, of the Garnett-Loach-Allen school for instance, breaks out of this cosy habit by the vigour, clarity, originality and depth of its perceptions of a more comprehensive reality. The best non-naturalist drama, in its very structure disorientates the viewer smack in the middle of the orientation process which television perpetually uses. It disrupts the patterns that are endemic to television and upsets or exposes the narrative styles of so many of the other allegedly non-fiction programmes. It shows the frame in the picture when most television is busy showing the picture in the frame. I think it is potentially the more valuable, therefore, of the two approaches.¹¹⁵

The implications of this are important for understanding Potter's commitment to TV drama. A 'non-naturalistic' style disorientates because it disrupts television's habitual 'naturalism'. Potter's purpose is to make the viewer sit up, take notice and attend to his play. He is also, however, trying to raise questions about the view of 'reality' which the bulk of television offers its viewers for passive acceptance.

In many ways, it is possible to trace the roots of this challenge to received TV wisdom all the way back to the Between Two Rivers documentary. As a BBC General Trainee, Potter learned how the 'facts' of current affairs could be 'lies' (: § 0.1). Television - the transparent 'window on the world', allegedly offering direct access to things as they

are - was actually a thoroughly manipulated medium. If this prefigured his move to drama five years later, it also links in with the 'fact', 'fiction', 'truth' distinction which runs through much of the work: the idea that 'facts' can be 'lies' and 'fiction' can express deeper 'truths' than 'fact'.

As a predominantly 'naturalistic' medium, purporting to reflect the world, television has traditionally tried to conceal its own manufacture. Writing TV plays thus became Potter's way of challenging the 'particular view of Reality' which he felt the medium was 'selling' to a mass audience. For much of the sixties, this linked him with Loach, Garnett and other prominent Wednesday Play practitioners, all of whom were trying to depict on television areas of experience which had hitherto been neglected or underrepresented: the problems of social class, sexuality, homelessness and so on. Extending the limits of what could be portrayed on screen, they were all trying to question received notions of 'reality' (bourgeois reality), in the name of a more 'comprehensive' vision of a world that was dynamic and could be changed. (: § 1.0 b)

Right from the very beginning, however, Potter's alternative reality was not so much external as internal. His 'psychological expressionism' challenged television's conventional view of the world by suggesting that what went on inside the head was just as important as anything that went on outside it. This modernist emphasis carried a political edge: not only did it introduce an intimate 'interior' drama to television, it also implied that the 'facts' which other programmes offered were inherently subjective and could be changed. As a current affairs documentary, Between Two Rivers had carried the ring of 'factual' authenticity. As a drama taking place inside its main protagonist's head, Stand Up made sure

its view of social class in Britain could never be construed as anything other than personal.

As Potter's work progressed, however, his broadly 'political' themes deepened into explorations of the 'unacknowledged spiritual questions' which had been underpinning them. The fact that we make our own world and can reshape reality could be emphasised by having a play reveal its own manufacture (and by implication that of the rest of television). Thus in Follow the Yellow Brick Road, Only Make Believe and Double Dare, self-reflexive devices were used to emphasise that a play in the TV schedules had its own special category and 'truth'. This was something which 'realist' and 'naturalist' dramas by definition could not do. However radical their challenge to orthodox views of the world, they had to share with the rest of television a concern to present their version of the 'facts' and thus conceal their own manufacture.

Potter's desire to be a television 'author' can also be seen in this light. Not only does heavily 'authored' drama underline a personal subjective vision, it also draws attention to this manufacture of television and hence to the idea that we make our own world and can reshape reality. Potter's style is thus inextricably linked to his vision of the world. Just as stories provide other 'ways of seeing', so too does 'non-naturalism'. In interview, he asserted this view that dramatic style is indivisible from 'truth':

I mean you can tell a writer who is a liar not by the events but by the style. It is style that is truth... If you get a piece of overwrite or flatulent writing and you know that it is emotionally untrue, it is the style which tells you, while the event may well be [factually true] I mean, somebody could sit down and write their life and be absolutely factually accurate and the style would be a lie if it was pompous or if it was fickle or if it just played with the truth in that way. That is the truth to me. It's a far more important area of truth-

telling than saying 'well did X actually happen and was that followed by Y or did Y actually precede it ?'¹¹⁹

Mere 'facts' are not the 'truth'. There are deeper 'truths' which fiction can access. In one way, this emphasis on the primacy of 'art' and an inner as opposed to an outer world makes Potter a television modernist. In another, however, it also connects with much older narrative traditions of myth and fairy tale, insofar as it adheres to the idea that however fantastic or outlandish the form in which it is contained, fiction can reveal 'truths' about life.

It is this which seems to separate Potter from Raymond Williams' notion of 'psychological expressionism' as a kind of 'realism'. As Chapter One indicated, Williams' argument was that many of the modernist innovations of early twentieth century drama were part of the broad dramatic trend towards 'realism'. They were a kind of 'psychological realism' (: § 1.0b). In the same paper, however, he was also forced to make a somewhat awkward distinction between drama which focuses on an inner 'psychological' world and that which deals with 'spiritual' or metaphysical themes. In the latter category, he cited the plays of Eliot, Yeats and 'some Beckett', asserting these were:

... based on attempts to restore the world-views which realism and naturalism had attacked: the deliberate reintroduction of supernatural or metaphysical forces and dimensions controlling or operating on human actions and character, or the less easily recognisable introduction of forces above and beyond human history and 'timeless' archetypes and myths.¹²⁰

Because of his view of (and ideological commitment to) 'realism' as the main historical trend of drama since the eighteenth century, Williams, here, is forced to hive off as regressive an important strand of

modernist writing which does not fit his definition of drama as increasingly contemporary, socially extended and above all secular. The latter, to him, deals with the 'real' world; the former does not.

By contrast, what the example of Potter shows is that far from being an offshoot of 'realism', it is possible to relate an emphasis on 'interior drama' to a fundamentally different way of seeing. The preoccupation of 'naturalism' and 'realism' is with external reality - describing its 'surface' or depicting the underlying social, historical and political forces which both shape it and can change it. Potter's 'non-naturalism', on the other hand - which includes 'psychological expressionism', self-reflexive devices, use of myth and fairy tale - is concerned with an inner world; with what, as an increasingly self-conscious religious dramatist through the nineteen seventies, he came to regard as the 'spirit'.

3.5) Conclusion

This is why, in 1977, Potter was able to label art "the inheritor of religious acts".¹²¹ Because it allows other ways of seeing, art provides a way for individuals not only to order but reorder their world. It can restore the 'wonder' and recapture the lost lands of childhood. It also has the power to reshape reality: as Hide and Seek showed, not only can Authors shape characters, characters can shape their own Author. An Author can become his own character and so find a way of resolving his personal problems. In this way, writing becomes an act of faith. It inherits the power of religion to transform lives.

As an Author too, the individual can become a kind of God - the true Author of his Fate. Indeed Potter pushes the metaphor further. For him, the world is both made and being made. God waits within us: hence we are our own God. The world of stories - "Only Make Believe" - opens up and reveals the sovereignty of the 'spirit'.

If it was this recognition which resolved the crisis of faith that haunts Follow the Yellow Brick Road and Hide and Seek, it also has implications for a number of recurring features in the plays: the self-reflexivity; the 'uses' of the enchantment of fairy tales; the 'non-naturalistic' style. Each is a way of asserting the power of fiction or drama and of a different way of seeing. Ultimately, they are Potter's challenge to the materialist secular thinking that dominates contemporary society.

Hence his continuing choice during the seventies to write plays for television was not merely expedient or accidental. As his broadly 'political' attacks became superseded by 'spiritual' themes, TV became even more important to him as not only the most potent medium but the one

which most authenticated prevailing attitudes. To write for TV was thus in a sense to attack materialist secular thinking from within.

There was, however, one problem. As early as his 1973 Introduction to Follow the Yellow Brick Road, Potter had pinpointed it. Writing of why he first chose to be a television playwright, he commented:

And so while most of my original reasons for choosing to write for television are - if suitably rephrased - still valid, they leave out something crucial: the quality of response. Bullets on one side and football on the other... [mean] the life of a play so doubly boxed can be sucked away in the surrounding flow. Worse, a panel game, a plastic-prairied Western, a hard-eyed news bulletin, Wimbledon, a detective melodrama and an original play eventually submerge together into the same kind of experience. It is this landscape of indifference, so hotly lit, which in the end defeats the pride and passion of the writer.¹²²

In Only Make Believe, Potter illustrates the point through the figure of Hudson's secretary, Sandra: people tend not to watch TV plays. The mass audience - the coalminers and other working people from whom Potter had escaped yet now wanted to reach through television - had little or no interest in one of the medium's most traditionally prestige and 'high-brow' forms: the single play. It was series and serials like Z-Cars and Coronation Street which got the high ratings. Despite Potter's best attempts to make an audience sit up and take notice of his work by means of his 'non-naturalistic' style, the very title Wednesday Play or Play for Today before each of his plays, was always going to be a cue for "half the bloody audience to switch over or switch off" (as Christopher Hudson phrases it, in Only Make Believe).¹²³ It was not the coalminers but the dons and the TV critics who would be guaranteed to keep on watching.

It is in this context that Potter's move to the more popular serial format should be seen. The highly successful 'serials with music',

Pennies from Heaven and The Singing Detective, were both attempts to use this format as a vehicle for the exploration and expression of 'authored' themes, normally associated with the single play or TV film. As Chapter Four will examine in more detail, Potter's intention with the extended format was not simply to gain ratings or even enhance his reputation as a 'major' TV writer. It was also to challenge prevailing (materialist secular) attitudes by challenging prevailing TV forms. If the original play and 'the detective melodrama' tended after a while to merge into the same landscape of indifference, then it would only be through colonising those other forms (as with The Singing Detective) that Potter would be able to challenge viewer indifference.

Hence it is no coincidence that Pennies from Heaven should coincide with an upward curve of optimism in Potter's work, together with a renewed interest, after the Brimstone banning, in the possibilities of writing for the medium (: § 2.4). Aside from adaptations like Late Call and The Mayor of Casterbridge, Pennies, however, was by no means his first foray beyond the single play. Transmitted seven years earlier, Potter's first original 'authored' serial had been Casanova.

CHAPTER FOUR

SEX, LIES AND VIDEOTAPE: "CASANOVA" AND "PENNIES FROM HEAVEN"

4.0) Magic Moments: "Casanova" and The Evolution of The 'Authored' Serial

First transmitted on BBC-2 between November 16 and December 21 1971, Casanova makes it possible to trace the ways in which Potter began to experiment with 'authored' drama beyond the single play. A forerunner of Pennies From Heaven and The Singing Detective, it helps explain why these works are not easily categorisable in terms of conventional television forms:

In 1971, Potter suggested to The Sunday Times that far from being a serial or a series, Casanova was "a single play divided into six episodes". Based on the memoirs of the famous eighteenth century lover, the idea of a six hour play had arisen because he "wanted to do an accumulative portrait; something that wasn't swallowed up as soon as the screen went dark".¹ Potter was thus seeking to overcome the anxiety he would later express in the Introduction to the published Follow The Yellow Brick Road - the fear that all too often the single play could "be sucked away in the surrounding flow of television", so defeating "the pride and passion of the writer".² A longer work, stretched out over weeks, might make more of an impact. It could stand out from the 'flow'.

On one level, such a desire was only part of a growing trend amongst BBC dramatists to extend 'authored' drama beyond the confines of the one-off play. If David Mercer's Generations trilogy had provided an early illustration of how 'authorial' themes could be spread across a number of related works, in 1966, John Hopkin's Talking To A Stranger had demonstrated the possibilities an extended format could offer the TV playwright. Characterised by the narrative continuity of the weekly serial, this work, examining the breakdown of a suburban family, employed the kind of formal experimentation normally associated with the one-off 'authored' play.³

Thus 'authored' drama in an extended format evolved largely from the direction of the single play. It arose from the desire of writers to explore single play themes in greater depth than the temporal constraints of the single play form would allow. Conventional serials, being generally 'unauthored', could offer only narrative continuity from week to week.⁴ Writers like Hopkins and Potter were seeking thematic continuity as well. Right from the very outset, however, these episodic dramas created a confusion in production categories. Originating not within Series and Serials but the Plays Department of the BBC, they blurred the distinction between what constituted a serial and a series of related plays.

In the case of Casanova, this confusion was further complicated by its links with the historical or costume drama. Having entirely self-generated the Casanova project in the manner of his single play work, Potter completed the scripts over a period of thirteen months and delivered them to Gerald Savory, the Head of BBC Plays, who then invited Mark Shivas to produce them.⁵ This was a significant choice, revealing

how Casanova was perceived within the BBC. In the early seventies, Shivas was a producer of BBC-2 plays who had gained a reputation for lavish costume drama, following the considerable success of his The Six Wives of Henry VIII. Akin to Talking To A Stranger, this was a series / serial that nevertheless emanated from the Plays department of the BBC: a group of six historical plays which sought to exploit audience fascination with the private life of royalty. First transmitted in January 1970, they attracted an average of four million viewers per episode - record audiences at the time for a BBC-2 drama. Winner of the Prix Italia and many other awards, the plays subsequently went on to become highly lucrative for the BBC in terms of programme sales overseas.⁶

What is evident from its production history is that in Casanova, the Plays Department spied a suitable follow-up to its last big costume success. Thus Shivas reassembled many of the team he had worked with on Henry VIII: director John Glenister, designer Peter Seddon, costume designer John Bloomfield and so on. Also like Henry VIII, the production was considered too large for one director to handle alone. The six Casanova plays were divided equally between two directors - Glenister and Mark Cullingham - who each had their own individual crew.⁷

By the time of its transmission the following November, Potter's drama had thus become a major new costume production for the BBC's Autumn season. The Radio Times gave it prominent space, putting its 'star', Frank Finlay, on the front cover, dressed in full eighteenth century garb as Casanova.⁸ It is here that a marked divergence begins to appear between the BBC's promotion of the drama and Potter's own in various interviews he gave at the time. While the writer described his latest

work as a single play over six episodes, to the Corporation, it was "a six part series". Where the Radio Times stressed Casanova's "historical accuracy" and the fact that several of its production team had worked on "the award-winning Six Wives of Henry VIII", Potter told The Sunday Times, "To me, the term 'costume drama' means something totally pickled".⁹ Not only did he claim Casanova was a work of 'contemporary relevance', he also insisted it was completely lacking in historical authenticity. The memoirs on which it was based were fraudulent: "They're vain and egotistical... they are about a man who is hunted by what he is hunting - and that is freedom, expressed in sexual terms."¹⁰

Thus what was the motivation behind the drama ? There is evidence that part of Potter's intention was to subvert the trend in costume drama which had become increasingly dominant in BBC drama, following the worldwide success of Henry VIII and the earlier Forsyte Saga. Though long a staple of its schedules, by the early seventies, a number of factors had helped the historical or costume drama to thrive at the BBC. The departure of Hugh Carleton Greene from the post of BBC Director-General in 1969 had seemed to many in British television to mark the end of a régime which had actively encouraged adventure and experiment in programme-making. As Chapter One noted, by 1970, there were fears that a new wave of 'middle-brow' reaction had set in against 'controversial' single play subjects: a determination on the part of management to crack down on the freedoms programme-makers had enjoyed under Greene (: § 1.5). The advent of colour television in 1967 had also created new pressures within the BBC to justify the additional cost to the audience of installing colour equipment and buying a new licence. With its meticulously designed costumes and sets, historical drama was one way of satisfying the viewer that all that extra expenditure to watch television

in colour had been worthwhile. Given all these factors, it was little wonder that by 1970, prominent single play practitioners like Kenith Trodd could complain that in this new post-Carleton Greene era, you could do "anything you like[d] at the BBC so long it [was] about three girls in a flat or the six wives of Henry VIII...!"¹¹

In this light, Casanova can be seen as Potter's response to changing TV fashions - an attempt to subvert the trend away from contemporary single play subjects by means of a costume drama which portrays not a king or an aristocrat but one of history's most notorious rogues: Giacomo Casanova.¹² In marked contrast to the typical protagonist of costume drama, Potter's Casanova is very much depicted as a deviant on the margins of society whose quest of the senses is an attempt to escape from all its suffocating moral codes.

Episode One (titled "Steed in the Stable") illustrates this point well. It opens with the stereotypical image of Casanova as great lover - in bed with one Barberina, whilst an anonymous voice on the soundtrack lists his many vices: "Seducer of countless women... Corrupter of youth... Unbeliever."¹³ Suddenly, the door of his apartment bursts open, as Casanova is caught in flagrante delicto by Messer Grande, the Chief of Police. Acting on behalf of the State Inquisition of eighteenth century Venice, Grande informs the libertine he is to be arrested "for impiousness, fraud and fornication."¹⁴ The 'steed' is to be 'stabled' under the lead roof of the Doge's Palace, where he will have "cause and time to reflect upon his wickedness and amend it."¹⁵

In Potter's version of the story, state repression thus becomes synonymous with sexual repression. The anti-hero pitted against dark

forces of reaction, Potter's Casanova embodies some of the key 'counter-culture' slogans of the sixties and early seventies: 'sexual liberation'; 'dropping out'; 'doing your own thing'.¹⁶ In various interviews of the time, the writer himself made the link with the 'permissive society' and the threat of reaction against it. In The Sunday Times, he explained that what had first attracted him to the subject was the 'myth' of Casanova:

Everyone's heard of it... But what does it mean? You hear about the office Casanova, the small-town Casanova, the shop-floor Casanova. He was what we describe as a libertine: but he was concerned with religious and sexual freedom, and these are things we have to address ourselves to now... He lived in a time very much like our own. The same fear of sex as a liberating agent is abroad now: we even have our own Inquisition.¹⁷

If this was Potter's argument against considering the drama a 'mere' costume romp, what is also clear is that he was no innocent party to the BBC's decision to produce Casanova as an historical drama in the Henry VIII mould. In many ways, that choice had already been determined by the nature of his scripts which parallel Henry VIII in several key respects. Hence aside from the fact that both are a series of six plays dealing with the private life of a historical figure, Casanova mirrors Henry VIII by presenting a shifting view of its subject. In Shivas' earlier production, each of the six plays had concentrated on the relationship between Henry and one of his six wives. Scripted by a different writer, each had illuminated "different facets of Henry's character".¹⁸ In Casanova, the extended format is also used to present a complex portrait of a man seen at different phases of his life. Over the six plays, Casanova is variously portrayed as archetypal Italian lover, wretched prisoner of the Inquisition, European traveller, as well as practitioner of black magic. Finally, in the last play, he is discovered in old age, cloistered within a German castle, where he has found employment as the

librarian of a Count. It is at this point he begins to write down the memoirs of his various exploits: the memories which have formed the basis of the other five plays.

Like Henry VIII, Casanova's relationships with women are, for obvious reasons, a principal focus of the drama. Though many appear and disappear over the six plays, Potter chooses to focus on three whom it is implied haunted the libertine all his life: first, a black-haired black-eyed country girl, Cristina, whom Casanova almost marries in Episode One; second, Anne Roman-Couplier, the god-daughter of a friend in Grenoble, whose heart Casanova breaks in Episode Four ("Break A Window") and finally Pauline, a melancholy 'English Rose' he encounters in London in Episode Five ("Fevers of Love"). As implied by the title of this fifth play, it is Pauline whom Casanova comes closest to loving, after she replies to the offer of a room he has advertised in an English newspaper. She, however, has a husband and a mysterious past and is simply seeking a place to hide. His declarations of love rebuffed, it is the libertine who for the first time is forced to deal with a broken heart. Even worse is his dawning recognition that having seduced and abandoned so many women in the past, he may no longer be capable of love. As he tells Pauline, even he is unsure whether his declarations of love to her are sincere or not: "I've used up all the words... Everything bounces back to times... I have used exactly the same phrases, with seemingly exactly the same kind of sincerity...."⁹

Akin to Henry and his wives, each of Casanova's three main 'loves' allows different aspects of the central protagonist to be explored from week to week. In the case of Cristina, it is the spiritual longing which Potter sees as underpinning Casanova's quest of the senses. This is most

clearly illustrated in Episode One when Casanova first glimpses her: an image which is to haunt him throughout the rest of the six plays. Standing by the edge of a Venetian canal, he gazes across an expanse of shimmering water into the face of a beautiful young girl, sitting in a gondola with her uncle, a priest. In his original script, Potter's directions indicate Cristina should be seen "as in sweet memory, in a haze of light almost".²⁰

The image is thus really a vision, heavy with religious symbolism - the girl with the name of Christ, attended by a priest. Like the 'Author' in Hide and Seek, the sight of the raven-haired beauty becomes a moment of epiphany for the male protagonist: a Paradise spied from the far shore. She comes to embody all his spiritual longings for perfection; for God. The paradox of this goes to the heart of Casanova's dilemma in the plays. If, as the drama suggests, all of his relationships with women are the product of a desire to express his deep spiritual longing, to approach the religious vision of purity he spies from afar, he knows only one way to do this: through his own sexuality. In the case of Cristina, she is a virgin who agrees to be 'deflowered' by him in return for a promise of marriage. Matrimony, however, is out of the question for a libertine. As he worriedly confesses to his 'patrone', it is "a lifetime's sentence."²¹

It is here that Potter begins to link the two main plot strands which dominate Casanova. As previously indicated, the drama begins with the arrest of the main protagonist and his imprisonment under 'the Leads' of the Doge's Palace. A man who has lived only for the senses, the experience is literally hell on earth for Casanova. Stripped of all material comforts, he is locked away in a tiny dark cell with only the rats for company. In this way, the drama begins a narrative experiment,

revolving around the flesh-spirit dichotomy so central to Potter's work. The story of Casanova's imprisonment becomes a means of exploring how a man who has lived all his life only for the flesh would cope with a situation in which he was placed at the opposite extreme; where, stripped of everything, all he had to rely on was the strength of his own 'spirit'.

Reduced in prison to the bare essence of being, Potter's Casanova begins to look inwards for the first time in his life, towards his 'spirit': "Think... think... think", he mutters as he paces about his cell.²² Only by this means will he find escape from his present condition. As his prison doctor warns him when he contracts fever, if he wants to survive, he must "abandon despair"²³. Counterpointing scenes of his prison 'present' with memories of his freedom as a libertine, Episode One portrays Casanova in a "fury of a recollection", pacing about his tiny cell²⁴. Frustrated at his lack of freedom, he kicks at a pile of rubbish on the floor and in so doing suddenly dislodges an old bolt which has been buried in rags. With a cry of joy, the prisoner realises he has a ready-made tool with which to engineer escape. Significantly, within the logic of the drama, this comes as a reward for the intensity of his recollection. The moral is clear - by turning inwards and confronting his own 'spirit', Casanova has found a means of escape. Following his doctor's advice, he has turned despair into hope.

With great determination, he begins to dig his way to freedom, using his 'bolt' to pierce 'a hole' in his cell floor from whence he hopes to escape out into the world he knows lies just beyond. As this implies, the enterprise abounds with a sexual symbolism which in many ways encapsulates the drama's view of its protagonist: Potter's Casanova is a man who tries to use sex as a means of transcendence to a spiritual

nirvana which he knows lies just beyond his reach, yet which in his everyday experience, he finds impossible to grasp. If the image is the same as that of Cristina - the religious radiance he seems fated only to glimpse from a distant shore - so too is the strength of his desire to 'penetrate' that world; to possess it.

Casanova's dig for freedom thus becomes a kind of religious travail; one which is eventually rewarded when, pushing his thumb through the bottom of the hole he has dug, a tiny chink of light appears. From the darkness of his present world, the prisoner thus earns a glimpse of the next. At the very moment of triumph, however, comes defeat. Lorenzo, Casanova's jailer, enters the cell and informs the prisoner he is to be moved to a new cell: "Bigger... Cleaner. With windows".²⁵ Episode One ends with an air of absurdist black comedy as Casanova is forcibly dragged from the tiny cell from which, previously, he would have given anything to leave. Defeated by the material world, he seems fated only ever to glimpse the light of spiritual 'grace', never to get at it. At the very moment when escape seems possible, the material world with its compromise and temptation - 'Bigger. Cleaner. With windows' - steps into separate him from it.

In many ways the benchmark for the other five plays, Episode One reveals Potter's attitude to the Casanova story. Far from prison or marriage being the 'stables' which confine 'the steed', it is shown to be his own sexuality. Potter's Casanova is a prisoner of his own desires. His yearning is for spiritual transcendence which he tries to achieve through the flesh. It is for this reason, the plays imply, he always fails for even when eschewing the material world and concentrating hard, he seems destined never to escape it. In this way, Potter universalises the

Casanova myth, audaciously transforming a particular historical rogue into a general metaphysical hero: a kind of spiritual everyman, struggling for something better yet always unable to attain it. Instead, Casanova has to settle for the temporary Paradise of a string of sexual encounters - a series of 'Magic Moments'.

This transformation of the lewd memoirs of a libertine into a spiritual work for television is made clearer through the structure of subsequent episodes - each of which follows Episode One's pattern of counterpointing scenes from Casanova's life with details of his experience in prison. In Episode Two ("One At A Time") Casanova seduces the three siblings of his landlord in Geneva, yet the result merely brings post-coital depression and spiritual dissatisfaction. As he gazes out over the river Isère, he mutters to himself, "Poor Isère. Even you are confined to your banks. All your life confined to your banks".²⁶ Even when free, it is suggested that Casanova, as pathological womaniser, was always in prison. By Episode Three ("Magic Moments"), his attempt to trick a greedy judge in Mantua through black magic has begun to raise serious doubts in his mind about the path he is on. Pretending to conjure up the devil, he succeeds instead in conjuring up a real thunderstorm and flees for his life, fearing his behaviour has incensed the gods.²⁷

By Episode Four ("Break A Window"), the 'sinner' and unbeliever is fated, it seems, never to achieve escape from the life that confines him. Attempting through his affair with Anne Roman-Couplier to break the window that separates him from the spiritual nirvana he longs to access, all he succeeds in doing is breaking her heart. By the end of Episode Five and his rejection by Pauline, his imprisonment appears complete. As

he watches the 'English Rose' leave, he presses his forehead against the window pane of his London apartment, in what seems a symbolic gesture.²⁸

Ironically, it is only in the final episode of Casanova that the libertine finds escape. The play's title, "Golden Apples", indicates how a cherished wish can often be fulfilled in the most unlikely circumstances and against all the odds. It forms part of a quotation from Virgil, heard on the soundtrack as the final episode opens: "Let the hard oak bring forth golden apples. Let narcissus bloom in the elder... Ah ! If the last days of my life could only be prolonged to see the whole of creation rejoice in the age that is yet to come..."²⁹ The voice is that of Casanova in old age and as the play begins, he is seen shuffling about amongst all the books he looks after in the castle library of the German Count Waldstein. As librarian to the Count, he is engaged in an almost constant battle with a retired warrant officer, Herr Feldkirchner (Graham Crowden) - a strict military type whose demeanour contrasts markedly with that of the far less orderly old Italian.

Casanova's reputation as a libertine has thus brought him little reward or freedom in old age. This is emphasised by shots of him labouring up some stone stairs to his room at the top of the castle. In an elaborate montage sequence, the old man's progress is cross-cut with images from Episode One of the young Casanova being led through a maze of corridors to his prison cell in the Doge's Palace. Not only does the old man parallel his younger self in being confined by his environment, he too is a prisoner of the body. While the young libertine was trapped by his desires, the old man is painfully aware of the fading of his senses. As he confesses to Feldkirchner, he is a prisoner of "this defunct body with

its withered appetites, faded tastes, deadened senses... and - defunct organs..."³⁰

Episode Six shows him at work on the story of his life - an ageing scribbler sifting through his many papers and memories. In his script directions, Potter states this image of "his gnarled, swollen old hands shuffling through page after page of his own handwritten memories" should be "the concrete image which sums up and perhaps justifies the method behind the whole series."³¹ In other words, Casanova's counterpointing of different episodes from a life - the flashbacks and flashforwards to the libertine's life before and after prison, coupled with the use of prison as an objective correlative for the protagonist's psychic state - are all justified by this image of an organising mind, sifting through memories in old age, making connections between disparate events. Akin to John Hopkins' Talking To A Stranger, the extended format of six plays is used by Potter not only to portray different aspects of a personality from week to week (as with Henry VIII) but also to show the same event from a variety of different perspectives. Throughout the drama, events from other episodes are replayed and juxtaposed with new scenes in such a way that they take on fresh meaning or significance. The final effect is of a kind of 'narrative montage' in which dramatic meaning is conveyed not so much through the action and dialogue of any one scene but through a combination of scenes that together take on a significance greater than the sum of the constituent parts. As Potter himself suggested at the time, he was trying to create:

... a portrait... that accumulated, that sifted through layers of various incidents and how they changed perspective like the things we think about... We're walking compendiums in a way of memory and previous instincts embalmed by present states of mind and we know that we change perspective as we mature or decay..."³²

All of this is neatly encapsulated in Potter's dramatisation of the famous story of Casanova's escape from 'the Leads'. Forming the climax of the six plays, this is the suspended enigma towards which the rest of the 'serial' has been building - the gap in the text which had separated the audience's knowledge of Casanova's life before prison from that of his life after. Rather than giving a simple narrative account, however, Potter chooses to juxtapose the escape scene with Casanova's perspective on it from old age, thus resituating it within the context of the aged libertine's desire to 'escape' his withered body.

Crucial in this respect is the central role Potter gives to writing. In flashback scenes to his incarceration under 'the Leads', the libertine is shown being provided with a basket of mulberries by his jailer Lorenzo and later, some books borrowed from a prisoner in a neighbouring cell: a defrocked priest called Father Balbi. Suddenly, with the books and the juice of the mulberries, Casanova realises he has paper, ink and a ready-made postman, in the shape of Lorenzo, through which to smuggle out messages to Balbi. Aware that since the discovery of his own previous escape attempt (in Episode One), it is impossible for him to use the 'bolt' he still has hidden in his possession for a future break-out, he decides to conceal it in a large Bible and smuggle it out via Lorenzo to Father Balbi, under the pretence of an exchange of books. If Balbi can use the tool to dig his way out of the ceiling of his own cell, then perhaps he can come and fetch him too.

In the course of this sequence of events, Potter emphasises, through juxtaposition of past with 'present', links with the elderly Casanova. If prison has become a metaphor for Casanova in old age, writing is also shown to function as the means of escape. As the prisoner told Lorenzo

in justification of his request for more books: "When I open a book I also open that door. For a moment".³³ Likewise, in recording the history of his life, the elderly Casanova is able to open the door, if only temporarily, to that other world of the 'spirit' which he had tried so hard as a young man to reach through sex. The symbolism of Casanova's prison escape emphasises this. On the one hand, if the hiding of a 'bolt' in the Bible mixes images of the sacred and profane, freedom only comes for the libertine when his 'tool' is contained within the covers of a book. On the other hand, true escape through the 'hole' in the ceiling - the desired transcendence to another world - is achievable in the end only through the aid of a priest. Similarly, whilst writing offers a temporary 'door' to that other world of 'the spirit' for the libertine in old age, it cannot recompense him for the withering of his body and the fading of his senses. As a consequence, he decides to take to his bed, announcing "I am trying to escape". His doctor, Rasp, tries to argue against Casanova's death-wish and despair, urging him to "engage [his] mind in some project!"³⁴ As he confesses to Feldkirchner, however, he fears Casanova will die unless he can be encouraged to 'care about something'. Significantly, it is writing, the doctor thinks, which holds the key: "... Get him involved again with the writing... Let the past rekindle flames in the present, so to speak".³⁵

At Rasp's instigation, Count Waldstein's mistress, Caroline, is dispatched to the dying Casanova's bedside to read his memoirs to him and so with luck, raise his spirits. The aged libertine, however, is more interested in acquiring something else from her before he dies. As he tells her: "A suck... That's all. At your nipples. Can't manage much else."³⁶ With this last faint rekindling of the 'flames' which consumed much of his life, the drama ends. As Caroline unlaces her dress, exposing her 'golden

apples', the old man dies. The final image is the drama's most telling. In a last flashback, the young libertine is seen emerging triumphant onto the roof of the Doge's palace, having escaped his prison cell. As Potter describes his actions in the original script: "Italianate, he kisses the air and starts his slither down the moon-polished slope... Pan across to the rooftops of a sparkling moon-lit Venice, shining almost like the 'holy city'..."³⁷

As this final flashback makes clear, the libertine has been released in death from the prison of his passions and reached the 'holy city' which all his life was a struggle to achieve. Despite its portrayal of all his so-called 'sins', the drama ultimately vindicates Casanova's strivings for spiritual perfection which, it suggests, was the source of his compulsive desire for women.

Far from being a 'mere' costume romp, Casanova can thus be viewed as a religious work; one which draws its spiritual themes from a most unlikely source. In this respect, the drama has a number of interesting links with the contemporaneous Traitor. If Adrian Harris was a figure who eschewed the material world in order to chase his dream of Camelot, Potter's Casanova functions as an exact mirror image. A man of the senses, he embraces that world to extremes, yet at the same time his life is portrayed as a similar search for a 'holy city'. The flip side of Harris (material versus non-material man), he is possessed of the same spiritual yearning. Closely transmitted together in the Autumn of 1971, the two dramas can be seen as related examinations, from either side of the flesh-spirit dichotomy that runs through Potter's writing, of the same underlying 'spiritual' questions which were beginning to surface in his work of the early seventies. Utterly secular, even 'profane', in their

actions and settings, both 'smuggle' spiritual themes out to a mass viewing audience, under the guise of the spy play and costume drama respectively. As such, they embody Potter's view that religion has to be taken out of its special 'God-Slot' and rooted in the everyday - including the everyday television schedules.³⁸

Casanova has resonances with other Potter works too. Cut off from the pleasures of the outside world in a kind of 'hell' under the Leads (a 'hell' in which he runs a high fever and has to be attended by doctors), Casanova's predicament echoes Philip Marlow's hospital 'hell' in The Singing Detective. There is the same medical advice that if the patient wants to get well, he must abandon despair and acquire a more positive mental outlook. Like Marlow, it is only by looking into himself that Casanova discovers the rudiments of escape. Also strongly echoing The Singing Detective are the scenes of Casanova in his 'prison' of old age. As with the psychiatrist Gibbon in the 1986 serial, Dr. Rasp realises the clues to the protagonist's defiance of doctors and insistence on finding his own means of 'escape', lie within the pages of the book he is writing. The doctor realises that behind the mask of apparent despair, the old man does care about something: his writing. If his mind could be 'engaged in some project', then perhaps he could get well again.³⁹ (: § 5.3 c)

Written during a bad period in Potter's illness, Casanova thus provides an early prototype for The Singing Detective. Both main protagonists find themselves in a position where, stripped of everything, they have to search deep inside themselves in order to understand and deal with their current predicament.⁴⁰ In both cases, too, the drama moves between the agonies of their confinement and their memories of the world outside. Like the 'two' Marlows in The Singing Detective, there are 'two' Casanovas:

one, the clean-shaven expensively dressed libertine, out in the sensuous world of eighteenth century Venice; the other, the bearded wretched victim of the Inquisition, locked up in prison. These alter egos correspond exactly to the flesh-spirit dichotomy Potter explores in the drama. They are the visible manifestations of a 'torn' hero, caught between the atheism of the 'unbeliever' and the prisoner's need for there to be something more (: § 5.3 c).

For all these links with perhaps his most celebrated work, Potter's Casanova was not well received in 1971. As the writer put it in interview: "People hated it. It was voted the worst series of the year by the critics... and I felt the same grief I felt about Blackeyes".⁴¹ Misleadingly promoted by the BBC as an historically accurate costume drama, Casanova was quickly condemned by Mary Whitehouse and other 'Clean-Up TV' campaigners for its "lewdness and gross indecency". For his part, Potter retorted that Whitehouse was "an ignorant and dangerous woman", incapable of grasping that the drama was in fact "a moral work".⁴² This very public sparring would set a precedent for later Potter works like The Singing Detective and Blackeyes. It was with the 1971 drama, however, that the first real equation was made in the popular and press mind between 'sex on TV', 'controversy' and 'Dennis Potter'. The history of Potter drama as 'media event' had begun in earnest.⁴³

Aside from these public attacks, another and perhaps more fundamental reason for the drama's relative unpopularity was its very complexity for audiences and lack of overt narrative 'signposting'. This was hinted at by Christopher Dunkley in a review for The Times in which he observed that it was a pity the BBC would probably never allow Casanova what it needed - a marathon showing of two three hour episodes on successive

nights. That way, he suggested, "the repeated flashbacks and allusions... would... acquire infinitely more significance than... when seen at weekly intervals, where they tended towards confusion."⁴⁴

Three years later, when Casanova gained a repeat showing, this is exactly what the BBC did. With Potter's approval, the plays were re-edited into two ninety five minute episodes and shown on consecutive nights. He himself suggested how the new structure of Casanova should go: the scenes of Casanova in old age were to be used as 'book-ends' at the beginning and end of the drama, between which the rest of the protagonist's exploits (his life as a libertine and in prison) were to unfold in flashback.⁴⁵ In other words, the 'method' of the plays which it had taken Potter six episodes to reveal in 1971 was immediately foregrounded in the repeats, allowing the audience to grasp more easily the non-chronological structure of the narrative.⁴⁶

What it also did was bring Casanova much closer to being a single play. It showed that this 'serial' had originally been written by a single play writer who had not paid much attention (because previously he had never had to) to the conditions under which episodic narrative operates in television: that is, the need to maintain a strong central narrative thread from episode to episode, allowing the audience 'space' each week to refamiliarise themselves with characters and events.⁴⁷ In his next venture into the 'authored' serial, Pennies from Heaven, these lessons would be learned and put to use. It is perhaps significant, however, that it would be another seven years before he would again attempt to extend his 'authored' drama beyond the single play.

4.1) PENNIES FROM HEAVEN

a) Origins

The next time, the results were to prove far more conclusive. Pennies from Heaven (first transmitted on BBC-1 between 7 March and 11 April 1978) not only became one of the most celebrated dramas in British television history, it also rejuvenated Potter's career, setting him on a path that would lead eventually to Hollywood.

The idea for Pennies, however, only arose after much discussion between Potter and his now regular producer, Kenith Trodd, as to what their next project together should be. As Chapter Two noted, the banning of Brimstone and Treacle had paradoxically strengthened Potter's desire to write for television: if drama could have that kind of impact, then some kind of response from him was needed (: § 2.3 d). There were other pressures too - the death of his father in November 1975 had meant that unusually for this prolific writer, he had submitted no original work to the BBC during 1976. The Autumn of that year had also seen the fuss surrounding the renewal of Trodd's contract. Thus by the Winter of '76, events had created a need for some new major Potter work to appear - both as a response to the past and as a commitment to the future. The question was what should it be ?

From the BBC, Trodd managed to secure a commission for Potter to write a Casanova-type series of six original plays, to be transmitted in the regular Tuesday Play for Today slot: that is, prime-time BBC-1. Six plays rather than one would provide Potter with a broader canvas, perhaps enabling him to create the equivalent of a television novel. Trodd believes the BBC were so generous in their donation of eight hours of screentime because in the wake of Brimstone and the other events of 1976,

controllers were feeling "guilty and permissive" towards both he and Potter.⁴⁸

Having secured copious amounts of prime-time, the problem for Potter and Trodd was then how to fill it ? A number of ideas were mooted and rejected - one, about children, later became the basis for Blue Remembered Hills. The most consistent theme, however, in these discussions involved the thirties dance band music which had been used atmospherically in past Potter plays and of which Trodd is also an acknowledged expert. Though furnishing the titles for such past Potter works as Angels Are So Few, Only Make Believe and Double Dare, it was the use of thirties songs in Moonlight on the Highway which became the inspiration for Pennies. The desire once more to counterpoint the sentimental tunes of Al Bowlly with the sordid 'reality' of a protagonist's life led to the idea of a drama revolving around the exploits of a thirties crooner - a Bowlly figure who was also a Casanova type, seducing his way through the six plays. As Potter puts it in interview, this, however, was "too on the nose". It might have embroiled him in all sorts of unwanted controversy over the life of the real Al Bowlly.⁴⁹

A drama revolving around a protagonist at the very top of his profession would also have made it difficult to evoke the specific historical context out of which the popular music of the thirties had emerged: the reality of Depression-hit Britain, in relation to which the romantic hopes and dreams expressed in the songs seemed to function as some kind of necessary antidote. To convey this gulf between the poverty of most working lives and the richness of the aspirations expressed through the music, it would be necessary to create a character who was not on top but on the margins of society - a 'wannabe' high on dreams yet low on cash.

Eventually, this led Potter to the idea of making his central male protagonist a sheet music salesman: someone who lived by the songs (indeed lived for them), yet at the same time could not make his living from them. Along the way to this conclusion, however, ideas ebbed and flowed. According to Kenith Trodd:

There was talk of a provincial loser who'd failed to pull off the perfect murder and the music receded. So, in these discussions did the adrenalin, especially when I suggested we might be advised to call off the songs and think instead of a Lawrence novel Potter had tinkered with adapting. There was no relish for that; the music would not go unheard and eventually the dangerous breakthrough came, ending the dither and guaranteeing funk and terror. Potter announced he would start the series in a bleak suburban bedroom with a man bursting into early morning song. He would be miming to a fuzzy '78 and the record was by a woman. He told me the song and I said there were good versions of men singing it. NO, he said, I want the audience to be as disoriented as possible. Primetime BBC-1, it would be crazy. But of course it was that craziness that made it work and provided the pitch of tension and peculiarity which Pennies from Heaven needed to express its attitudes to the music.⁵⁰

Above all, therefore, it was the songs themselves, rather than any specific idea about a singer or a murderer, which determined the shape of Pennies from Heaven. The plays evolved as an attempt to express 'attitudes to the music' rather than the other way round. As Potter suggests in interview, "the voice synching concept" of characters miming to original thirties recordings arose from a desire for the songs to be "upfront" rather than "background" to the narrative.⁵¹

In fact, such a TV dramatic innovation had a precedent. At one point in Moonlight on the Highway, David Peters is seen sitting alone in his bedsit, staring at himself in the mirror, whilst Al Bowlly's "Lover Come Back To Me" plays on the gramophone (: § 2.0 (b)). As the camera pans around the room and towards the mirror, the protagonist is discovered miming the words of the song. Quickly, his own imitation is overwhelmed

by the emotion of Bowlly's rendition. Finding he can no longer hold back the tears, he guiltily switches off the record as a knock on the door jolts him back to reality.

If this is the origin of the miming device in Pennies (the idea that songs can mirror emotions to such an extent that individual identification with the singer becomes complete), it also emphasises that the drama was not explicitly conceived as a musical. The decision to have characters burst into song was arrived at only gradually and always through a wish to foreground the original recordings. At the same time, having achieved this, Potter's drama then uses it to evoke images of the film musical. Thus in Episode One, as the central protagonist, Arthur Parker, mimes to the first musical number (a 1932 recording of "The Clouds Will Soon Roll By"), Potter's script directions indicate "he appears to sing - and in a woman's voice... and he does it wholly in the conventions of a musical - as though totally in earnest for a moment, Arthur and [his wife] Joan are in a film musical."⁵²

What is also clear is that Pennies is informed by the film musical's inherent optimism - its typical narrative trajectory of the triumph of hope over experience, faith over defeat. The drama not only contrasts the upbeat tunes of the time with the 'reality' of the Depression, it also snatches the most unlikeliest of happy endings from the jaws of an otherwise bleak dénouement. The final episode (Episode Six: "Says My Heart") ends with Arthur Parker turning up "like a bad penny" on Hammersmith Bridge, after the audience has just seen him hanged for a murder he did not commit.⁵³ As he turns to face the camera, he gives a cockney smirk: "Couldn't go all through that wivaht a bleed'n happy endin' now, could we ?"⁵⁴ If the self-reflexive gesture is a familiar Potter

technique, the need for a happy ending resolutely conforms to the generic conventions of the film musical.⁵⁵ This, however, confounds audience expectations of how the narrative should end (: the central protagonist has just been hanged. It should be a gloomy conclusion. Why is he still alive ?) The result is thus a foregrounding of the basic tension upon which the whole of the drama rests - the disjunction between depiction of the 'reality' of the Depression and the rose-hued saccharine world celebrated by the songs. As with the Hollywood musical, the power of music is finally shown to win through - resurrecting Arthur, it defies and disrupts the 'realist' narrative that had portrayed his execution. At the same time, if it is a sentimental intercession by 'the Author' which finally saves Arthur from the gallows and delivers the happy ending of the musical ("Says My Heart"), this is heavy with ambiguity and tension for it implies that in the real world beyond the musicals, the protagonist would have been allowed to hang. In Pennies, a careful balance between optimism (the songs) and pessimism (the 'real' world) is thus preserved right to the very end, though with one major qualification. Since it is the dreams and hopes expressed in the songs which ultimately triumph and are celebrated in the plays, this necessarily undercuts many of the doubts and ambiguities troubling the narrative. In the final scene, pessimism is transcended by the power of the music, in a manner that carries clear religious connotations. Akin to Brimstone and Treacle, Pennies asserts the existence of a greater or ultimate good: a world of the 'spirit' behind that of 'gloomy realism' which the songs both recognise and express.

Such inherent optimism not only permeates the ending but much of Potter's original Pennies scripts. Even the execution scenes are written with a mischievous black humour (- as Arthur goes to the scaffold, for example,

he tells his jailers, "Hang on a bit - I got an itchy conk. I said, hang on will you ?"⁵⁶). To understand the reasons for this perceptible lightening of tone from most of Potter's single play work, it is worth considering briefly the personal circumstances out of which the Pennies scripts emerged. As the writer recalled in interview, in February 1977, he was admitted to Guy's Hospital in London for the first clinical trials of a new drug for his illness. Called razoxane, this was hailed at the time as a 'miracle' cure for psoriatic arthropathy (though later, its unpleasant side-effects would result in its withdrawal). In 1977, however, it looked as if Potter's long-standing illness had finally been beaten for good. For a few years after that, he was virtually free of the illness, with no arthritic pains or skin lesions. He himself makes the connection with the changing mood of his writing: "'77, as they were administering Razoxane and I was at Guy's, I started Pennies. I see that as the change."⁵⁷

Just how much of one is illustrated by an interview that Potter's wife, Margaret, gave to the Daily Mail in April 1977. She stated that the moment she arrived at the hospital with her husband's clothes:

I noticed the incredible difference. He wasn't just walking normally - he was pacing furiously up and down like a caged animal. I saw years and years of pent-up energy in that pacing... I saw a lightness of spirit... It was almost a relief when he stopped dashing madly around and picked up his pen... He wrote a new play in hospital, Pennies from Heaven... Today he set off gaily to London with a second play he's just whizzed through in the past eleven days...⁵⁸

As this shows, Pennies was written at a time of great optimism in Potter's own life. It would thus be surprising if the sense of hope in the face of despair which the scripts communicate were not directly attributable to Potter's changed situation at the time. What these

biographical details also indicate is that from February 1977 on, Pennies was written extremely quickly and with a sense of great freedom. The serial's director, Piers Haggard, testifies to the speed: episodes, he recalls, were delivered to him at an average of one a fortnight.⁵⁹

Given this frenetic creativity, searching for possible sources that inspired the drama might seem a fruitless quest, yet there is evidence that the murder for which Arthur is hanged in Pennies was based on an actual case. In interview, Potter points to the 1990 film Chicago Joe and the Showgirl as having been drawn from the same factual source which provided him with the inspiration for the murder plot of Pennies.⁶⁰ Chicago Joe is based on a notorious real murder that occurred in Hammersmith in 1944. According to Potter:

That murder during the war was something I'd been playing with in my head and I think was... the obscure origin for the idea of a murder set at the time - because thinking about that led to me think of the music of the time; of the forties. So an aborted start on that... eventually dropped a decade and changed nature... Just before going to Guy's and starting on the Razoxane... I went to the BBC with that idea and that gradually... became Pennies...⁶¹

In the real-life case, Karl Hulten, a deserter from the American army, was tried at the Old Bailey and sentenced to hang in January 1945 for the casual murder of a taxi driver. Also found guilty and sentenced to death (but later reprieved) was his lover Betty Jones, a runaway from the Welsh valleys who had come to London in search of the bright lights, only to end up as a 'showgirl' - a dancer cum stripper. Together, the pair had lived out a mutual fantasy of a gangster and his moll, escaping from the reality of war-torn London into their own private world saturated with images from popular culture. It was their attempt to enact their 'Bonnie and Clyde' dreams for real which eventually led to murder.⁶²

Considered in the light of his later Singing Detective serial, it is possible to see what attracted Potter to the case - autobiographical resonances of Hammersmith and 1945; a 'crime of passion'; the power of popular culture; a blurring of fantasy and reality⁶³ (: § 5.3). Despite his eventual decision to use the music of the thirties, the influence of the 'Chicago Joe case' can still be traced in Potter's construction of Pennies:

Thus the image of the lovers on the run, flouting the restrictions and the repressions of their society, is clearly echoed in Arthur's involvement with Eileen Everson - a demure girl from the Forest of Dean (just over the Welsh border) who, like Betty Jones, leaves for the bright lights of London and is gradually transformed into a tough self-reliant prostitute. After Arthur finds he is wanted for the murder of a blind girl, both he and she become desperadoes, fleeing London for the countryside where she casually guns down a farmer. Of particular note in this 'fatal attraction' is the place of fantasy and popular culture in sustaining Arthur and Eileen's relationship. If Arthur dreams of a world "where the songs come true", this is the very quality which Eileen most admires in him.⁶⁴ As she tells him in Episode Five, "... you acted as though the songs were real... - as though they allowed you to - to - get away with..." Arthur completes the thought for her: "No - I draw the line at murdering people, love."⁶⁵

The conversation of the fugitive lovers is also peppered with references to popular culture. Akin to Hulten and Jones in the forties, it becomes Arthur and Eileen's means of temporary escape from the oppressive social structure of thirties England. Thus even when they are in hiding from the law and have their first lover's quarrel, they realise they are

fighting just "like in the pictures".⁶⁶ Arthur, however, longs not just for temporary escape but a complete break with class-ridden English society. As he tells Eileen, "I'd rather be a Yank... They got the best songs."⁶⁷ By Episode Six, he is suggesting they ought to head for "Chi-ca-go... I like the sound of it. You can roll it in your mouth, can't you? Chi-ca-go."⁶⁸

As with the Hulten-Jones case, the freedom to dream of this 'Chicago Joe' proves short-lived, however. Society in the form of the law catches up with the rebels trying to escape it and punishment is meted out. In the process, it emerges in court that Arthur, like Hulten, is not only a social fugitive but a military one as well. The court prosecutor reveals that as a young soldier in World War One, he was "court-martialled for cowardice and narrowly escaped being shot as a deserter..."⁶⁹ Convicted of murder (whilst Eileen is let off free), Arthur is sentenced to hang. In the real 'Chicago Joe' case, society exacted the ultimate price from Hulten for his devil-may-care attitude and his attempts to turn fantasy into reality. In the drama, as noted earlier, Arthur and his dreams are finally rescued from the scaffold. What seems clear, however, is that while the actual details of the murder case are much transformed, the themes of fantasy and rebellion, embodied in the 'Chicago Joe and The Showgirl' story, provided Potter with the basic plot model for his own Pennies from Heaven.

4.1 (b) Production

Production on Pennies commenced on 26 August 1977 and lasted right through to 30 March 1978 (three weeks into the series' first transmission) under the stewardship of director, Piers Haggard. The choice of Haggard as the director of Pennies was a significant one, revealing how the drama was originally conceived. Though having a long track record in TV drama, he was picked after Potter saw his BBC-1 production of The Chester Mystery Plays, transmitted during Easter 1976.⁷⁰ This adaptation of fourteenth century texts was nothing less than the history of the world in two and a half hours: a portrayal of life as the medievals saw it, from the Creation to the Last Judgement. It was widely praised on transmission, chiefly because of its use of colour separation overlay (CSO) which portrayed real actors against painted backgrounds.⁷¹

Undoubtedly, the 'non-naturalism' of this appealed to Potter. The Pennies scripts contain directions for graphic and 'caption sequences' that are designed to exploit the range of effects available for videotape drama at this time. Throughout the six plays, CSO is used whenever the drama needs to evoke a thirties period backdrop. Thus Episode One opens with what the script specifies should be "detailed, slightly idyllic paintings of [a] leafy suburban street (Metroland), early nineteen thirties" in front of which "a man with a trilby hat is walking his dog".⁷² The effect is of nostalgic pastiche. Drawing attention to the plays' artifice, the use of real actors in front of painted backgrounds allows Potter to emphasise his depiction of the thirties as 'non-naturalistic' - not verisimilitude but a backward glance from the present; a subjective collage of received images and stock motifs.⁷³

If Haggard's experience on The Chester Mystery Plays equipped him well for this aspect of Pennies, above all it seems to have been his ability to handle religious drama which made him ideal for Potter's purposes. With his proven track record on The Mystery Plays, he was able to bring to Pennies the techniques he had developed of treating 'spiritual' themes in ways that would be visually interesting to an overwhelmingly secular TV audience.⁷⁴

Related to this was the problem of how to work the musical numbers into the drama in a manner that would be visually stimulating. Potter's scripts seldom provided an image of what should happen during each song and simple miming would soon bore the audience. Thus the director saw it as one of his main tasks to connect each song with the action of an individual scene, in such a way that even if the actual performance were spare and simple (as BBC finances would inevitably dictate for most of the numbers), the audience would still feel the narrative had been advanced or some new insight into the characters gained. For this purpose, Haggard enlisted the help of BBC choreographer, Tudor Davies, and it was with his assistance that many of the musical numbers were transformed into the shape in which they appear in the finished production.⁷⁵

Another example of collaboration lay in casting. Suggestions for who should play Arthur Parker had come from a number of different directions. As Kenith Trodd recalls, Potter had his own off-beat ideas, suggesting the comedian Roy Hudd for the part, together with Spike Milligan as his alter ego, the 'Accordion Man' (: the real culprit of the murder for which Arthur is eventually hanged: § 4.1 (c)). Bizarre as this may sound, it indicates Potter's sense of Pennies as black comedy - of Arthur's

exploits being those of a tragi-comic hapless figure, whose belief in 'the songs' is as absurd as it is touching.⁷⁶

Though never seriously taken up, the writer's suggestion also emphasised how important it was that the central role be played by someone whom the audience could empathise with as the epitomé of the flawed, sentimental hero. Haggard tested a number of different actors for the part. Hywel Bennett (Willy in Where the Buffalo Roam) read for it and was a real possibility. Eventually, he was given the part of Tom - a villain who seduces Eileen when she first arrives in London in Episode Four. The actor to whom Haggard was really on the point of offering the central role was Michael Elphick - a versatile character actor who would have made a convincing cockney.⁷⁷

Three to four weeks into casting, however, Trodd suggested one other possibility - a then relatively unknown cockney actor called Bob Hoskins who at that time was really only well known for his role as Alf, an illiterate removal man, in the BBC adult literacy series, On the Move⁷⁸ Though Haggard knew nothing of his work, he agreed to see Hoskins. It was not, states the director, that the actor read the part incredibly well which led to him being offered the role of Arthur. Rather, it was that while Elphick was a very good and proven performer, there was a quality to Hoskins: "something about him that might be extra special".⁷⁹ Nevertheless the director recalls the decision to cast him was something of a gamble for the production - one that could have easily backfired, given he was so relatively inexperienced.⁸⁰

By the Autumn of 1977, work on the £800 000 Plays Department production was well under way.⁸¹ One of the most noteworthy aspects of the actual

production process was the amount of rehearsal time the actors received. A very precise director who works with his actors until he gets exactly what he wants, Haggard persevered especially long and closely with Hoskins, until there were times when the other man (who is more of an instinctive performer) despaired of ever pleasing him.⁸² If credit for the strong performances in Pennies is thus partly due to directorial tenacity, Haggard asserts they were also in no small part aided by the fact that the drama was recorded mainly on videotape within the multi-camera studio - with only its exterior scenes shot on 16mm film. As the dominant mode of BBC drama production at this time, such a mixture of taped scenes with filmed inserts ensured that the production benefitted from copious amounts of rehearsal time very close to the actual recording/ filming dates - to such an extent that the material became second nature to cast, crew and director.⁸³

At the same time, Haggard took steps to minimise the inevitable 'textural' contrast involved in such a mixed media approach of cutting between scenes shot on film and those recorded on tape within the multi-camera studio. Borrowing from soft-focus techniques in cinema, he developed a way of softening the distinction between the aggressive sharpness of the videotape image and the more grainy texture of film. His technique was to fit the studio cameras with light fog filters for the recording of the dramatic scenes, whilst using double fog filters for the musical numbers. The effect was to give the studio scenes a much more 'hazy', painterly look which also helped visually emphasise Pennies' view of the thirties as being that of cultural memory: of the past seen from the vantage point of the present and filtered through a haze of recollection.⁸⁴

This device was not simply a director's annoyance at having to mix tape with film. Haggard felt a heavy clash between taped and filmed scenes would distract from the real stylistic distinction he wished to make in the drama - that between the saccharine world of the songs and the 'normality' of life in the Depression. To this end, the director worked closely with Pennies' lighting man, Dave Sydenham, to ensure that just as the 'naturalism' of the dramatic action was disrupted by characters bursting into song, so too would the 'normal' studio lighting change to various different colours to fit the mood of the music (- for example, as in the obvious choice of blue for the song, "Blue Moon" in Episode One).⁸⁵

On the way to this, however, one significant experiment was tried and abandoned. Attempting to highlight the distinction between the musical numbers and the drama, Haggard experimented with having all of the dramatic scenes in the first two episodes of Pennies recorded in black and white, only switching to colour for the musical numbers. The effect was a bold contrast: the drab black and white world of the Depression was counterpointed with the world of the songs that literally brought a splash of colour into the lives of the protagonists. Haggard showed the results to both Potter and Trodd. While both the director and producer quite liked the idea at first, the writer was less sure. The repetition of the device over sixty songs in six episodes would become a tiring gimmick, he maintained: whenever there was music, in would come the colour. Trodd and Haggard also became less sure. As the latter puts it, it would have been too much of "a sledge-hammer device", too literal a metaphor. Instead a change in lighting was felt to be a slightly less obvious (if more theatrical) means of signalling that through the songs, the protagonists were being transported into another realm.⁸⁶

What this aborted experiment also shows is the degree of consultation that went on between director, writer and producer during the actual production of Pennies from Heaven. As Haggard attests, this was in part due to quite a bit of nervousness as to whether Pennies would actually work. By 1977, both Potter and Trodd had large reputations to keep and the drama's miming device was unusual. Without careful thought as to its execution, it might well have been disastrous. Haggard recalls Potter was worried "whether he was going up a blind alley, whether he was going to make a fool of himself." It was only after the writer had seen the rehearsal tape of the first scene in which Arthur bursts into song, that he felt satisfied to declare "'It's going to work'."⁸⁷

Such nervousness about Pennies was not confined to those behind the camera. While its cast today may, in the light of its subsequent success, attest that everyone knew the drama was going to work, many at the time were worried about the damage it might do to their career.⁸⁸ In the event, none needed to be: the production received very good, though not rave, reviews on first transmission. Peter Buckman in The Listener, for example, called "the plot banal and the behaviour of the central characters frequently incredible... it was irresistibly funny to see them break into mime."⁸⁹ Others, however, were much more kind. Michael Ratcliffe in The Times praised Pennies as "the televisual equivalent of the serialised Victorian novel"⁹⁰

Significantly, it was in the popular press that Pennies made its biggest impact, in this way bringing Potter's work out of the Play for Today ghetto and to the attention of a mass public. James Murray in The Daily Express called the serial "a magical welding together of popular music, trenchant humour, high drama and all the tricks of television technology.

It's all so refreshing, I think it will galvanise the whole country".⁹¹
On the strength of such eulogies, twelve million viewers tuned in to the first episode - the drama having also been heavily trailed in the Radio Times⁹²

In this fashion, Pennies was soon elevated to the status of 'instant classic' and was quickly repeated by the BBC the following Christmas. As Piers Haggard makes clear, however, this was less for audiences to have 'another chance to see' than to nudge voters in their nominations for the BAFTA awards the following March.⁹³ In the event, though nominated for many, the serial won only two British Academy awards - Potter picked up the Best Writer's award while the drama itself won the award for most Original TV Production. To the disappointment of many, Hoskins did not win the Best Actor's Prize.⁹⁴

As this summary indicates, though Pennies is now looked back upon and celebrated as a significant event in British television history, opinion at the time was somewhat mixed - it won some awards, not others; it was lauded by some reviewers, not by others. Perhaps the key to understanding why lies in Piers Haggard's opinion that Pennies' following has been amongst 'the discerning'. He states: "Amongst discerning audiences, the media and otherwise, it has an impassioned following. Amongst the general public, I don't know..."⁹⁵

What this indicates is that the drama found its most ardent champions amongst a quite narrow élite of 'opinion-formers' within metropolitan media circles - journalists, TV critics, fellow TV practitioners - whose views of Pennies as 'pioneering' drama were then disseminated to the wider audience via the press, as well as weekly journals like Time Out

and the Radio Times. In this way, Pennies quickly became a reputation. As a symbol of 'quality' television drama, it was held up within media discourses as an example of what British television could do or be.⁹⁶

In the absence of rigorous sociological investigation, what the bulk of the public thought of Pennies can only be guessed at (- for example, from the letters columns of the Radio Times.⁹⁷) One clue, however, comes from the fact that an EMI soundtrack album of songs from Pennies became such a best-seller that a second album had to be quickly released⁹⁸. At the close of the seventies (just prior to the election of a Conservative Government under Margaret Thatcher), Pennies from Heaven had unearthed a huge nostalgia market, waiting to be tapped.

By 1990, when the drama was next repeated, though Potter feared it might not stand the test of time, it hardly seemed to matter anymore if the serial seemed somewhat overlong or employed too many songs.⁹⁹ It was the songs themselves that mattered now. BBC Enterprises, sore at losing out to E.M.I. in the seventies, used the occasion to launch its own heavily promoted soundtrack album, complete with sleeve introduction by Trodd. Pennies from Heaven by this time had become not only a reputation but part of the BBC's own marketing strategy.

4.1 c) Interpretation

In many ways, the central dramatic conflict of Pennies is that between freedom and repression. Arthur and Eileen are characters who go on the run from their own society - attempting to flee all its various repressions and demands for conformity, as symbolised by the forces of 'law and order' pursuing them for a crime Arthur did not commit. At the start of the drama, both protagonists are shown imprisoned within domestic routines from which they crave distraction: for Arthur, this is life in suburbia and a dull marriage to the petit-bourgeois Joan; for Eileen, it is being surrogate wife and mother to her coalmining family in the Forest of Dean, whilst holding down a day job as teacher in the local village school.

Each protagonist finds their own means of temporary escape from this domestic drudgery. In the village school, Eileen enchants her pupils with the fairy story of Rapunzel; a tale that expresses her own secret longing for escape - of the princess locked up in a tower who is rescued by a handsome prince. Arthur's escape, meanwhile, is sex. As is made clear right from the very first scene of Pennies, in which he pleads to Joan for 'a bit of the other' since he is "going to be away from home for the next four days", sex is shown to be Arthur's way of dealing with the frustrations of his life as a salesman¹⁰⁰. Not for him the sexual repression of a Jack Black, nor even the spiritual angst of Casanova: instead he is earthy and sensual; an unrepressed working class Londoner who even admits to Joan at one point that given half the chance he thinks he would "fuck [his] own grandmother!"¹⁰¹

The key to understanding this shift in characterisation from previous male protagonists, lies in the collapse of the flesh-spirit dichotomy

noted in Potter's writing, with the 1976 'trilogy'. (: § 2.3 (b)) With Old Testament notions of a literal 'Fall' from Eden shrugged off, the way is open to create a protagonist for whom sex is not just an empty act. On the contrary, it is when Arthur is deprived of sex that he feels empty. Sitting at the breakfast table in Episode One, after Joan has denied him his conjugal rights, he points to his heart and tells her "I'm empty - blank - I've got nothing here."¹⁰² Sex is not the source of Arthur's spiritual imprisonment (as it was for Casanova). Rather, it is one of his few means of gaining spiritual sustenance. The previous Potter divide between 'spirit' and 'flesh' has been blurred irrevocably. In Pennies, it is impossible to separate out Arthur's need for sex from his need for love: the demands of his 'flesh' from those of his 'spirit'.

The inner conflict which had haunted previous Potter protagonists is gone in Pennies. Instead, it is externalised and shifted onto Arthur's relationship with his frigid wife Joan. Their marriage is dramatised as a constant battleground between desire and repression - 'liberated' Arthur versus puritanical Joan who denies him sex, calling him a "filthy beast".¹⁰³ Unlike his counterparts in previous Potter plays, Pennies' central protagonist is completely free of sexual hang-ups. All of the forces of repression now come from without - from society at large which extends itself right into the home in the form of his morally upright wife Joan, with her pretensions to bourgeois 'respectability'.

As this makes clear, domestic and sexual repression are only symptoms of a much wider oppression from which Arthur and Eileen both eventually flee. The chief battleground within the plays is ultimately that of the individual versus society - of the desire for personal freedom and self-expression set against a society characterised as wholly reactionary and

oppressive. Crucial in this respect is the historical setting of thirties England. Forming a constant backdrop of economic despair and exploitation, the Depression of the thirties becomes synonymous in the plays with 'repression'.

As Ian Colley and Gill Davies have pointed out, Pennies' period setting has little to do with the real nineteen thirties: it "eclipses the 'documentary' decade of wars, slump, mass unemployment and open class conflict."¹⁰⁴ As previously noted, Potter draws instead on a few stock motifs - music; Metroland; a salesman in the Depression - in order to offer a pastiche of the thirties; one that belongs more to general cultural memory than any real historical past. If explanations for this are the familiar ones from past Potter works - 'non-naturalism'; a distrust of 'fact' as opposed to 'fiction'; a desire to subvert the historically accurate costume drama - one other reason suggests itself. The past is presented as memory because the drama wishes to draw attention to its own relationship with the present.

Thus written in 1977, a Jubilee Year that was a time of economic crisis, Pennies is also set in a Jubilee Year that was a time of economic crisis.¹⁰⁵ It is 1935, the twenty fifth year of George V's reign and the country "is going to the dogs", according to Arthur's fellow salesman.¹⁰⁶ As the identity-inviting 'little man' struggling in the face of economic crisis and decline, the exploits of Arthur Parker thus seem designed to touch a popular nerve about the state of Britain in 1977-8.¹⁰⁷ At the same time, it is important to note how such contemporary resonances intersect with more personal 'authorial' links. 1935 was not only a Jubilee year. It was also the year in which Potter was born. In court, accused of murder, Arthur fails to produce a convincing alibi for where

he was on the night of the crime: May 17th 1935 (Potter's own date of birth). Later, condemned to hang, he is asked where did it all go wrong? "The day I was bleed'n born", is his reply, playing on suggestions not only of his own but Potter's birthday - that is, the date of the 'crime'.¹⁰⁸

By linking 1935 with 1977, the period of Potter's own life-span, the implication seems to be that nothing has changed very much in Britain. The same old repressions are still there - economic, social, political. The more personal 'authorial' links with Arthur also suggest that the 'Depression' portrayed in Pennies is as much psychic as economic. This is made clearest in the figure of the 'Accordion Man': the real culprit in the murder of a blind girl for which Arthur eventually hangs. An epileptic stammering tramp, he makes his living playing hymns on his old battered piano accordion. He is first encountered by Arthur in Episode One, thumbing a lift on the highway from London to Gloucester. Both on the same road, Arthur and the Accordion Man are both in a sense 'commercial travellers' - each in his own way trying to interest an indifferent public in the 'songs' he peddles. Despite the surface 'naturalism' of their differing social status, Pennies suggests an equivalence at some deeper 'non-naturalistic' level - a psychic or symbolic world behind the world in which relative economic positions become irrelevant, beside both men's similar struggle for survival in the Depression. As with the Accordion Man, the implication is that Arthur, too, is at the bottom of the social heap, fighting against poverty and despair.

In turn, these links are reinforced by the number of times the Accordion Man reappears throughout Pennies, haunting each of the main protagonists.

In Episode Two, Joan sees him standing on a street-corner and for a moment experiences the "queer sensation" that he is her husband, Arthur.¹⁰⁹ Stripped of the surface 'lie' of material difference, she spies Arthur's spiritual 'essence' in a surrogate - a beggar trying to interest passers-by in his 'hymns', literally pleading for 'pennies from heaven'.

Even more significantly, Eileen encounters the Accordion Man in Episode Five. As he passes her in a London street, he suddenly shouts: "I thought you were dead !... The d-devil had put out your eyes. He told me to - to - No. It couldn't be you..."¹¹⁰ Later, that episode, he is found dead in the Thames, having jumped off Hammersmith Bridge. If this case of mistaken identity illustrates his guilt over the murder of the blind girl which subsequently induces his suicide, it also symbolically links Eileen with the murder victim. Crucial to understanding why is the fact that earlier, his alter ego, Arthur, had also encountered the victim on his travels. Parking his car at the side of a country road in Episode Two, he had met the blind girl walking alone through a field. Transfixed by her strange vulnerable beauty, he had offered to escort her home, yet though she had declined, he could not help shouting emotionally, "I shall never forget this ! Not ever !... I think you're the most beautiful young lady I've ever seen !" Out of earshot, however, he had whispered: "I'd cut off my right arm if I could make you see again... I dunno what I'd do if I could only - take your knickers off..."¹¹¹

In this way, a potentially darker side to Arthur's errant sexuality was revealed. As the cockney Casanova carrying on an adulterous affair with Eileen, he may seem the loveable rogue but could it that be his sexual desires border on the pathological ? Running through Pennies is a villain-victim ambiguity which plays with notions of Arthur's guilt. By

way of the symbolic link with the Accordion Man, it raises the question of whether at some 'deeper', 'non-naturalistic' level, Arthur is not indeed guilty of the crime for which he eventually hangs. As the drama unfolds, a case gradually forms against him. Not only does he lust secretly after the blind girl but later, like the stereotypical murderer, he returns to the scene of the 'crime' - the spot where he had desired her and where in an improbable coincidence, she is later found raped and murdered. It is because of this that the police first come to suspect him of the crime.

Moreover, it is a sex crime - the work of a "sexual maniac", according to the puritanical Inspector who leads the police investigation.''² Given his sexual peccadilloes ('outrageous' for the period), Arthur becomes a suitable candidate on whom to pin the murder. The result is an echo of the scapegoat motif of A Beast, Stand Up and Where The Buffalo Roam: the individual is punished by the wider community not so much because of his guilt as his failure to conform to the narrow set of behaviour codes that constitute the socially acceptable 'norm'. The individual is persecuted for being individual.

At the same time, the villain-victim ambiguity of Nigel Barton and Willy Turner is also present in Arthur's characterisation. The salesman may not have literally killed the blind girl but is his sexuality in some way aberrant? Is the murder to which he is symbolically linked not somehow an expression of his own forbidden desires? Throughout the six episodes, Pennies maintains a careful balance in its portrayal of Arthur as everyman hero and Arthur as social/ sexual 'criminal'. On the one hand, he is shown to be a common liar and cheat, two-timing not only his wife but also Eileen. As the 'Prince' unlocking her from the tower of her virginity, he seduces Eileen on the promise he is unmarried, yet later

abandons her when she becomes pregnant. It is this which in turn symbolically connects her with the blind girl and helps account for her meeting with 'the murderer' (and similarly Arthur's with 'the victim'). An 'innocent', metaphorically blind in terms of her lack of worldliness, Eileen is led by Arthur to her downfall via a forced seduction that parallels the Accordion Man's sexual assault of the blind girl. Discovering her own pregnancy in the same episode as the police discover the body of the blind girl (Episode Three), she is forced to resign from her teaching job in the Forest of Dean and head to London in search of a new life. Once more, however, she finds herself exploited by men, as she is forced into prostitution to survive. Only by the end of Episode Four does she finally get to be reunited with Arthur, her 'prince, at which point the pair decide to cut the ties of their previous lives and go on the run.

On one level Arthur is thus extremely guilty in Pennies: a metaphorical 'murderer' who 'kills' off Eileen's old life in the Forest of Dean, forcing her to become a prostitute in London.¹¹³ By virtue of his past misdeeds, his dramatic fate is to 'become' the Accordion Man - literally hanging in his place at the end of Episode Six.

At the same time, Pennies complicates this simple virgin-whore dichotomy in its presentation of Eileen's transformation into a 'fallen' woman. Moreover, it does so in a way that helps to recuperate Arthur, suggesting a more positive view of his actions. Thus Eileen is no mere victim of Arthur's seduction. As she admits to him in Episode Three, "I wanted you, you see."¹¹⁴ From her shy passive role serving her father and brothers, her liaison with Arthur forces her out of the Forest of Dean and turns her into a strong independent 'woman of the world' who learns to look

after herself.''¹⁵ Ironically, by the time of Episode Five when they go on the run, it is she who has to protect Arthur, resisting his calls to give up prostitution; calculating instead that the selling of her sexuality is their one hope of economic advancement in Depression-hit Britain. As Arthur tells her, "I ain't got no guts at all", to which she replies, "Don't worry. I've got enough for both of us."'¹⁶

The development of Eileen's characterisation in Pennies is thus a further illustration of the blurring of the flesh-spirit dichotomy in Potter's work as a whole. Rather than as a simple victim of a 'fall' from sexual innocence, she is portrayed as no innocent at all but a willing party to Arthur's seduction. Having been exploited by men, she later begins to turn it to her advantage in Episode Five. There are clear parallels with Blue Remembered Hills (: § 3.0). The abandonment of the notion of an innocence from which one can lapse leads to more complex Potter characterisations - a world of blurred categories rather than simple stereotypes of 'good' and 'evil', 'innocence' and 'experience', 'virgin' and 'whore'.

In turn, this blurring of categories helps recuperate Arthur. As suggested earlier, sex is one of his few means of spiritual sustenance and expression. If his sexuality verges on the pathological, it is also a sign that he cares - literally, a spontaneous overflow of his emotions. Thus Pennies sustains two completely opposite readings of his character: one, the self-centred 'sexual maniac' which the law believes him to be, deserving of the punishment he receives; the other, that his strong sexuality is simply the sign of a warm-hearted, highly emotional man. In this light, his desire to remove the blind girl's knickers becomes but the comic manifestation of his wish that she could be made to see - "I'd cut

off my right arm if I could make you see again. I'd - I dunno what I'd do if I could only take your knickers off... Take care ! Take care !"¹⁷

If by way of the title of Episode Six ("Says My Heart"), Potter hints at his own verdict, it is mainly left up to the audience to decide the true extent of Arthur's 'guilt'. In the final episode, the protagonist is literally put in the dock. After his arrest, lengthy scenes follow, depicting his trial at the Old Bailey.¹⁸ In this way, Pennies sums up the evidence for and against him. At the same time, its theme of the individual versus society is starkly dramatised. Sentenced to death, Arthur, the 'little man', finds himself powerless against the full weight and authority of the British state. He is finally seen being hanged, just as the screen goes black.

Hence although he apparently turns up 'like a bad penny' on Hammersmith Bridge after he has been hanged, it is decidedly ambiguous as to whether his resurrection is in body or simply in spirit. Turning to camera, Arthur and Eileen both say, "The song is ended but the melody lingers on."¹⁹ Akin to the question of Arthur's guilt, Pennies thus finally leaves it up to each viewer to choose the version of events they most want to believe: either that Arthur has been granted a reprieve at the last possible moment and that he has raced to be beside Eileen, or that his 'song' has indeed ended, even if his 'spirit' (the dreams he lived for) does still linger on. If the tension is very much that of the happy endings of musicals as opposed to the 'real world', it is also exactly the struggle between optimism (freedom) and pessimism (repression) which informs all of Pennies. In other words, it is a struggle of probabilities, of the defiance of 'improbable' optimism over pessimism: the more predictable, 'realistic' world-view.

It is this which clearly motivates the ambiguity in Arthur's characterisation. Neither purely a victim of circumstance nor quite a villain, he is both in Pennies. While the law is portrayed as deterministic in its search for convenient solutions and simplistic absolutes (complete innocence or utter guilt), the drama itself offers a more complex world-view. It is not 'either or' but 'both and': Arthur is profoundly guilty yet so too is he an innocent. Crucially, this is what separates the villain-victim ambiguity in his characterisation from that of previous Potter protagonists like Nigel Barton and Willy Turner. The central male protagonists of earlier Potter plays were always 'torn' heroes, hovering uneasily between contrasting possibilities of guilt or innocence. This uncertainty was as much internal as external to their construction: flashbacks, fantasy sequences and other 'psychological expressionist' devices helped emphasise how much the guilt and tension that racked the plays emanated from inside their own heads.

With Arthur Parker, there is no such angst. As previously noted, all of his problems are external, lying in the disparity between the 'real world' of the Depression and the vision of a better world he senses in 'the songs'. There is thus no need for elaborate flashback sequences to dramatise his inner conflict and private guilt. He has none. His struggle is with an outside world that does not measure up to the confidence of his dreams. If this helps explain the 'naturalistic' simplicity of his characterisation in Pennies - the fact that aside from the musical numbers, he is portrayed wholly from 'the outside'; the viewer never being taken inside his head to be shown his memories - it also accounts for why it is finally left up to the audience to judge the true extent of his guilt in Pennies.²⁰ The strength of Arthur's own dreams rules out any great degree of private angst or self-awareness on his

part. In keeping with the shift of emphasis, noted with the 1976 'trilogy', there is no longer a sense of a male Potter protagonist being 'torn' between irreconcilables. Arthur is much more of an integrated personality in whom guilt and innocence, flesh and spirit mingle and blur. In the very simplicity of his character and desires, he resembles the children in the contemporaneous Blue Remembered Hills: a sinner who at the same time is innocent because he is unaware.

Also like the 1979 play, underlying this is Potter's movement towards an instinctive faith in an ultimate Good ('God'). Sitting in a cheap hotel in Episode Two, listening to his fellow salesmen air their Depression woes, Arthur suddenly tries to articulate the feeling he himself can only half-consciously grasp through the songs - the sense that behind all the immediate evil and misery in the world, everything is ultimately alright:

ARTHUR: Blimey, I can almost taste it ! It's looking for the blue, ennit, and the gold. The patch of blue sky. The gold of the, of the bleed'n dawn, or - the light in somebody's eyes - Pennies From Heaven, that's what it is. And we can't see 'em, clinking and clinking, all around, all over the place... just bend down and pick 'em up !²¹

The realisation of an ultimate purpose and Good is simply a feeling. It can be expressed 'with no language but a cry'. Nevertheless, Arthur perseveres with his depressed fellow salesmen in this key scene, telling them: "Somewhere the sun is shining - And do you know where ? Inside yourself ! Inside your own head !... Put[s] the real meaning into them songs..."²²

Thus it is the strength of his own spiritual yearning rather than any special qualities of the tunes themselves which makes the thirties songs so potent for Arthur - as his cynical colleagues are quick to remind him,

the songs of Tin Pan Alley were really just "a business... dreamed up in a back-office by a couple of Jew-boys with green eyeshades".¹²³ This is the idea Potter first developed in Follow the Yellow Brick Road: namely, that the power of the human 'spirit', "the human dream for some concept of 'perfection', some Zion or Eden or Golden City", will always outcrop in some form, no matter how secular the context or how "ludicrous" the object through which this basic religious impulse is expressed.¹²⁴ As a result, Pennies holds out the tenuous possibility that unlikely as it may seem, the schmaltzy songs of Tin Pan Alley may just have had it right after all - namely, that if one acquires a spiritual faith, believing positively enough that 'somewhere the sun is shining', the storm-clouds may indeed soon 'all roll by', banishing the 'Depression blues' which within the drama are as much psychological as economic. In this way, the optimistic assurances of the songs become either extremely trite or boldly emancipating. Like Arthur's characterisation, it all becomes a matter of from which perspective one chooses to look.

The salesmen scene thus functions as an important microcosm of the drama as a whole. As with Pennies' ending, the viewer is invited to choose between 'predictable' pessimism ('Depression' and repression, culminating in Arthur's legalised murder) and 'improbable' optimism (faith in the songs that leads to his miraculous resurrection). What is important to note is that this pessimism / optimism duality exactly corresponds with 'naturalism' and 'non-naturalism'. Both the narrative and characterisation of the drama conform to the familiar conventions of habituated TV 'naturalism'. As previously noted, there is none of the 'interior' drama or 'psychological expressionism' of other Potter plays: Arthur's characterisation is wholly external in relation to the world of the Depression whilst the drama itself takes the form of a simple linear

plot.¹²⁵ It is chiefly in the musical numbers which constantly interrupt the narrative that Pennies' 'non-naturalism' resides. In their sheer number (eighty two in all), the songs offer a constant alternative to 'naturalism' - the brightness and happiness of the melodies and choreography contrasting with the gloomy depiction of 'real life' in the Depression. In turn, this connects with the drama's religious view for if as Chapter Three suggested, Potter's 'non-naturalism' is ultimately an assertion of another way of seeing, beyond 'naturalist / realist' modes, this is precisely the function of the songs in Pennies. When the music begins, the gloomy 'naturalism' of the dramatic narrative is disrupted or 'transcended'. The different, brighter fictional space that the miming and lighting changes announce becomes an assertion of the existence of an inner realm of the 'spirit'; one where dreams of perfection reside, in stark contrast to the depressing reality without.

It is this which seems to lie behind Potter's desire that the audience be as "disorientated as possible" by Pennies' very first musical number, "The Clouds Will Soon Roll By"¹²⁶ (: § 4.1 (a)). The phrase recalls his comments in his "Realism and Non-Naturalism" paper of that same year, in which he claimed the best "non-naturalist drama, in its very structures disorientates the viewer smack in the middle of the orientation process which television perpetually uses."¹²⁷ (: § 3.4) Suddenly, with a male character miming to a woman's voice several minutes into a 'serious' drama, viewer expectations are undermined. The habitual 'naturalism' of TV drama - the fiction whereby audiences are invited to collude in the belief that what is taking place on screen is real - is disrupted. Audience engagement and identification with the central protagonist is momentarily suspended and received notions of 'reality' thrown into question. The incongruity of a man singing in a woman's voice makes it

impossible for the audience to deduce anything other than that this is an actor in a TV studio miming to a recording on the soundtrack. In this way, the manufacture of 'naturalism' and of drama in general is exposed. After only a few minutes of conventional acting and plot exposition, the normally concealed realm of production is opened up to the viewer, revealing 'naturalism' to be a pretence. The result is a perfect dramatic metaphor for Pennies' assertion of the existence of a realm of the 'spirit' - of a world behind the world, underlying everyday surface 'naturalism'; a place where individuals retain the freedom to dream of other possibilities and so perhaps the power to shape their own destiny.

It hardly seems coincidental that many of the songs used in Pennies are those which Potter first heard in early childhood. He has written they were the songs you used to "hear coming up the stair [from the wireless]. When you're a child. When you are supposed to be asleep."¹²⁸ They are thus indelibly associated with the 'wonder' of childhood - the child's way of seeing the world for the first time that for Potter is religious and which he was clearly trying to invoke in his audience with the 'disorientation' of the very first song in Pennies. This seems to be why he has suggested the songs in the drama function like 'psalms':

... [The songs] represent the same kinds of things that the psalms and fairy tales represented: that is, the most generalised human dreams, that the world should be perfect, beautiful and loving, and all of those things... I believe that there is a sort of religious yearning that the world shall be whole, and what I want people to recognise by the end of the plays is that the songs are only diminished versions of the oldest myths of all in the Garden of Eden...¹²⁹

It is thus the songs which, standing in opposition to the pessimism and 'repression' of the central narrative, constitute the optimism in Pennies - part of a simple assertion of belief that 'the world shall be whole';

the triumph of hope over experience. In this light, Pennies can be seen to abound with Christian symbolism. The trial and persecution of the innocent Arthur, his hanging and subsequent inexplicable appearance on Hammersmith Bridge, all carry echoes of Christ's Crucifixion and Resurrection. At the moment of extreme pessimism, when it seems brutality and death have triumphed, the 'miracle' happens. Like the equivalent one with Pattie in Brimstone and Treacle, it does so through the power of an instinctive faith. Just as with Mrs Bates, Arthur believes in something. In the face of other's cynicism and all the evidence of experience, he clings to his conviction that the songs (the 'psalms') are true and it is this which sees him through, even to the bitter end. His reward for his trials is salvation through God: that is, through the God-like 'Author' who, in deciding he should live, expresses his own instinctive belief; the gut reaction or emotional choice of "Says My Heart".

The songs as 'psalms' are thus ultimately the expression of a desire for emotional justice. In keeping with this theme, it is highly significant that reunited on Hammersmith Bridge at the very end of the serial, the final song to which Arthur and Eileen mime is called "The Glory of Love", its title echoing the Christian conception of love as the means to spiritual rebirth. The two characters who believe most in the songs, Arthur and Eileen, literally embody this Eden dream - as the initials of their Christian names suggest, they are Adam and Eve. Combining innocence with original sin, they resemble the children in Blue Remembered Hills. Naive and reckless, they are also in some sense the children of God, with the capacity to achieve salvation at the very end because they believe in Him.

Also implicit within this salvation is transformation. It seems no coincidence that Arthur should be resurrected on the same bridge (Hammersmith) from which the Accordion Man jumped in Episode Five, suddenly appearing there after his execution.¹³⁰ As noted earlier, the Accordion Man's suicide was motivated by his burden of guilt over the murder of the blind girl. Unlike his salesman alter ego, he thus conforms to a more familiar type of Potter protagonist; one 'torn' between the demands of spirit and flesh: the spiritual yearnings he expresses through the hymns he plays versus his own physical compulsions which lead him eventually to sexual assault and murder.¹³¹ In this way, he seems to embody the old flesh-spirit dichotomy of previous Potter plays, as opposed to the new more 'integrated' personality of Arthur in whom such categories blur. The difference ultimately seems to be that between despair and hope: poor, marginalised, racked by guilt, the Accordion Man can see no way out of his dilemma other than suicide. Arthur, however, has something to believe in (the songs). His instinctive faith gives him the 'spiritual' power to confront death and finally the miracle which allows him to cheat it. Completely unrepressed and child-like through his proximity to the songs, the difference between Arthur and his alter ego is like that between a new and an old self. If this explains Arthur's resurrection at the spot where the Accordion Man died, it also in turn suggests Pennies as a work depicting psychic transformation: of old attitudes jettisoned in favour of new; of an old self dying in order to live again in new form.¹³²

In that sense, Pennies from Heaven can be seen as a drama about the overcoming of spiritual trials that culminates in an eventual reward of personal transformation. Again, it is through the figure of the Accordion Man that this is made clearest. It is he who sings the title song to

Arthur in Episode One, with its lines: "Every time it rains / It rains Pennies From Heaven /... If you want the things you love / You must have showers..."¹³³ The fact that Potter takes the title of his drama from this song indicates the centrality of the idea that although every life 'must have showers', all the apparent trials and storm-clouds may be for a greater good. The metaphor is clear: those 'Pennies From Heaven' (literally, the rain) may seem to be of little value and bring no cheer and yet they are everything. They are what brings life to the earth: hope and renewal. Wrapped up in the cares of day to day living (for example, the need to earn money, symbolised in the plays by the harsh materialism of the Depression), the implication is that it is all too easy to forget or become habituated to this. Only by a different way of seeing, the drama asserts, can all the 'pennies' lying around us everyday be perceived afresh. In that recognition, it is implied, comes a spiritual transformation and renewal - the development of an instinctive faith in an ultimate Good. Or as an enraptured Arthur puts it to his fellow salesman in Episode Two, "Pennies From Heaven... clinking and clinking all around, all over the place... Just bend down and pick 'em up!"¹³⁴

Pennies, however, finally leaves it up to its audience to choose whether they wish to do so or not. An avowedly religious work, written from a Christian perspective, the drama is ultimately a struggle between probabilities, of different ways of seeing - the 'predictable' pessimism of 'naturalism' (the 'real' world of the Depression which hangs Arthur as a villain) versus the 'improbable' optimism of 'non-naturalism' (the realm of the 'spirit' and songs, belief in which finally resurrects Arthur as a hero). Balanced on the knife-edge between optimism and pessimism, Pennies permits both views to be tenable - Arthur may be innocent or

guilty; alive or dead. God and salvation may exist or they may not. If Potter indicates his own choice ("Says My Heart"), the drama, by sustaining both possibilities, finally leaves it up to each viewer to decide, ultimately as a matter of personal faith. In Pennies, Potter's own Christian optimism may be palpable but it has to be left open-ended. As he put it in 1978:

I think optimism is open-ended, you see. I don't think it's a blind assertion of things. And I'm more and more inclined to the opinion that drama should be open at all points of access so that you can take even the opposite sometimes of what is intended. You should be able to use it as sort of working material for what you are responding to, and take from it a lot of things that I wouldn't want people to take from it. But they will, and that's good... All politics and all religion and all social aspirations ought to be about allowing, encouraging, searching for people to be given the chance of being other than they are seen to be, other than the way they are going. When predictability is built into drama or drama-documentary and it seems to be asserted that C follows B follows A, and there's no way out, there's no surprise left, and I think that's pessimism and when I use the word, optimism, I use it against that grain.¹³⁵

4.1 d) Pennies from Hollywood

Fuelling his own increased optimism, the success of Pennies led to a period of frenetic activity in the late seventies and early eighties which saw Potter transform himself from reclusive BBC playwright into "self-confessed hustler", determined to negotiate his own production packages and to challenge traditional orthodoxies and working practices not just in television but film as well.¹³⁶ By 1981, he had written his own American movie - a big budget cinema version of Pennies for MGM - and for a time was reputedly the highest paid screenwriter in Hollywood, after Neil Simon. All of this from a man who had spent the previous twenty years ill, as a virtual recluse and who had never ventured out of England until he was 41.¹³⁷

After the British success of Pennies, approaches had been made from both Bernard Delfont and Joseph Janni to adapt the plays for cinema. An option on the movie rights was finally given, however, to Greg Smith, a British film producer then setting up business in Chicago: a city which had promised to invest heavily in film.¹³⁸ By the end of 1978, Potter had produced a draft screenplay for him, in which all of Arthur Parker's exploits were relocated from England to Chicago in the American Depression of the thirties. Despite this obvious targeting of the American market, the Pennies screenplay could find no financial backers in Britain. It was at this point Potter began to realise "what goes on... [when] someone hopes to make a movie" in Britain and he vowed to do something about it.¹³⁹ The formation of his own independent production company, Pennies From Heaven Limited, was partly the result (: § 5.0). Not only were he and his partner Kenith Trodd keen to challenge traditional broadcasting structures, their move into independent production was also an attempt to give a boost to the ailing British film

industry by trying to generate enough money and prestige to produce "an annual British movie, without fees or commissions".¹⁴⁰ By Autumn 1980, Potter announced the first of these projects would be a feature film version of the banned Brimstone and Treacle - to be produced in Britain by PFH, with shooting scheduled to start the following spring.

Hence if behind PFH Ltd there was idealism, this also had to be backed up by substantial financial resources. Ironically, it was Potter's rejected Pennies screenplay which would give the company its biggest economic boost. Whilst in Britain, working on his film Nijinsky, Hollywood director Herbert Ross became acquainted with Potter's work and approached him with a view to scripting his next project: a follow-up to the director's 1977 film about ballet, The Turning Point. Travelling to America, ostensibly to discuss this project with Ross, Potter (now the self-confessed 'hustler') produced the Pennies screenplay from his pocket.¹⁴¹

A director at the peak of his career both in commercial and award terms, Ross had reached a point where he was in a position to build a reputation as a major Hollywood 'artist, taking risks with 'daring' material that might lead to critical acclaim. Pennies seemed to fit the criteria. Having a background in musicals and choreography, he and his producer wife, the late Nora Kaye, also had the expertise to realise the musical numbers on film. With Ross and Kaye's support behind it, Pennies was offered to the major Hollywood studios. Paramount (with whom Ross had just made Nijinsky) turned it down. Things, however, were different at Metro-Goldwyn Mayor. By 1980, the erstwhile home of the Hollywood musical was a studio in decline, its last major film having been Straw Dogs nearly ten years before. MGM, however, was under new management.

David Begelman, a former executive at Columbia, had taken over the reins with a brief to turn the studio around in one year and restore it to somewhere near the pre-eminence it had once enjoyed. Hence just as Pennies was being offered, he quickly needed to get ten or twelve major projects into production in order to signal a decisive break with the previous decade of decline. What better way to announce MGM was back from the grave than with the production of a big-budget 'musical', the genre with which the studio had once been so successfully associated? If not a financial one, at least Ross's picture might be a critical and Oscar success, thus putting MGM back on the map as a bold, adventurous studio which encouraged talent and innovation.¹⁴²

In this way, MGM and Begelman decided to back Pennies where other studios had turned it down. Importantly, there were two conditions attached. The first was that a major star play Arthur Parker. After many top Hollywood actors (including Dustin Hoffman, Robert Redford and Al Pacino) turned the Pennies script down, a Hollywood agent, John Gaines, succeeded in concocting a meeting in Las Vegas with Ross, Begelman and the movie's young executive producer, Rick McCallum.¹⁴³ According to the latter:

What we didn't know was that [Gaines] represented Steve Martin and that Steve Martin was performing live in Las Vegas... We were invited to meet Steve during the half-break of the show and as we were walking down the corridor, the sound of "Pennies From Heaven" started to come up and there was Steve lip-synching to the Arthur Tracey version. And that was it. We had the movie. We were ready to go...¹⁴⁴

Having 'auditioned' for the movie in such an unorthodox way, within a week a deal had been signed with Martin as Parker, together with Bernadette Peters (Martin's co-star in his previous movie, The Jerk and

also at the time his off-screen partner), in the role of Eileen. On the film's release, many criticised the casting of a comedian in the central role.¹⁴⁵ If the choice of Steve Martin recalls Potter's suggestion for the BBC Pennies that Arthur be played by a comic, the reason in the case of the Hollywood version was simple economic pragmatism. Martin's last film, The Jerk, had been the highest grossing comedy ever (\$92 million). Thus MGM thought they had at last found an Arthur Parker who was a proven box office draw. For his part, Martin now had the chance to establish himself as a premier Hollywood star by tackling his first 'serious' dramatic role.¹⁴⁶

In this way, the Hollywood version of Pennies was born out of a number of expediencies: Ross wanted a critical success; Martin wanted to become a major star; MGM needed a big-budget production to restore its credibility as an important Hollywood studio. Meanwhile, Potter himself wanted to use some of the money and kudos of having worked on a big American movie as a way of realising his own ambitions of reviving film production at home. In this last aim, he came partly unstuck as a result of the second important condition MGM attached to the Pennies deal. This was an insistence that all further international sales of the original BBC drama be halted in case box office interest was drained away by American TV stations buying up the series and screening it at the time of the movie's release. As a result, Potter's agent (Judy Daish) was forced to go to the BBC to ask them to stop any further sales effort, aware that if the Corporation refused, the whole MGM deal would collapse. The BBC exacted a high price for their compliance, demanding \$100 000 plus half Potter's further profits from the film.¹⁴⁷ Considering the writer's fee for the Pennies screenplay was \$250 000, these were terms that could only further sour relations between the BBC and Potter - already at an all-

time low after his departure to LWT the previous year (: § 5.0). Though the Corporation have always refused to comment, undoubtedly this factor played a part in their dealings. The consequent suppression of the TV Pennies for the sake of Hollywood also resulted in much bad feeling being directed towards Potter from those involved with the original drama.¹⁴⁸

In the event, neither Potter nor the BBC managed to profit highly from the \$19 million MGM version. Through 1980 and 1981, the writer became a regular transatlantic commuter between Britain and the MGM set in Los Angeles, as his script went through successive drafts in which lengthy scenes and stretches of dialogue from the original version were pared down to fit the constraints of a ninety minute Hollywood movie. On the film's release, this was an aspect which drew fire from many British critics familiar with the TV version - the feeling that the heart and soul had been cut out of Pennies: "Dennis Potter made simple (and painless)", as one put it.¹⁴⁹ In fact, closer inspection reveals a structure to this paring down. It is not just a case of across the board cuts. Many of the revisions are made in the service of a much darker and bleaker vision than that of the original TV plays.¹⁵⁰

This is tellingly illustrated by the movie's treatment of the scene in which the Accordion Man sings the "Pennies From Heaven" title song to Arthur. Whilst in the original TV drama, the Accordion Man's performance took place in a café to which Arthur had taken him for a meal, the film version moves the character beyond these confines in order to have him sing and dance against a stylized backdrop featuring images of the homeless and dispossessed.¹⁵¹ In this way, the Accordion Man is transformed from the unique character he was in the television version (the specific alter ego of Arthur) into a general representative of all

the suffering victims of the Depression. De-emphasising the specific 'murderer/ rapist' symbolism of Arthur's relationship with the Accordion Man, the Hollywood version refashions the link as one of fellow sufferers unable to escape the Depression.¹⁵²

This seems to be why in 1982, Potter suggested the movie version was "even more bleak in a way" than the original BBC drama.¹⁵³ Its general outlook and tone is unusual (even remarkable) for a big-budget Hollywood film and clearly has much to do with a combination of a British writer's playful enjoyment of the possibilities of critiquing capitalism from the very heart of the American Dream (Hollywood), together with an American director's desire to take risks and create an artistic success. As Potter suggested in 1982: "I wanted to use the musical convention that this film tells you everything is fine, even while I'm saying everything is NOT alright, that there is something, a piece of imagination that says everything is not alright."¹⁵⁴

It is from this desire to create a genuine 'Depression' musical that most of the differences between the Hollywood and TV version of Pennies can be attributed. In marked contrast to the irony, ambiguity and playfulness of the TV drama, the film concentrates instead on an exploitation of genre. Traditionally the escapist form par excellence, the MGM Pennies uses the musical genre to suggest there is no escape for those, like the central protagonists, caught up in the Depression.

A clear example of this comes in one of the few genuine rewrites to Potter's original movie screenplay when, near the end of the film and while on the run, Arthur and Eileen escape into a cinema. Sitting in the dark, they watch a scene from the 1936 Astaire-Rogers musical, Follow The

Eleet. On screen, Fred Astaire is singing "Let's Face The Music and Dance". Suddenly, silhouetted against the large image on screen, Ross's film shows the small figure of Arthur, miming the song and mimicking Astaire's gestures exactly. Then, just as suddenly, the spectator is metaphorically taken 'in' to this film within a film in order to be shown the dance sequence from "Let's Face The Music" reconstructed in detail - with Eileen and Arthur (Bernadette Peters and Steve Martin) temporarily 'becoming' Ginger and Fred. If the aim is to illustrate how important the escapist dreams of the musicals were to those struggling in the Depression era, the MGM Pennies also emphasises the impossibility of complete identification with the image. Dancing as Ginger and Fred in an ornate ballroom setting, the lovers are joined by a male chorus, all of whom are dressed in top hat and tails and carrying shiny black sticks. Foregrounded as the pair dance behind, the chorus slowly raise their sticks vertically until these come to seem prison-like: "like huge bars tightly surrounding seemingly miniature Arthur and Eileen", as Potter's final draft puts it.¹⁵⁵ If the effect is to suggest there is no escape for Arthur and Eileen from the Depression, it also implies that no matter how hard they try to submerge themselves in dreams, those dreams will never be realised. Their fate, instead, is to 'face the music' of the Depression and Arthur's murder charge. Poor and on the run, they can only glimpse Paradise from the cinema stalls. They are mere spectators, ultimately shut out of the image.

The American Dream of success lying within the grasp of everyone is thus undermined in the film. In turn, this helps shed light on how the musical numbers work within the Hollywood version. Whilst the performance of the songs in the BBC drama was always dramatically motivated by the sheet music Arthur peddled, the MGM version exploits its

production context in order to pay homage to the screen musicals of Hollywood's past. Counterpointing the dark tableaux of the Depression scenes, most of the songs are realised as lavish 'white set' production numbers which, as with "Let's Face The Music", come to reflect not only Arthur's particular dreams but the collective fantasies of cinema audiences of the period. Where, then, does this leave the 'religious' element of the Hollywood Pennies ? Whilst the use of songs in the context of a 'serious' BBC Drama was formally unique, representing an alternative realm of the 'spirit', surely the very capacity of the musical numbers to be assimilated within the traditions of the American screen musical must nullify the religious theme of the MGM Pennies ? Potter, in 1982, disagreed:

I don't think that's true. I mean, the film is more difficult by being, on the surface, easier to assimilate in the musical numbers... [It] is... mentally, more difficult and challenging because the realisation of the dream is less tacky... When you're dealing with the dreams of uneducated, naive and apparently simple people, you use irony, a slight distancing of yourself from the substance of their dreams. Whereas I maintain that the substance of their dreams is as real as the Psalmist's cry. I'm using a Busby Berkeley sequence as a found artefact to illustrate what Arthur would actually see and relate to.¹⁵⁶

For Potter, the religious element in the Hollywood Pennies is actually strengthened from the BBC version, ironically because greater amounts of money have been lavished on the production of the musical numbers. The film is thus more 'difficult' because audiences cannot so easily adopt a position of detached or ironic amusement at the 'tackiness' of the realisation of the songs (as they might have done with performances in the BBC studio). The very strength of the songs' production means the nature of Arthur's dreams cannot be dismissed so easily.

In this way, the American Dream is simultaneously critiqued and celebrated in the MGM Pennies. The American Dream, as refracted through the screen musicals, ironically becomes Arthur's means of surviving the American Dream gone wrong of the Depression. As in the Follow the Fleet scene, the bleak impossibility of most individuals ever achieving the capitalist dream of success is indicated in the disjunction between fantasy and reality, whilst at the same time the persistence of that 'old human dream' for something better than one's present lot - of which the American Dream is but one manifestation - is celebrated. The American Dream is thus turned in and against itself: the film celebrates the resilience of dreams and the power of individuals to hold on to a vision of something better against the implacable odds of the American capitalist system.

In turn, this has important effects for the end of film. It means the optimism of Arthur's final 'miracle' escape from the hangman becomes even more hard-won and improbable than in the BBC drama. This is suggested by the final "Glory of Love" song which, unlike the TV version of Arthur and Eileen miming alone on Hammersmith Bridge, is a big Busby Berkeley-like production number, featuring chorus girls dancing against a gloomy backdrop of Chicago in the Depression. Far less ambiguously than the TV drama, the unlikely optimism of the MGM version cannot be as the result of a change in material conditions (Arthur's bodily resurrection; an end to the 'Depression'), it must be 'spiritual'. It can only be the defiance of belief and optimism in the face of an otherwise bleak landscape; a final assertion of hope over pessimistic experience. This is undoubtedly why Potter described the religious element in the Hollywood Pennies as being 'more accomplished': "I know it's more difficult to get to but maybe

this is perverse of me, I wanted to cheat the studio people over there, as I've learnt to do at the BBC."¹⁵⁷

With American audiences, however, Potter's attempt to smuggle religion into Hollywood backfired. The religious element of the original TV conception may well have been enhanced (as he claimed) but the fact that the production numbers could be so easily assimilated within the traditions of the Hollywood screen musical also meant they could be easily dismissed.

Mindful of the amount they had spent on it, MGM previewed the finished film in Denver, Colorado, just prior to its release in Christmas, 1981. The studio's publicity department went into overdrive, advertising the film as a 'musical extravaganza' and even, 'Coming for Christmas, the funniest film you'll ever see.' As a consequence, half the audience walked out, so unprepared were they for a film which, given the publicity and the casting of Steve Martin and Bernadette Peters, they had presumed would be a comedy along the lines of The Jerk.¹⁵⁸

When the film subsequently went on general release - in the U.S. just before Christmas 1981, in Britain on May 20th 1982 - reaction was also violently mixed. In Britain, the film was inevitably compared with the BBC serial and found wanting.¹⁵⁹ In the U.S., however, the movie found favour with some well-known reviewers. Pauline Kael called it "the most emotional movie musical I've ever seen... There's something new going on - something thrilling - when the characters in a musical are archetypes yet are intensely alive."¹⁶⁰ The general returns across America, however, were a disaster. The film cost almost \$20 million to make but took only \$7 million at the box office - record-making losses for MGM that could

only help to accelerate the studio's decline, turning Pennies into one of the biggest loss-makers in Hollywood history.¹⁶¹ If there were clearly many reasons for the film's financial failure - a Christmas release for a broadly downbeat 'Depression' movie; false expectations generated by the casting of Steve Martin; the general unfashionability of musicals in 1981 - neither was the film the decisive 'artistic' success which had been hoped for (though Potter's screenplay was nominated for an award at the 1982 Oscars ceremony).

As a result, after a brief fling during which time he wrote a number of (mainly unproduced) screenplays, Potter was no longer quite the flavour of the month in Hollywood anymore (: § 5.1). As he himself later put it, the Americans came to view him as a 'black' writer and recoiled from his alleged "savagery" and "bleakness" - little realising, of course, that if it had not been for the strength of his own optimism at the end of the seventies, Potter would never have made it to Hollywood in the first place.¹⁶²

4.2) Conclusion

Certainly, the writer had come a long way from the religious introversion of his work in the early seventies. The difference is clearly signalled in the respective treatments of sex in Casanova and Pennies. In the 1971 drama, the 'vacuity' of living for the flesh was embodied in the figure of the eighteenth century libertine: an Italian prisoner, desperate to escape the material world for a 'higher' spiritual realm that he knew lay on the other side of his cell yet which, despite all his efforts, he seemed fated never to reach. Death paradoxically became in Potter's hands the moment of ultimate triumph for Casanova, when he was finally able to leave the pains and passions of his body behind: freed at last from the material world.

Compare this with Pennies, only seven years later. Having had his personal life transformed in 1977 by an apparent 'miracle' cure for illness, this could only help to fuel the new optimism which, as with the 1976 'trilogy' of single plays, was becoming tangible in Potter's writing. In Pennies from Heaven, Arthur Parker's 'spirit' does not express itself in a desire to flee the body but rather through the body. Sex is no longer seen as 'vacuous' but along with 'the songs', one of his main spiritual outlets. Arthur's material aspirations have become inseparable from his spiritual yearnings.

As a consequence, in sharp contrast to Casanova, death in Pennies paradoxically marks the moment of the drama's most confident endorsement of life. Whilst in the 1971 drama, the death of the protagonist signalled his escape from the physical world, in the 1977 plays it marks the moment of defiance: an assertion of the power of belief and the 'spirit'

to cheat death. Arthur's 'spirit' returns to the world to live again; to live through it. He does not reject material reality. He embraces it.

Potter's return from reclusiveness in the late seventies and his adventures in Hollywood can be seen in much the same terms. If it is too negative and reductive to say the writer went there simply for the money, it would also be naive to put his motivations purely down to an idealistic aim of reviving the British film industry. Rather, like his central character in Pennies, material aspirations and 'spiritual' ideals interpenetrated each other: a desire to try and change the way films were made in Hollywood and Britain mingled with the legitimate financial desires of a professional writer with self-professed "ambitions, inevitable anxieties and a fair measure of what used to be called avarice", coupled with a clear need to expand his own personal and career horizons.¹⁶³ In 1982, he put it this way:

I went to Hollywood for a clutch of differing and sometimes contradictory reasons. One was simply to do with curiosity. Another was to do with getting the longer perspective about what I want to do and, in order to do it, I need to get hold of the money. And a third is more or less precisely the same reason that I wanted to write for television sixteen years ago. Biographically, it may be because I come from the English working class and because I can't swallow the cant about High Art easily, and because I have a partly hostile, partly eager, partly complicit relationship with so-called Popular Art. I don't find it easy to step away from and say that's not my field... I think the place for me is in the middle of it.¹⁶⁴

A few years later, in 1985, he also admitted that he had desperately needed a few years out of British television: "I was digging a hole for myself. How long can a writer write without any external stimulus?"¹⁶⁵

Potter's new entrepreneurism in the late seventies and early eighties was thus in one sense a desire to escape the reclusiveness of his past - not

only that of his illness but also the career he had developed in tandem with it of being a writer for television. Originally, he had taken up writing because it was one of the few jobs he could do, given the nature of his illness. It suited an enforced reclusiveness. By the late seventies, however, when temporarily free from illness, becoming a businessman - an active media 'hustler' - was one way for Potter to make a decisive break with that past.

The problem was would this new extroversion affect the work, perhaps for the worse ? Would his sudden rash of activity across a range of different media disperse his energies, making the writing suffer ? In 1980, Sean Day-Lewis hinted at the dilemma in a Daily Telegraph profile which appeared the day after the first of Potter's new TV plays for LWT had been transmitted: "The good news", Day-Lewis stated, "is that he does not want to desert. He still considers himself a... television playwright... The less good news is that [he] is plainly enjoying his distracting new role as a businessman, a very active partner in his Pennies From Heaven independent production company... "1986 In tune with the free-market ethos of the newly elected Conservative government under Margaret Thatcher, Potter had transformed himself into an Arthur Parker figure - a salesman for his own work. In terms of television drama, it was the three play package for LWT in October 1980 which provided the first test of whether, in purely creative terms, that transformation had been for the best.

CHAPTER FIVE

SINGING FOR YOUR SUPPER: POTTER IN THE EIGHTIES

5.0) "Cream in My Coffee": The PFH / LWT Deal

As Chapter Two noted, Potter and Trodd had some harsh words to say about the BBC when they made their much-publicised defection to LWT in May 1979. They argued that an illiberal climate of censorship and bureaucracy had stifled the creative freedom which BBC programme-makers had enjoyed in the sixties (: § 2.3 d). It was undoubtedly the attraction of a future outwith established broadcasting structures which had led them to form their own independent production company, Pennies From Heaven Limited. In turn, their subsequent 'partnership' with LWT was watched closely by the rest of the television industry as a timely example of what the future might hold - particularly through 1980, as Margaret Thatcher's Conservative Government began to push through Parliament legislation that would lay the foundations of Channel Four.'

For Potter, the PFH/ LWT deal was particularly significant. Not only was it a specific riposte to the BBC over the banning of Brimstone, it also seemed to signal important changes were on the way for both him and British television. After years of "wistful dreaming about the possibilities" of his chosen medium, remission of illness had at last seemed to put him in a position where he could turn his dreams of wresting creative control away from the broadcasting 'bureaucrats' into

reality. As he put it in 1979, "I vowed to myself... there would be a few bloody changes. And now that I've got the power... and the opportunity, I can do something."²

It was the BBC's lack of flexibility in the face of these aspirations which led to Potter and Trodd's final break with the Corporation. The specific issue centred around both men's difficulty in reconciling a new desire for 'independence' with their own long-standing commitment to public service broadcasting and the BBC. PFH Ltd had been formed in 1978 whilst the pair were still at the Corporation. For their first project Potter and Trodd had been ambitious - deciding to mount a television adaptation of all of Anthony Powell's thirteen novels in the sequence, A Dance to the Music of Time. Independently of the BBC, they approached the novelist and succeeded in persuading him to sell the TV rights to his books. Then, with no choice in these pre-Channel Four days but to co-operate with a traditional broadcaster, they took the project to the BBC, with a view to inviting it to commission Potter to adapt the novels into a drama serial. It was at this point the problems began as Potter and Trodd found all their work in wooing Powell and making the series possible reduced to the payment of a flat format fee by the BBC. Further confirmation that the Corporation begrudged the notion of working with 'independents' came at the end of 1978 as Potter was working on the scripts. The BBC, suddenly, without prior consultation, told him that due to financial constraints, what had been agreed as six seventy five minute plays would have to be reduced to five of fifty minutes each. The proportion of drama to be shot on film (as opposed to studio-recorded on videotape) would also have to be diminished. As Potter later put it, "That sort of news is very depressing when you are actually in the middle of working on scripts."³ Coupled with this were the threats to his

producer: namely that if the plays were not done as required, Trodd would no longer be given a slot in the schedules and his contract would not be renewed.⁴

Immediately, Potter asked for indefinite postponement and with Trodd and his agent, Judy Daish, began to look for a home for his work beyond the BBC. Finally, after a number of "euphoric lunches followed by disconsolate silences" with several interested parties, PFH Ltd fetched up at LWT in May of 1979, with a deal to supply it not with A Dance to the Music of Time but a package of nine plays to be delivered over a notional two year period - six of them by Potter.⁵

For the writer, it seemed a "cracking deal."⁶ LWT - in the shape of Director of Programmes, Michael Grade; Controller of Drama, Tony Wharmby and Managing Director, Brian Tesler - had agreed to finance an expensive package in which every play would be shot wholly on location on film, with a workable average of twenty-three days shooting per film, plus a quota of free-lance cameramen of Trodd's choice. Acknowledging the 'independent' principle, LWT undertook to pay PFH overhead and script development costs and on delivery of each script, to take full responsibility for the costing of the production budget. It all seemed a brave move. Here was a commercial company prepared to support the new breed of 'independent' that one day might break up the cosy television duopoly which ITV had shared with the BBC for over twenty years. The writer and producer also hoped the deal could be used as leverage to achieve what they had really wanted all along - to get back to the BBC 'on proper terms', as acknowledged 'independents' working within the Corporation.

It was only after this honeymoon period had ended and PFH became immersed in the practical production details that serious problems began to emerge. Once the first three Potter scripts were in, the company discovered there had been a fundamental misunderstanding about costs. It transpired that prior to delivery of the scripts, Michael Grade had presented the LWT Board of Directors with budget projections for the first three films that were badly underestimated: £ 100 000 per film as opposed to Trodd's own base-line projection of £ 200 000.⁷ With no experience of this type of high cost filmed drama (LWT's previous output in this area having always been highly studio-based), the company had not done their homework. They had apparently failed to make adequate comparisons with the budgets of films produced by other TV companies.

In order to compensate for these financial miscalculations, LWT asked Trodd whether he would mind making the first Potter script, Rain on the Roof, more cheaply as a studio play, rather than as a film on location. Trodd refused, responding that he was unwilling to help bail out the company for its own financial mistakes.⁸ LWT eventually backed down. Each of the three Potter scripts, it agreed, would be shot on film. Accordingly, new budgets, totalling £ 832 000, were drawn up in line with the spending of other ITV film-making subsidiaries.⁹ The Potter films would be made back to back throughout the first half of 1980 for transmission dates in the autumn. By February, location shooting on Rain on the Roof had already begun under the direction of Alan Bridges.

The problems, however, were not over. As Trodd puts it, Grade's relationship with the Board never recovered from his initial miscalculation. By the time the last Potter play, Blade on the Feather, was being shot in June 1980, relationships between PFH and LWT were

deteriorating fast, as a difficult wet shoot on the Isle of Wight played havoc with the budget, resulting in a £ 150 000 overspend.¹⁰ From his initial (mis)calculation to the LWT Board of a total of £ 300 000 for the three films, Michael Grade now had to tell it that close to £ 1 million had been spent on Potter and Trodd.

In the meantime, Trodd was readying his next project for shooting: a two-part Jim Allen film, entitled The Commune, which had been budgeted at a total of £ 675 000. Just prior to the start of shooting on 15th July 1980, Grade announced he was postponing the project indefinitely. Alleging 'cash flow problems', he accused PFH of letting the budget drift up by £ 35 000, even before shooting had started.¹¹

By the summer of 1980, suspicions were growing that LWT was looking for a pretext to abandon their commitment to the remaining films in the package. It had not escaped Potter and Trodd's attention that the franchises of the ITV companies were up for reconsideration by the IBA at the end of the year and that one of the most important criteria in determining whether, in the face of possible competition, LWT would retain its licence to broadcast, would be a judgement on the 'quality' of its programmes. Perhaps this had been the real motive behind LWT's deal with PFH all along and of Grade's recent actions. As Trodd put it that July: "If LWT can get three window dressing films by Dennis Potter on the air before franchise time, then the PFH deal will have served its main purpose for them. They might then be happy to loose us quietly as an unnecessary thorn in their side."¹²

His words were to prove prophetic. On Monday July 28th, Michael Grade issued a statement to the press, announcing the partnership between LWT

and PFH was dissolved. He cited "irreconcilable differences" whereby PFH had found it very difficult to work within "normal budgeting constraints and disciplines."¹³ Generous budgets, he alleged, had been heavily overspent. The statement concluded: "It is now clear that there are likely to be insurmountable difficulties when an independent production company of this kind comes to work inside a major broadcasting organisation, whether ITV or BBC..."¹⁴

Potter and Trodd were enraged by the statement - particularly after they discovered Grade had authorised both it and a formal letter to PFH, prior to disappearing from the country on a month's holiday to California. Worse, the press had received news about the deal's collapse before PFH had received their letter. Having got to the press first to put his side of the case, Grade had succeeded in putting PFH on the defensive regarding allegations of overspending. Moreover, there was nothing the 'independents' could do to prevent the deal's collapse. As LWT were quick to point out, the PFH contract, in accordance with normal practice, had specifically been for the supply of scripts. Whilst the ITV company had intended to produce them, legally it was under no obligation to do so.¹⁵ Despite subsequent press coverage in which both men tried to put their case, there was nothing in real terms which Potter and Trodd could do. The PFH/ LWT deal was dead.

In retrospect, it is possible to see there were faults on both sides. As Trodd admits today, there was, during shooting, "an uncontrollable tendency to let costs rise". This was not simply a question of the ill-advised choice of the Isle of Wight as a location for Blade on the Feather. He recalls a clear example during the shooting of the second Potter film, Cream in My Coffee: a play set in the Grand Hotel,

Eastbourne, which alternates between the 'present' and the thirties. In the course of shooting one of the period scenes, Trodd and his director, Gavin Millar, suddenly noticed one of the leading actors was wearing an old-fashioned thirties wristwatch - an item which no-one had requested. On investigation, it transpired that the LWT costumes department had spent hundreds of pounds on the watch in order to give the production an authentic period feel. Trodd claims that in the absence of adequate LWT production controllers (due to the company's inexperience in filmed drama), it was impossible for him to police every area of the production to cut down on such lavish spending. Besides, he states: "there was a feeling we were doing the posh stuff [on film]... There was a certain scale of production value and that was what we were going to do".¹⁶

At least some of the budgetary problems of which Grade later complained therefore resided within LWT itself. It was a product of the enthusiasm amongst the company's staff for having been given the opportunity to work on 'posh' drama. This manifested itself in a desire that every aspect of the production look and feel right. Coupled with this was Trodd's own preoccupation with making TV drama expensively on film. As a figure who had worked predominantly at the BBC, he had little experience nor indeed desire to act as a line producer, with both eyes permanently fixed on the budget.¹⁷ It was these factors which helped create pressures on the budget that in turn were magnified ten-fold by the inexperience of LWT management in dealing with the costs of filmed drama. Thus, rather than any conspiratorial move connected with the franchise, the dropping of PFH by London Weekend was more a question of simple economics. By 1980, with Britain in the grip of a recession and an awareness growing in ITV circles of a possible cash crisis due to a decline in advertising revenue, the commercial companies were keen to cut

back on all possible 'extravagances'¹⁰ It seems that by the summer of that year, LWT had decided prestige film drama by PFH was one luxury it could no longer afford.

Just as at the BBC, PFH had therefore found its bold ambitions to change the face of British TV thwarted by financial constraints beyond its control. It had also discovered that far from being the engine to break up existing TV monoliths, small 'independents' could all too easily be engulfed by them. At least in those pre-Channel 4 days, if not later, partnerships with so-called 'independents' could never take place on a completely level playing field. 'Independents' were necessarily dependent on the vicissitudes of the dominant television order - not equal to or outside it.

By July 1980, Potter was bitter. Writing in the Daily Mail, he complained that British TV was "going to the dogs". It was Grade's assertion that the PFH deal demonstrated 'insurmountable difficulties' between 'independents' and the major broadcasters, to which he took particular exception. This was, he retorted, a signal for ITV and the BBC to "stand shoulder to shoulder... against intruders arrogant enough to claim the right and then the ability to make their programmes". He shuddered to think of the future of native TV drama: "All the doors are closing against it".¹¹

He, however, was not prepared to wait around for the answer, nor for that matter the advent of Channel 4 (- which at that point he believed had "been virtually handed over to the existing ITV companies"). Disgusted with British TV institutions, he asserted he was off to California to work "on a big M.G.M. movie that everyone here turned down flat".

Significantly, he added: "I may even bump into Michael Grade in Hollywood. If his face is red, it won't be from the California sunshine..."²⁰

What of the three completed films he left in his wake ? As planned, these were transmitted by ITV over three consecutive Sundays, from 19 October 1980 onwards. Alone of all Potter's single TV plays, these works were clearly tailored as a package to satisfy a pre-existing commercial deal - a fact signalled by the symmetry of the titles: Blade on the Feather; Rain on the Roof; Cream in My Coffee. Unlike his 1976 'trilogy', there is no real strong, developing thematic connection between each, though they do share important structural similarities:

The most significant of these is the memory of a father's death which haunts the three plays. In Cream in My Coffee, as the elderly Bernard Wilsher (played by Lionel Jeffries) visits the Grand Hotel in Eastbourne for the first time since the thirties, there are flashbacks to the time when he last visited yet had to return home to attend the funeral of his father. In Blade on the Feather, Cartwright (Tom Conti), apparently an M.I.5 agent sent to kill an ageing British traitor, Cavendish (Donald Pleasance), remembers how his own father was murdered as a result of Cavendish's treachery. The key to understanding this motif lies in the third play, Rain on the Roof. Its central character is Billy (Ewan Stewart), a backward country youth who visits the house of a frustrated middle-class housewife, Janet (Cheryl Campbell), in order to receive tuition on how to read and write. Haunted by grief for his dead working class father, he wants to learn to read so that he can find solace in the Bible. Potter uses this dramatic situation to contrast the working class

puritanism of Billy with the secular values of middle-class Janet. In so doing, he raises questions as to whether, despite his naivety, Billy's simple instinctive faith may ultimately have greater wisdom than the more 'sophisticated', yet somehow 'shallower' life, Janet leads. In a key scene, Billy tells Janet:

BILLY: I've met Jesus... I been born again - all new. Like I've been washed all clean and shiny... Oh, you got no idea how low I was. Down in the dumps. Everything was like it was raining all the time... Raining on the slates...

JANET: Rain on the roof, yes.

BILLY: Rain on the blinkin' brain, I reckon. The Bible. That's the book I wanna read missus.²¹

Elsewhere, Potter has explained the 'Rain on the Roof' image of the title: "The way rain glints on slate", he stated in a 1980 newspaper interview, "has always seemed to be the colour of depression".²² As the play progresses, it becomes clear Billy has been taking dangerous amounts of anti-depressants to assuage his grief over his father. At Janet's house, he suffers a blackout while attempting to decipher some words she has written for him on a page. The scenario recalls Where the Buffalo Roam fourteen years earlier. Again, there is the same concern for adult literacy, expressed through the figure of a backward youth ('Billy' instead of 'Willy') who is traumatized and inhibited from reading by the memory of his father (: § 1.1).

The play ends in Grand Guignol fashion when, after a dinner party that ends in a blazing row between Janet and her husband John, the youth creeps back into the house and stabs Janet's womanising partner with a sliver of glass from his own greenhouse. In this way, akin to previous 'outsider' plays like Angels and Schmoedipus, a frustrated middle-class housewife is liberated from her domestic prison by the intervention of a

'visitor' from outside . Billy, too, at last finds peace. As Janet stares down at her dead husband and trembles, the youth settles down to his reading and writing as if all were normal - his only comment being: "Words. Funny things."²³

Leaving aside questions of its dramatic efficacy, underlying this violent dénouement is a clear symbolic subtext. Moving from inhibiting grief over his dead father to a new sense of peace and enthusiasm for 'words', Billy's progression mirrors Potter's own journey in the nineteen seventies towards a renewed spiritual optimism and instinctive religious faith expressed through writing. What is important to note is that Rain on the Roof links this progression to optimism with the death of a father.²⁴ Through the very extent of his distress, the death becomes a catalyst for Billy's discovery of faith and God. Out of sorrow and depression emerges an ultimate good, not only for him but for Janet as well. At the end of the play, her cynical adulterer of a husband is killed off and 'displaced' by someone of child-like simplicity and an instinctive faith. In terms of past Potter protagonists, the difference is that between a Jack Black or Daniel Miller and the later creation of Arthur Parker. It seems to be precisely this transformation in character which Rain on the Roof is symbolically charting.

If, of the three 1980 plays, Rain met with the most incomprehension on first transmission (and is therefore the work in most need of interpretation), Cream in My Coffee was undoubtedly the most successful and accessible.²⁵ With two distinguished actors in the leading roles (Peggy Ashcroft and Lionel Jeffries), the play went on to win many awards, including the 1982 Prix Italia. Alternating between the life of a couple in their youth (during the thirties) and in old age, as they

revisit the same hotel after a gap of forty years, the play is an exploration of memory and the passage of time. It occupies a similar territory to Alice, Dreamchild and Late Call - the events of youth are contrasted with old age and thereby the shape of an individual life is discerned. As Potter put it in his introduction to the published script, "Cream in My Coffee tries to show, among other things, how dangerous or corrosive it can be not to have some sense of the shape of your own life, and how damaging to seek what you are determined not to find."²⁶

In retrospect, perhaps the more interesting of the other plays is Blade on the Feather. Its title taken from an Eton boating song, this marked Potter's return, after many years of exploring 'spiritual' themes, to an examination of the English class system. Like Traitor, Blade is a spy drama, dealing with treachery and guilt. It is also structured as an 'outsider' play:

In this case, the intruding visitor is one Daniel Young who pays an unexpected call to the home of retired Cambridge academic, Jason Cavendish - ostensibly because he is writing a thesis on Cavendish's Tolkien-like fantasy novel, Cloud Cape. In fact, no-one is as they seem. Young is actually called Cartwright and has come to kill Cavendish because the latter was a former spy for the KGB who recruited Philby, Burgess and MacLean and who was also instrumental in the murder of Cartwright's father. Apparently the epitome of the reactionary upper-class gentleman, Cavendish and his butler Hill (Denholm Elliot) are both communists and traitors. They take great pleasure in acting out the class roles of master and servant in public, whilst in private remaining secret friends and confidantes. As the 'outsider', Cartwright succeeds in insinuating his way into this bizarre domestic situation, in a manner

akin to Martin in Brimstone. In spite of the suspicion and hostility of Cavendish, he succeeds in charming the old man's daughter and wife - seducing one and later murdering the other. Then, it becomes the turn of the old man to die.

As Potter suggested around the time of transmission, Blade plays with the conventions of the English spy story. A sense of decline, however, permeates the play for the old rigid class order which legitimated that genre's narratives of betrayal and subterfuge is now shown to be hopelessly irrecoverable. The traitor Cavendish finds himself in a "cosy, social democrat British Railways" post-war England from which he feels alienated and to which he cannot give his loyalty.²⁷ In this way, Blade clearly marks a development from Potter's previous explorations of social class. If, in The Nigel Barton Plays, the viewpoint on betrayal was firmly from the working class, in Traitor, Potter examined the question from the other side of the class divide; focusing on why someone from the upper class should choose to betray their own roots. Like Barton, Harris was very much portrayed as the exception rather than the rule - the outcast at school who forsakes his class in pursuit of the vision of a transcendent ideal.

With Blade, the traitor Cavendish lurks within the very bosom of English society. To all appearances, he is the image of the respectable English gentleman yet in him, categories of 'Left' and 'Right', 'patriotism' and 'treason' blur. He may have betrayed for the communists but paradoxically he is shown to have done so in the name of old England. All of this is brought into sharp relief by the play's ending. When Cartwright reveals to Cavendish he is here to kill him, he urges the traitor to 'play the game' and take his own life. Realising the

impossibility of his situation, the old man relents. All, however, is still not quite what it seems. As shots ring out and Cavendish dies, Hill comes rushing over. Gradually, it becomes clear that as in the best tradition of country house thrillers, it was the butler 'who done it' - he who was responsible for events all along. The closing dialogue between Hill and Cartwright reveals that the latter was no vengeful M.I.5 agent but a hit man from the KGB; contacted by Hill to kill the old man because in his dotage and guilt, Cavendish was in danger of confessing his secrets to his wife: an M.I.5 'sleeper'.

As Potter quite rightly suggested in 1980, Blade on the Feather is thus more than "slightly gamey" as a play. It manipulates the conventions of the English spy story, finally turning them inside out. At the time, Potter hoped the play would communicate his sense of "the decay of English life; of it being an over-ripe plum ready to fall - if not already rotting on the ground."²⁸ His drama shows tired games of class warfare being played out in a 'social democrat' Britain in which the old social structures that once legitimated them have long since decayed. As a result, none of the main characters quite believes any longer in what they are doing and none are who they say they are. In spite of its illustration that the shell of the class system still pertains in British life, Blade's message is that, ultimately, in terms of the attitudes which once ruled our country, we are all traitors now.

5.1) "Tears Before Bedtime": Joseph Losey and the Original "Track 29"

Originally, Potter and Trodd had intended to make the Blade script as a feature film, with James Mason and David Niven in the leading roles of the elderly traitors. That deal never came off, partly due to a long-standing feud between the two stars dating back to what each did to help the British effort in wartime. As Kenith Trodd recalls, "One stayed away. The other came back to fight".²⁹

The putative director of that project had been Joseph Losey who long had expressed a wish to work with Potter, in much the same way as he had collaborated with other British playwrights like Harold Pinter.³⁰ After meeting Potter to discuss Blade in December 1979, Losey kept in touch with him over the next few years, searching around for a suitable project on which they both could work. Now housed in the British Film Institute, Losey's personal files attest to his keenness to collaborate with Potter on a film aimed at audiences in his native America.

After a number of abortive suggestions (including an offer for Losey to direct Potter's first original stage play, Sufficient Carbohydrate), eventually, in January 1983, came a project on which they could both agree to collaborate.³¹ This was a new Potter film script, variously titled Tears Before Bedtime and Track 29. In fact, it was a reworking of Schmoedipus, with all of the action relocated from the London suburbs to Texas. (: § 6.0)³² Behind the film was an attempt by Potter to reconcile his recent screenwriting activities with an older commitment to television and the BBC. The plan was that Track 29 would mark the BBC's first real venture into feature film-making - that is, it would be a BBC film produced for TV transmission in Britain but also cinema release abroad. Following in the wake of the launch of Channel 4 and its Film on

4 initiative, the idea was, as Trodd puts it, "to make the BBC recognise its place in the British film industry", whereby productions could have a "double life": in the cinema as well as on television.³³

After his recent experience (and relative lack of success) in Hollywood, such a model was also a chance for Potter to get back to the BBC on the terms he and Trodd had always wanted - as 'independents' operating in association with it. Whereas before, attempts to be equal partners with the established broadcasting institutions had always come unstuck because it was the latter who held the purse strings, the advent of Channel 4 seemed to offer new opportunities. This time round, as it faced competition from the new channel, the BBC would be forced to recognise the 'independent' principle, particularly if the film were a co-production involving outside finance, in the manner of Film on Four.

In this spirit, two producers were attached to the project: Kenith Trodd as the BBC's liaison in London, whilst Rick McCallum, the young executive producer of the MGM Pennies, was recruited by Potter to act as his general representative in Hollywood, searching for American financial backing.³⁴ By July 1983, all the elements of production seemed to be in place - ready to go for an August shoot in Texas. Not only had McCallum secured American co-production money, Losey had gathered an all-star cast for this feature film version of Schmoedipus: Vanessa Redgrave as the bored, frustrated housewife; Anthony Higgins as her long-lost 'son' and Lee Marvin as the model railway-enthusiast husband. With Potter's help, it seemed that for the first time the BBC had found a genuine way to compete with Film on Four - circumventing its own previous bureaucratic hesitations in working with 'independents' and thus successfully integrating itself with the wider world of international film production.

For Losey too, the project was also special since it provided him with his first opportunity to work in his native America since he fled from McCarthyism to Europe in the early fifties.

Sadly, it was never to be. Whilst Losey was in Mexico, preparing for filming, news came through that the deal for Track 29 had collapsed, only days before shooting was due to start. In his subsequent letters to the cast and crew, the director confessed his devastation at the collapse: "I had begun to be too deeply involved...", he wrote.³⁵ In all his thirty two films, he had never known a film collapse "so late and [so] drastic..."³⁶

According to Rick McCallum, the reason for the collapse was that the BBC, at the very last moment, reneged on its agreement to make the film on 35mm (the standard gauge for theatrical release). They insisted, instead, that the production would have to conform to the gauge used for normal in-house filmed drama: 16mm. The decision proved incomprehensible to the American backers who promptly withdrew their support.³⁷

The following year Losey died. Though he went on to complete one more film (Steaming, made in Britain, ironically with Vanessa Redgrave), he was never able to fulfil his wish of working in America again. His widow, Patricia Losey, has written of the Track 29 episode:

... To make another film in the U.S... was something [Joe] really wanted to do and wanted to do for so long. If I put this first, before his desire to do a film with Dennis, it is only because the desire or need to make one more film in his own country preceded the unfulfilled collaboration with Dennis. If you were in your twenties or thirties and such a blow and such a humiliation fell upon you, I suppose it might make or break you, professionally and emotionally. Joe was already in his seventies and he survived in both ways. He made Steaming...³⁸

According to Kenith Trodd, it needed that one casualty of Track 29 in order for the BBC to get over its "silliness" in not allowing some key prestige productions to be shot on 35mm for theatrical release abroad.³⁹ By 1984, he had become part of a working party within the BBC, convened to examine just this question and more generally, the future of BBC Drama in the wake of Film on 4 and the rise of independent film production. Its recommendation was the setting up of a separate film arm so that the BBC could be more flexible, taking advantage both of independents and the theatrical film market.⁴⁰

Though through the eighties, Trodd was to lament its slowness, change was coming to BBC Drama. By 1988 and the appointment of a new Head of Drama, Mark Shivas, the BBC's Plays department was renamed BBC Films - a consolidation of a trend away from studio to filmed drama which had been accelerating since the early eighties. Independent producers were now free to come and go: the American Rick McCallum, for example, was able to have his own office in the BBC, whilst Trodd, now on a free-lance rolling contract, encountered no more problems in reconciling his BBC activities with the outside world. By 1989 and the Trodd-produced film, She's Been Away, shooting and editing on 35mm for overseas theatrical release was being actively encouraged within the BBC.⁴¹ Meanwhile, in 1987, Track 29 finally did get produced - significantly, however, as an independent British film outwith the BBC (: £ 6.0).

5.2) Movies, Radio, Novels, Theatre... Television ?

One Potter screenplay which did get made in the early eighties was his adaptation of Martin Cruz Smith's best-selling novel about murder and corruption in the K.G.B.: Gorky Park. Produced by Gene Kirkwood and Howard Koch Jr. for Orion Pictures in Hollywood, the film proved to be a disappointment for Potter - one that "never looked or sounded right".⁴²

Part of the problem was a difficult shoot in Helsinki which (because the Cold War was still very much alive at this time) had to double as Moscow for the American film crew. This uneased the film's British director, Michael Apted, who much prefers to shoot on actual locations.⁴³ Also uneasy was the film's casting of British comic actors (including Michael Elphick; Alexei Sayle; Rikki Fulton) in Russian character roles, alongside the film's 'heavyweight' American stars: William Hurt, Brian Dennehy and Lee Marvin.⁴⁴

If Potter was right to suggest all the elements ultimately do not gel, ironically, 1983's Gorky Park remains his one screenplay to have reached a mass international audience - despite or rather perhaps because, as a conventionally plotted thriller adaptation tailored to the demands of Hollywood, it is his least 'authored'.⁴⁵

Behind the compromise lay his desire to channel money gained from Hollywood screenwriting back into indigenous British film production. Released in September 1982, the movie version of Brimstone and Treacle marked the first fruit of his commitment to produce 'an annual British movie' through PFH (: § 4.1 d). Here too, however, compromise had begun to undermine the boldness of Potter's original dreams. Finance could not come from PFH alone but had to be raised jointly with American investors

- an arrangement that ultimately led to the casting of a pop star, Sting, in the central role of Martin the 'demon'.⁴⁶ Meanwhile, for different reasons, Potter, too, had been keen to inject a musical element into the film but found himself having to compromise for the sake of keeping his director, Richard Loncraine. As the movie's producer, Ken Trodd, recalls, the writer had wanted to "radicalize" Brimstone, using the Pennies device of characters bursting into song. Loncraine would have none of this, fearing that his attempt to establish himself in feature films would be swamped by Potter trademarks. Eventually, for the sake of keeping the project on track, Potter backed down.⁴⁷ This is why the film version of Brimstone remains faithful to the original TV play - a fact which drew fire from critics on the film's release, with many seeing it as "a bastard child" of the television studio which sat uneasily on the big screen.⁴⁸ The film did not do well at the British box office either. Marketed brazenly on the notoriety of its source material, it was given an X-Certificate by the British Board of Film Censors, thus automatically precluding the bulk of the teen audience who might otherwise have gone to see it on the strength of Sting.

It would be another four years before Potter's next 'annual British movie' would see the light of day. Dreamchild was yet another illustration of the difficulties (and sometimes stormy feuds) that were beginning to cloud the PFH dream of being involved in feature film production. The original screenplay, based on Alice, had been completed as far back as April 1983 and had initially been offered by Rick McCallum to MGM.⁴⁹ Perhaps understandably after the Pennies movie, the studio turned it down. By August of that year, however, following the collapse of Losey's Track 29, McCallum realised his next destination was England. Verity Lambert, then Head of Productions at Thorn EMI Films, had read the script

and wanted to finance it as a British movie for the international market.⁵⁰

The resulting £ 2.8 million film began shooting for seven weeks in the Summer of 1984, under Cream in My Coffee's director, Gavin Millar and with Coral Browne in the starring role of the elderly Alice Hargreaves. It was not until post-production, in the Winter of 1984/5, that major problems began to emerge with the film, as Millar found his 'director's cut' being interfered with by others. According to Millar, it was those at Thorn EMI, led by Verity Lambert, who took the film away from him and re-edited it into the version finally released (- in the process, leaving much on the cutting floor against his wishes).⁵¹ This version of events is contradicted, however, by the film's two producers, Rick McCallum and Kenith Trodd, who both allege independently of each other that it was not Lambert or Thorn EMI but themselves and the film's executive producer, none other than Potter, who re-edited the film into a version much closer to the latter's original screenplay. The reason, according to McCallum, was that Millar had improvised a number of additional scenes that were not in the original script, making the pace of the director's version much too slow.⁵² For Trodd, this was a difficult situation because he felt it threatened a walk-out from the director. It was for this reason he often found himself, to the exasperation of others, "tactically lining up" with Millar, urging patience so that the director could be allowed time to find 'his' film. Trodd well recalls Potter's response. To him, it was not Millar's but 'our' film - a film by PFH for which Millar had simply been hired by the company to direct.⁵³

Regardless of the rights and wrongs of this dispute (and there is clearly some bitterness involved), the episode illustrates the greater

difficulties Potter would inevitably experience in trying to impose his personal 'authorial' vision in cinema as opposed to television. Whilst in the 'writer's medium' of television, Millar was happy, with Cream in My Coffee to function as Potter's metteur en scène, he was less pleased to be overruled in the world of feature films where directors normally like to see themselves as the ultimate creative arbiters. Though the actual process of shooting films for TV may be essentially the same as cinema, albeit on a different scale, perceptions of power and status can often be much altered. In the case of Dreamchild, Potter's decision to act as the movie's executive producer testifies to his own keenness to exercise control over how this script was realised, even if that meant overruling the director and assuming direct responsibility for the editing of the film himself. As he commented to the New York Times on the film's release, the "more control you have, the more likely something will come out somewhat as you hoped."⁵⁴

In turn, these battles for creative control became extended to the shared production credit between McCallum and Trodd. As Trodd puts it, Potter thought the idea of inviting McCallum to England would be the perfect combination for his work - one producer (Trodd) for the "creative rub of ideas"; one (McCallum), skilled in budgets, logistics and raising finances.⁵⁵ In the tough new world of independent film-making which Potter had entered, an American from Hollywood was a major asset in raising U.S. finance for British films. Nevertheless, given that Trodd was Potter's long-standing producer and friend, associated in the public mind with the best of his television work, it was always going to be an uneasy relationship. If, in 1988, that relationship finally blew apart during pre-production on Blackeyes, the signs of major strain were already there as early as Dreamchild (: § 6.1 a).

Principally, these stemmed from the sense of both Potter and McCallum that Trodd was an absent producer on Dreamchild. As the writer put it in interview, "There were two producers on Dreamchild: Rick doing all the work and Ken turning up for photo sessions..."⁵⁶ Naturally, Trodd's point of view is different. He claims that the allegations of neglect on Dreamchild stem from his attempts through the eighties to reconcile involvement in independent production with Potter, alongside his own continuing desire to produce films for the BBC. The inevitable division this caused could often foster the impression of a lack of interest in the day to day needs of the production. Moreover, Trodd suggests that lying behind the allegations of neglect was Potter's "hurt" that the producer would never agree to work exclusively for the writer and PFH. Trodd recalls Potter had once suggested this as an "attractive financial proposition" but that he had refused.⁵⁷

Clearly, behind Trodd's determination to go his own way was a wish not to be seen as a simple functionary of Dennis Potter but instead to establish himself as a significant figure in his own right within British film and TV. Nevertheless, his insistence on combining Potter projects with other work inevitably created friction in the new three-way partnership that was being forged between himself, the writer and McCallum. Indeed, aside from those previously cited, one of the other reasons which may have induced Potter to invite McCallum over to England was simply a desire to get back at Trodd for the alleged 'hurt' caused by the latter's semi-detached role in PFH.

As if all of this were not enough, Dreamchild was to experience further troubles, even after post-production. By March 1985, the film was ready for release but it would be another seven months before it would gain a

limited run in selected cities: first, in the USA from October 1985 and then in Britain from January 1986. The reason was that in the intervening period between its completion and release, Thorn EMI Films collapsed. No-one consequently wanted to release Dreamchild. It was only Verity Lambert who supported the film and fought hard in the face of the crisis at EMI to let it be released. As a result of these troubles, any hopes the film had at the box office were effectively killed off. With no company actively behind it, seeking to recoup its investment, no-one was much interested in publicising Dreamchild. Despite glowing reviews in both countries, the film had no coherent release pattern - limping around a few major cities in Britain and the US before quickly closing, as the director puts it, even "while people were still queuing round the block to see it."⁵⁰

Thus by 1985, PFH Ltd.'s much-vaunted ideal of producing annual British movies was beginning to look considerably more threadbare than it had done in 1980, being increasingly hemmed in by economic pressures as well as problems of artistic control. Potter's escape from British television had proved lucrative and exciting in terms of the deal-making possibilities of the 'independent' but diversification away from the paternalist bureaucracy of the BBC had brought its own set of difficulties. It now took longer to nurse projects to fruition and when they did get produced, it could often be much more difficult to get them widely aired. Meanwhile, creative energies could be dissipated in the search for financial backing and the possible threat of artistic compromise that that entailed. Allied to these external pressures were internal ones: the battle for creative control which would inevitably result when a writer, accustomed to the privilege and protection of British television, attempted to impose his own strong 'authorial' vision

upon a medium which, by convention, had come to be regarded as the domain of the director. For all these reasons, the transformation of Potter from TV 'author' into cinema auteur was never going to be easy or painless.

In the early eighties, however, the writer had also diversified in other directions beyond screenwriting. The desire for greater freedom and adventure which remission of illness had triggered, not only led him away from television to feature films but also manifested itself in a new willingness to explore media he had previously shunned in favour of TV. An early example of this was his involvement in the launch of an independent local radio station in his home area of the Forest of Dean. With the help of fellow PFH partner, entrepreneur Clive Lindley, Potter helped put together a consortium which, in 1979, successfully bid for the first ILR franchise to be offered for the Gloucester and Cheltenham Area. The group won the franchise on the strength of its tender document which Potter himself wrote. Amounting to a personal credo for broadcasting, it was much praised by the IBA as "beautifully written, almost poetry..."⁵⁹ The launch of the new station, Severn Sound, accordingly took place in October 1980 and Potter remained a non-executive director on its Board until 1987.

Aside from cinema and radio, the early to mid eighties also saw Potter complete his second novel. Beginning with the image of a man breaking down on a train, Ticket to Ride would later become the inspiration for Potter's 1991 feature film, Secret Friends (: § Conclusion). Published in September 1986, the novel itself received good reviews and was even called in by the judges of that year's Booker Prize.⁶⁰

Meanwhile, after several previous aborted commissions, Potter's first original stage play was premiered in 1983.⁶¹ Sufficient Carbohydrate explored the conflict of wills between two middle-aged executives, one American, one British, as they holidayed together with their wives on a Greek island. The play occupied similar territory to The Bonegrinder insofar as it tried to use their dramatic conflict as a metaphor for the seedy post-war decline of Britain and the corresponding rise to world dominance of the US. This was thrown into sharp relief by the fact that both executives worked for the same multi-national food company - the homogenized processed food marketed by the company thus providing a concrete image for the play's view of the 'homogenizing processed' effects of US-inspired global capitalism.

Despite its status as a 'glittering', West End-style comedy of wills, a play written for theatre could never be the same, for the son of a coalminer, as one written for television. It did not have the potential of reaching a mass audience, composed of all social classes, in the way that television had. It could not give that "feeling... when you know all kinds of and conditions of people are watching your work when you've got a play on screen."⁶²

By 1983, Potter was beginning to have serious doubts he would ever have that experience again. Writing in the preface to Waiting for the Boat (a published collection of three of his old TV scripts), he expressed his "anger and frustration" that he "may well have written his "last 'original'... one-shot, one-slot play for television."⁶³ It had been four years since his last, Cream in My Coffee: "by far the longest such interval for nineteen years."⁶⁴

He had begun to realise that the desire for 'independence' which he and other practitioners had expressed at the end of the seventies had helped put the final nail in the coffin of the single TV play. Long under pressure in the schedules from censorship and cost pressures, the single play had finally been displaced by the greater consolidation of the film and TV industries - first through the independent film-making of Film on Four and then the feeling of the BBC (coupled with the genuine desire of leading drama producers like Trodd) that to compete it would have to make films. By 1984, the Play for Today slot had finished its final season and a new strand of films made by the BBC, Screen Two, was launched.⁶⁵ Though this change of title was in part cosmetic - the BBC had long made drama on film for Play for Today, side by side with recorded studio plays - Potter was not slow to realise that the move to all-film production marked a fundamental sea-change in the BBC's attitude towards writers of TV Drama. As he had suggested as far back as 1976, British TV had only remained a 'writer's medium' through certain class anachronisms, chiefly revolving around TV drama's theatrical origins and the corresponding notion of a 'theatre of the airwaves'.⁶⁶

If his desire to be 'independent' of the broadcasting institutions and to make films both for the BBC and theatrical release meant Potter was partly complicit in the changes of the early eighties which he was subsequently to deplore, nevertheless by 1985, he had come to realise that the move to filmed drama had succeeded in undermining the privileged position of the writer in British TV. As he stated in an interview in 1985, the move to all film work was a sign that the director had begun to displace the writer as the key figure in British TV drama. The consequences of that, he suggested, was that:

...In the end we'll get a director's television more than a writer's television, and everyone will say, 'Why is there nothing you can get your teeth into?' Why is it all so bland? Why are these issues all being skirted? Mostly because directors are on the whole... not so much interested in content as in that word which covers a great multitude of sins, 'style'.⁶⁷

Inextricably bound up with this mid-eighties pessimism was Potter's distaste for the Thatcherite market culture which had taken root in Britain during his absence from TV in the early eighties. What he disliked most about Thatcher's Britain was "that sleaze in the air that corrupts" so that the whole of British life "now seems to be taking place in a large hotel or supermarket. Everything is consumerist, including television."⁶⁸

After several years out 'in the cold', Potter duly returned to the BBC in 1985 to adapt F. Scott Fitzgerald's Tender Is the Night into a six part 'classic' serial for BBC-2.⁶⁹ The economics of British TV had changed sufficiently enough to make this new 'classic' serial not a studio drama but an expensive filmed co-production, made in association with Twentieth Century Fox and the American cable network, Showtime, and with one eye clearly fixed on programme sales abroad. Indeed, with his screenwriting experience and his name now a familiar one to American backers, Potter was so keenly sought by the BBC for this project that he was able to win "the kind of contract a writer dreams about." The Corporation were not to ask how he was getting on with the writing, nor to see any scripts of the episodes until they were ready, nor to give him advice. As Potter put it in 1985, "In other words, it was the kind of thing I'd always longed to have with the Americans, who continually say 'Can we see some pages, sir?'"⁷⁰ Thus if the ground on which he had based his writing career had irrevocably shifted by the mid eighties, Potter at least could return to television and be treated well on the basis of his own past

reputation, together with the BBC's need to have a 'name author' in order to deflect criticism from its output, whilst it continued to pursue its difficult transition away from recording studio plays towards producing films.⁷¹

The resulting adaptation of Tender Is the Night won praise when the finished production was transmitted between September and October 1985. Most critics felt Potter had succeeded where Fitzgerald himself had twice failed in terms of adapting the novel in a manner that retained its fable-like quality. Some, however, like Philip Purser, wondered whether, if instead of an expensive American co-production, so much care and attention could not have been lavished on "something closer to home" that was "in more urgent need of such treatment."⁷²

The answer would come almost exactly a year later with Potter's first original six-part drama for BBC TV since Pennies from Heaven. By the time he was doing press interviews for Tender Is the Night, the scripts of this new work had already been written and Potter was very keen to talk about them. The new series was called The Singing Detective and, he confidently assured journalists, it was going to "make Pennies from Heaven look like a rehearsal."⁷³

5.3) THE SINGING DETECTIVE

a) Origins

The trouble with Pennies, he stated, was that it had really been "a piece on one leg." Once the novelty of characters bursting into song had worn off, there was nowhere for the drama to go except to keep on repeating the same device. The Singing Detective, he asserted, would be much more ambitious. The songs would have a revelatory, investigatory function, relating more to what the central character, Philip Marlow, "doesn't know about... what he finds out gradually, which is what happened to him [as] a child..."⁷⁴

Just as gradual was the process by which Potter was able to arrive at even this degree of clarity about his new TV project. According to its eventual director, Jon Amiel, the genesis of the drama was a circuitous one. In order to be commissioned by the BBC, Potter went direct to Jonathan Powell, Head of Series and Serials, with the idea for a new serial - working title, The Singing Detective. The project which Powell then commissioned, in co-operation with ABC Australia (who agreed to put seed money in with a view to a future co-production), was on the basis of a two or three line idea, revolving around an American serviceman who returns to London to search for a girl he met during WWII. According to Amiel, the fact that Potter's subsequent scripts bore little resemblance to this initial suggestion is typical of the writer's creative process: "He'll allow the nature of the material to determine its own project."⁷⁵

Quite how this simple detection idea was transformed in the act of writing into the highly complex work that eventually got produced - one embracing hospital scenes, flashback, fantasy as well as elements of film noir - was an equally circuitous process. According to Potter, "the

whole thing began to take shape several years [before] when I was feeling rather sad about the death of the studio play. It seemed to have gone forever..."⁷⁶ He began to write down some ideas he had for a play: a series of scenes set in a hospital ward. Dealing with the interaction of patients from all classes and walks of life, reluctantly thrown together through illness, it was really the "idea for a sitcom." Nevertheless, the writer kept on "adding bits", with that growing "sense of dread when you know you're digging out something."⁷⁷

What is striking is how closely the hospital scenes in the finished scripts resemble those from one of Potter's own 'lost' studio plays, written almost exactly twenty years before: Emergency Ward 9 (: § 1.2). This is not simply a case of a writer, with experience of hospitals, returning to familiar ground. Rather, certain characters and events from the 1966 play map directly onto the 1986 work, suggesting the latter started life as a conscious reworking of Emergency Ward 9 - an homage to the days of studio drama upon which he and many of his contemporaries founded their careers yet which, by the mid-eighties, had itself become a patient, in terminal decline.⁷⁸

Hence not only is it in name that Marlow, the central hospitalised protagonist of The Singing Detective, echoes that of 'Padstow' in Emergency Ward 9. Both are writers too. True to his Chanderlesque moniker, the former is a writer of detective stories, while the latter, though ostensibly a teacher and lay preacher, bears all the hallmarks of an author surrogate. In the 1966 play, he is seen sitting up in bed, scribbling furiously: "Still jotting it all down, Mr Padstow?" a nurse asks. "Yes," he replies. "This is a good place to work."⁷⁹

Likewise, though twenty years separate the dramas, both protagonists find themselves beside recognisably similar patients in the ward. In Episode Two of the 1986 serial, Marlow's fellow patient in the next bed is George, an irascible old working-class Londoner. Like his equivalent, Flanders, in Emergency Ward 9, his relationship to the irritated writer is the source of much comedy (: § 1.2). At the same time, the fact that his was the generation which helped win the war is also foregrounded. George tells Marlow of how, as a soldier, he helped liberate Germany in 1945: "They'd come out of holes, these krauts... Holes in the grahnd..."⁸⁰

Also similar to Emergency Ward 9 is the exploration of race relations in the hospital scenes. The equivalent to the black character, Adzola, of the 1966 play is Ali, a Pakistani occupying the bed next to Marlow's in Episode One (later to be occupied by George). In both works, Adzola and Ali are victims of racial abuse, yet in each case, expectations of how will they react are undercut. In The Singing Detective, when a junior doctor asks Ali whether Marlow has been making offensive remarks about his 'origins', the Pakistani gives a "whoop of laughter", in mockery of the untried houseman and his high moral tone.⁸¹

The necessity of a tough-minded humour in hospital is underscored by the inclusion of very similar death scenes in both Emergency Ward 9 and The Singing Detective. In the 1966 play, the death labours of an old man are counterpointed with Padstow's lofty theological speculation to Flanders that there is a heaven - a place of "No money. No cares. Just perfect peace in God."⁸² In Episode Three of The Singing Detective, it is the elderly George who dies. In a famous controversial scene, Potter returns to the same 'counterpoint' technique he used twenty years before in Emergency Ward 9. Here, however, it is sex and death which are

contrasted: shots in 'the present' of doctors trying to save George's life are juxtaposed with flashbacks to the moment in Marlow's childhood, when he witnessed his mother commit adultery with his father's best friend.⁹³

Sex and death thus become linked in Marlow's mind, as 'primal scenes' he has witnessed; connoting for him the unrelieved physicality and mortality of human life. As with the contrast between Padstow's belief and the reality of dying in Emergency Ward 9, the question The Singing Detective raises through the hospital scenes - a world of bed, bodies and death - is whether there is anything beyond what Potter called "the suffocating materiality" of things?⁹⁴ To find that out and to attempt to uncover the roots of his own illness, Marlow confronts his own predicament by paradoxically escaping from it inside his head. Not only does he fantasise scenes from one of his old detective novels, he begins to delve into his own past - to his remote rural upbringing in an "English Forest" and the subsequent trauma he experienced when, as a boy, he was uprooted from this secure environment in 1945 and taken by his mother to the harsh, alien world of her native London.⁹⁵ In this way, it is possible to see the process by which Potter kept on 'adding bits' to his original hospital scenes: seeking to give his writer character a past; to explain through flashback the events that led to illness. What is significant is how closely the 'memories' given to Marlow resemble Potter's own.

As the writer himself suggested, The Singing Detective, in terms of his TV writing, was his "first official brush with the autobiographical form."⁹⁶ That is not the same, however, as calling it straightforward autobiography, as Potter was keen to stress in interview. He asserted the drama is definitely not his autobiography. Rather, it plays "with the

autobiographical genre because that is a very powerful way of writing. One thinks, 'Oh this must be the truth.' And of course it isn't."⁸⁷

Certainly, the use of surface detail from the writer's own life - the biographical 'facts' - is undeniable. Marlow is given the same crippling skin disease, psoriatic arthropathy, from which Potter himself suffered. Potter too was raised in an 'English Forest', from whence in 1945, his mother took him to London for nine months (: § 0.1). What therefore was the purpose of aligning Marlow's past to the writer's own so closely ? As we have seen with Hide and Seek, Potter claimed very good artistic reasons: it gives the work a present tense immediacy so that "it comes across as true... as characters you can't beat off... They're like somebody coming up to you and that's what I'm after..." (: § 3.1) Because, according to him, this use of his own autobiography is entirely selective and pre-meditated, The Singing Detective therefore seems to be more self-exposing than it actually is. Manipulating one's own autobiography for fictional purposes becomes simply a very powerful convention - "perhaps the most powerful one left in the hands of a writer."⁸⁸

For someone with a dislike of self-exposure, this is surely, however, a very dangerous 'convention'. Regardless of the perceptions of the viewing audience as to the drama's autobiographical extent, is there not for the writer the ever-present danger that by endowing an imaginary character with so many of the 'facts' of his own life, that that character will somehow 'slip' off the page, moving from being the product of fantasy into something too close to reality ? Clearly, to ask this is to return to the territory of Hide and Seek: the theme of characters escaping 'authors' and the progressive onion layer distinctions which that novel motivated between surface 'fact', underlying 'fiction' and deeper 'truth'

(: § 3.1). As Section 5.3 (c) will show, The Singing Detective owes much to Potter's first novel and indeed makes conscious allusion to it.

For the moment, however, it is worth noting that during the actual process of writing, Potter did feel an anxiety attendant upon reworking the pain of his own past experience for dramatic purposes:

When I sat down to write The Singing Detective, I was uneasy about the project. I continually tried to hold it away, thinking that it would be nauseous for the viewer. Then, I thought, write it. Get it out of the system. I couldn't write a horror story which is what it would have become so I used all the conventions I like - detective stories, musicals, situation comedy...⁹⁹

Hence the Pennies distanciation device of characters bursting into song became, here, a way for Potter to distance himself emotionally from too ready an identification with the 'horror story' of the ill central protagonist.

Likewise, it was from this standpoint that Potter was finally able to accommodate his 'sit com' hospital scenes with the forties private eye narrative he was originally commissioned to write. Given that Marlow is in search of self-knowledge and a way out of illness, he is a kind of detective, casting his 'private eye' inwards. This persona is literally embodied in dramatised fantasy scenes (ostensibly from the old detective novel the main character is rewriting in his head) in which he is shown as the detective hero of his own fiction - 'The Singing Detective', solving, in 1945, the mystery of a drowned woman, at the behest of his client (as well as prime suspect), Mark Binney.⁹⁰

As previously indicated, 1945 is not just the period setting of Marlow's novel but also the year of his childhood to which he keeps returning in

memory. It was, of course, too, the year World War Two ended: a fact the drama registers through flashbacks to Marlow's sense as a child that with the War rushing to an end, peace and harmony will prevail at last. As the boy tells himself, now the brave Allies have vanquished Nazi evil, "Everything. It'll be alright."⁹¹

Contrast this with the adult's view of the same period in his detective fantasies. The 1945 thriller scenes of The Singing Detective are pure film noir: a world of suspicion and paranoia where nothing is as it seems. Gradually, as Marlow's thriller narrative unfolds intermittently over six episodes, it becomes clear that the case of Binney and the drowned woman is only part of a much wider conspiracy, involving British and American attempts to smuggle Nazi rocket scientists out from under the noses of the KGB in order to start a new Cold War against the USSR. The same 'moral murk' of film noir is visibly present in the thriller scenes of The Singing Detective: old wartime certainties of Good (the Allies) against Evil (the Nazis) have evaporated to be replaced by a new climate of confusion in which a former enemy has been co-opted in the fight against a previous ally. As suggested by the rocket conspiracy, hidden malevolent forces are shown to play under a public facade of propriety, with the result that no-one is quite sure anymore who the true enemy is: the one in the East or someone much closer to home. This changed atmosphere suits the hard-boiled cynicism of a Chandler-like Singing Detective well.

It also, however, has clear links with both the 'real' Marlow's past and his hospital present. As dramatised by the thriller conspiracy, Britain's historical transition from Imperial moral crusader against the Nazis to a new Cold War role which is diminished and unclear alongside that of the

United States, finds a parallel in Marlow's childhood and his sense of confusion and loss of integration - first on witnessing his mother's secret woodland adultery and then on being uprooted from 'The Forest' and taken by her to live in London. As the child sums it up on voice-over in Episode Three, "Summat's wrong !... This yunt never right. Where's our Dad then ? Do him know about the woods ? ... I thought everything was supposed to be alright when we... beat them [Germans]". His thoughts are taken up on the soundtrack by the adult Marlow, reliving the confusion: "Where we goo-ing ? Mum ?... Round and round I reckon. Round and round..."⁹²

'Round and round' describes the swirl of Marlow's memories and fantasies in hospital but given the historical backdrop of 1945, it also hints at a wider view of Britain in spiralling decline since the war. As we have seen, this sense has emerged elsewhere in Potter's writing - in The Bonegrinder, Blade on the Feather but also, crucially, in Emergency Ward 9 where the world of the hospital ward became a metaphor for Potter's view of post-war Britain, in seedy decline from its Imperial past and riven by class and racial strife (: § 1.2). Given this play's links with the composition of The Singing Detective, something of the same symbolism seems to have carried over into the creation of the hospitalised Marlow: the image of the diseased patient, in mortal decline and self-inflicted exile from the rest of the world of the ward, coming to represent the ills of the wider body politic.

Written in 1985, The Singing Detective can thus, in one sense, be seen as Potter's personal assessment of the previous forty years of post-war history through which he had lived: from the high childhood hopes of V.E. Day to cynicism and diseased decline in the mid-eighties; in a changed

world which, more and more within the drama, comes to parallel the paranoid, conspiratorial atmosphere of Marlow's noir detective thriller.⁹³ The fact that the year in which The Singing Detective was written also marked Potter's fiftieth birthday seems no coincidence in this respect. The preoccupation with mortality and the concern to review the past right back to the year of 'that fateful age of ten' can both be related to this. (: § 1.0 b) At the same time, not only was 1985 the fortieth anniversary of that date, it also marked the twentieth of Potter's career as a television writer. As he himself suggested in pre-transmission interviews of the time, given The Singing Detective marked his return to original TV writing after several years away, he had wanted to use it to play "with the conventions - the musical convention, the situation comedy convention, the detective story convention - in order to see what TV drama can do."⁹⁴

The sentiment precisely echoes his evangelistic credo of the mid-sixties (embodied in such early plays as Vote, Vote, Vote and Emergency Ward 9) that the TV play should draw its vivacity from the other genres and programme styles around it (: § 1.2). If the reworking of the Emergency Ward 9 hospital scenes can be seen as part of Potter's general backward glance at his beginnings in TV drama, even more so is the inclusion within The Singing Detective of a scene almost identical to the Georgie Pringle classroom scene, featured in his first big success of 1965, Stand Up, Nigel Barton. As the writer put it in interview, one of the reasons for its inclusion was to show there could be continuity, even in what is commonly held to be the 'ephemeral medium' of television.⁹⁵ It is in this light that his homage to the studio play should also be seen - its terminal decline paralleling the mortal decline of the ill writer Marlow and by extension Potter's view of post-war Britain.

As suggested even by its very title, The Singing Detective is not, however, a pessimistic work. Rather, it evinces a resilient spiritual optimism in which reviewing the past becomes a means of self-renewal; a way in which to cope more successfully with a hostile present. In that sense, the work has to be seen in relation to the contemporaneous Dreamchild (itself a reworking of 1965 material: Alice) as well as the Late Call serial of exactly ten years before. (: § 3.0) In each of these works, memory and fantasy become the means by which an ageing central protagonist gains a sense of the shape of his or her own life, re-establishing touch with the 'wonder' of a lost childhood. In so doing, they become rejuvenated - imbued once more with the sense of sovereignty and personal freedom they once felt as children. In The Singing Detective, the more the middle-aged Marlow succeeds, like a detective, in piecing together and understanding his own past, the more he is able to get well, until, finally, at the end of Episode Six, he is free to leave hospital, 'cured' (: § 5.3 (c)).

If the works are similar, the difference between The Singing Detective and the other two lies in its ambition and scale. Whilst in Late Call and Dreamchild, the review of the past was solely a function of the memories and imagination of an individual protagonist, in The Singing Detective, it is also, implicitly, a review of forty years of British post-war history, including Potter's twenty as a TV writer. Regardless of questions of its relationship to autobiographical 'fact', it is thus a work much closer to Potter himself. That is, in keeping with the modernist sensibility and self-reference of Hide and Seek and Only Make Believe, the decision to root a view of the past in the experiences and imagination of a writer protagonist, emphasises that far from being an objective assessment, any perspective on history can only ever be

subjective. As Potter suggested prior to its transmission in 1986, all the events in The Singing Detective always return to one point of contact... [Marlow] in a hospital bed..."⁹⁶ The work can only ever be about itself and its writer. It is for this reason one must believe Potter when he also asserted that in writing The Singing Detective, he had made "the closest approach" yet to his own feelings: of "why I am like I am."⁹⁷

5.3 b) Production

The Singing Detective was shot between January and July 1986. Post-production then began in August and lasted right through to the first transmission dates in November 1986 - a very tight timetable given the complexity of the £2 million drama and its subsequent edit. During filming, the director, Jon Amiel, had to shoot between four and five minutes of material a day just to keep on schedule (: the average rate on a feature film, by comparison, is one and a half to two minutes per day).

That the seven hour drama not only was completed on time but went on to earn great critical acclaim is thus a tribute to the efforts of the director, his cast and crew. This speed of assembly was not entirely a function, however, of the relatively modest BBC budget.⁹⁸ The Singing Detective had an initially troubled production which saw it acquire no fewer than three producers.

The first was John Harris, a BBC Series and Serials producer, assigned by Jonathan Powell as an appropriate liaison with his department. As suggested by his decision to be commissioned by Powell, Potter had been keen, after the wrangles over Dreamchild, to avoid the involvement of Trodd in the Plays Department. Harris, however, was a line producer with none of the experience of working on a Pennies-type 'drama with music' that Trodd had. Accordingly, the latter was drafted in as executive producer and music consultant: a less hands-on job which still allowed him his wish to pursue his own film projects.

It was a measure of Potter's unease that Rick McCallum was also requested to be co-executive producer. At that time, it was almost unheard of for an 'outside' producer (particularly an American with a Hollywood

background) to be asked to help the Corporation on one of its home-grown drama projects. In interview, McCallum has no doubts why he was hired. He claims the production had "languished" under Trodd who, far from being keen, was more interested in making Potter's Christabel script instead (§ 6.0 b). McCallum states his task was to get the sets built, after which he departed, prior to the shooting of Episode One (- lured away, in fact, by an offer to work on the Nic Roeg feature film, Castaway⁹⁹).

Hence as the director Jon Amiel puts it, the whole production aspect of The Singing Detective was "a curious hybrid" of three reluctant figures: McCallum, building the sets and promptly disappearing to the sunnier climes of Castaway; Harris, a line producer, allocating resources from his office and finally Trodd, executive producer and music consultant, who, because of Harris' inexperience, begrudgingly found himself having to act as producer during shooting, with more appearances on set than was to his liking.¹⁰⁰

In turn, what this demonstrates is how much The Singing Detective was really the result of the effort of two individuals: Potter and his then relatively inexperienced director, Amiel. Rick McCallum admits this:

In terms of society, I can live within the context that everybody thinks I did [The Singing Detective]. But in reality, those guys, the two of them, made that virtually almost by themselves... And I mean it's one of the great, great collaborations of all time, between a director and a writer...¹⁰¹

Not only that but it was the first time that Potter had ever had such a relationship with a director. In the past, the writer had always been absent from the actual production process of his work. With the exception of perhaps one or two meetings with the director to discuss

casting and possibly a visit to rehearsals or the actual set during shooting, his involvement with his scripts had always ended when he handed them over, complete, to be produced by the BBC or ITV. The task of the director was then to realise them technically, endeavouring at all times to stay close to the writer's intentions and 'meanings'. While, partly, this absence from production was due to Potter's poor health (and attendant reclusiveness), it also had much to do with the more general nature of TV play production during the sixties and seventies and in particular the clear division of labour in this period between the writer's privileged 'creativity' and the director's less regarded 'technique' (: § 0.0 b).

By 1985 and The Singing Detective, times had changed somewhat. As Potter had begun to register with trepidation, the rise of filmed drama was leading to a rise in the power and assertiveness of directors who no longer were quite so prepared to subordinate their contribution wholly to the demands of script and writer. Given Potter's fear that television would soon become inimical to his type of 'authored' drama, it is thus remarkable that Amiel managed to win the writer's trust and confidence on The Singing Detective, forging a relationship with him which the director describes as "one of the most harmonious and exhilarating" he has ever had with a writer.¹⁰²

Essentially, the key to this was the absence of any producer intermediary. Amiel had not been the first choice to direct The Singing Detective: a number of other more well-known directors at the time, including Stephen Frears and Dreamchild's Gavin Millar, had turned it down, on the grounds of not wishing to commit themselves 'merely' to television for six months. As one of the up and coming BBC-trained

directors, Amiel had been offered the drama, on the strength of his past television work. Because of the situation with the reluctant producers, however, he then found himself having to create his own relationship with Potter, without any of the normal support of a producer third party. In July 1985, having arranged for writer and director to meet for the first time, Kenith Trodd had opted to head for Italy (ostensibly to work on his own project, The MacGuffin) - a decision which so enraged Potter, he tried, unsuccessfully, to have Trodd sacked from The Singing Detective.¹⁰³

In the long run, such a reduction of interest in the drama to two individuals paid dividends. In the short term, it produced what Amiel describes as two "extremely difficult and confrontational" meetings with Potter. Having read the scripts, Amiel had felt he was in the presence of a rare television 'masterpiece'. As an ex-BBC story editor, however, he realised there were certain aspects of the original scripts that were "not fully achieved". These had to do with the relationship between Marlow and his wife, Nicola; the 1945 thriller strand (which Amiel felt needed to be brought out more strongly) and above all, the very end of the drama. Differing considerably from that which finally made it onto the screen, the director did not find the original dénouement either emotionally strong enough or satisfying.

Given these specific points, amidst his general admiration for the piece, Amiel found himself in the difficult position of being the junior partner in a relationship with Britain's premier television writer and worse, with no committed producer to back up his criticisms. Because of this, he expected Potter to be arrogant and unbending. Accordingly, he states he made up his own mind to be "extremely arrogant and cocky" in the first meetings, spelling out all the things he thought were wrong with the

scripts. As Amiel puts it, "I was determined to prove I was not in awe of him - which I was."¹⁰⁴

The result, predictably, was deadlock, with the writer's suspicions about the rise of directors merely fuelled. It was only once both sides opted to lay down their protective armour that real progress began to be made. The way this was done was precisely to break down the division of labour between creativity and technique that had always left Potter an 'outsider' in the production of his own work. As Amiel phrases it, just as he had to persuade Potter to allow a director for the first time to offer advice on the rewriting of scripts, so too had the director to put aside his own ego, allowing the writer to become involved (again more or less for the first time) in the process of translating images on screen. Hence if, as occurred in one instance, Potter said he did not like the way a particular scene had been shot, the director would put aside his own "bristling ego" and agree to do it again - though only if the writer would write it again. In this way, states Amiel, he and Potter forged a relationship through confrontation which eventually became a collaboration, with personal pride subordinated to the common interest of improving the work on screen.¹⁰⁵

In so doing, Amiel's crucial contribution to The Singing Detective was to readjust its whole emotional weight, making the plight of the central character much more sympathetic to an audience. In many ways, Potter resembled Brecht in as much as he always preferred to try and make his audiences think, rather than simply feel.¹⁰⁶ During the drafting of The Singing Detective, he also tried, as we have seen, to distance himself emotionally from too close an identification with the central protagonist. The result was what Amiel felt to be an "extraordinary intellectual

journey", though with little sense of an emotional release attendant on the process. This was particularly the case with the original ending which became almost a clinical "pursuit of the writer" (who was finally revealed to be none other than 'Dennis Potter' himself)!^{o7}

After initial hostility, Amiel's criticisms sent Potter back to the scripts but with one major proviso. As the writer told him seven weeks before shooting, if he was going to rewrite, then it would not just be certain bits. He would have to rewrite the lot, starting at page one. Understandably, this put a certain chill on proceedings. As a script editor, Amiel had seen "the terrible tendency" of writers "to throw dozens of babies out with the bathwater" on rewriting. This was not the case with Potter. While heavily under attack from psoriatic arthropathy, he rewrote seven hours of material of the utmost complexity from 'top to bottom' in time for shooting, working at the rate of effectively one episode per week. Not only that but according to Amiel he managed to rewrite "with astounding editorial sense" - preserving what was good, excising what was weak. In this way, the plot of the 1945 thriller strand was strengthened but more importantly, a greater emphasis came to be placed upon Marlow's vulnerability as a character. This is particularly so with the rewritten final episode, where Marlow's love for his estranged wife, Nicola, is revealed through his fantasising of her death and his tearful realisation of how much he needs her. As Amiel puts it, finding that formula was important. Instead of simply tying up a series of parallel enigmas from the other five episodes (as before), the rewritten sixth episode took a giant leap sideways to solve them, in a manner designed both to satisfy "the audience's needs for answers" and give "an emotionally coherent follow-through". Thus Marlow confronts his own feelings through fantasy for the first time and this sets the scene

for the rewritten ending: a climactic shoot-out, in which he kills off his old sick self in order to achieve his own regeneration.¹⁰⁸

Amiel's emphasis on 'emotion' versus Potter's on 'intellect' continued into many other areas of production. In casting, the director even threatened to resign, unless he got his own way over the choice of lead. Potter's (and his producers') favourite for the part was the Shakespearian actor, Nicol Williamson. The reasons were clear: Williamson was an actor of great stature, capable of capturing Marlow's inner rage. The director, however, would not have him, believing he was a performer of almost "glacial coldness" who might incarnate Marlow's anger but not his vulnerability. Consequently, Michael Gambon was offered the part, as Amiel's 'only contender'.¹⁰⁹

Another area where Potter's views were challenged and overridden was on the question of film. Clinging to his preference for studio drama, the writer had originally wanted all of the hospital scenes to be recorded on tape in the multi-camera studio (in line with his hommage to the studio play). Not only was Trodd against it but by 1985, directors had grown used to working at the BBC on 16mm film, particularly on large projects such as this. As Amiel recalls, Potter did not need to be coaxed much into acquiescence. The logic of film had become 'unanswerable'.¹¹⁰

Once in shooting, this logic translated itself into a directorial concern to create an expressive mise en scene. Amiel worked closely with the designer (Jim Clay) and lighting cameraman (Ken Westbury) to give each of the main narrative strands of the drama its own distinctive look. In particular, there was a concern not to bathe the flashbacks of Marlow's childhood in sepia tones but to make the remembered world of the Forest

more "richly saturated with colour and intensely vivid" than the world of the present which would seem insipid by comparison. Accordingly, the rich greens and yellows of the Forest were contrasted by very soft, diffuse lighting for the hospital scenes, where design and costume were drained of all primary colours. Finally, for the thriller strand, low key film noir lighting ("hard source lights with hard shadows") was Amiel's inevitable choice for evoking the paranoid Cold war atmosphere of 1945 London.'''

Largely overlooked in reviews of the time, the director's contribution to The Singing Detective was thus a vital one. In key areas such as casting and mise en scène, he put his own stamp on the material, readjusting the whole emotional temperature. Not only that but in spite of his relatively junior status, he bravely did what no other director had ever done before with Potter - criticise his TV scripts and ask for rewrites. If, as Amiel maintains, Potter remains primo genitur and 'author' of the work (:the director functioning as 'interpreter'; refining and embellishing what was in the original scripts), nevertheless it seems clear that in the course of the actual production process of The Singing Detective, the writer came closest to his first real creative collaboration with a director.'''²

This is particularly borne out by post-production where, true to their original bargain, Potter was, for the first time in his writing career, invited to be part of the process - joining Amiel in the cutting rooms for some of the editing of the six episodes. Together, they made a number of audacious changes (including greater 'associative' cross-cutting between the different narrative strands). Amiel quotes Potter that in the editing, The Singing Detective received its "'last and most important rewrite of all"'.'''³

Hence almost by accident, Potter's concern for intellectual rigour found a perfect complement in Amiel's directorial desire for greater viewer empathy. Arguably, it was just this blend of qualities that gave the drama its impact and made it such a success, not only amongst Potter's usual champions within the British press but to a large extent with the popular audience as well (: § 5.3 d).

5.3 c) Interpretation

If Amiel's impact on the drama's emotional appeal was decisive, there can be no disguising how much of The Singing Detective is uniquely Potter's. True to its implicit status as a review of his twenty years in TV Drama, The Singing Detective distils all of his main themes and preoccupations as a writer, offering what is almost a television version of his first novel, Hide and Seek (: § 3.1). Certainly, the links between the two works are palpable:

In each, a writer character probes his own work in search of autobiographical connections; 'clues' to himself. In common with the 'Author' in Hide and Seek, Marlow realises he has revealed himself through fiction: his attitude to women (as evinced by his constant drowning of female characters) and thus clues to the roots of his own illness. Like the 'Author', he begins to 'rewrite' (replaying scenes in his own mind); a process that gradually brings him nearer and nearer to himself, as figures from his imagination start to converge on the 'real world' of the hospital ward. Throughout the fantasy thriller strand of the drama, two mysterious men in raincoats have dogged The Singing Detective's every effort to solve the case of the drowned woman. Ostensibly from 'Counter-Intelligence', it seemed to be their job to cover up the conspiracy by any means possible, including murder. Suddenly, at the end of Episode Six, it is this pair the writer finds by his hospital bedside. As they tell him, they are dissatisfied with their place in the story. Their roles are 'unclear': "We're padding. Like a couple of bleed'n sofas."¹⁴

Like Daniel Miller in Hide and Seek, these are self-aware characters who have decided to confront their malevolent 'Author'. Demanding to know who they are, they start to torture Marlow yet as they do so, another of

his fictions seems to cross into 'reality'. With guns blazing, The Singing Detective bursts into the ward. In the ensuing shootout, he kills one of the mysterious men but as he takes aim at the second, he is stopped by a shout from his 'other self': "No ! Wait! That's murder !" The detective turns to camera to address us, the audience: "... Murder, he says. I call it pruning. Only one of us is going to walk out of here. Sweeter than the roses..."¹¹⁵

And suddenly he fires - though not at the mysterious man. Instead it is the 'real' Marlow, the ill figure in the bed, who receives a bullet in the skull. As the detective explains to camera: "I suppose you could say we'd been partners him and me... But, hell, this was one sick fellow from way back when. And I reckon I'm man enough to tie my own shoelaces now."¹¹⁶

With that, the scene in the ward returns to apparent 'normality': busy, with all of the usual patients in place. Clear-cut distinctions between reality and fantasy nevertheless continue to be undermined as the curtains around Marlow's bed open to reveal him fully recovered, dressed and ready to leave hospital. As Nicola, his wife, arrives to take him home, Marlow mutters, "I think I've cracked this case, folks." He calls to her, "Have you brought my hat ?" Reaching into a hold-all, it is The Singing Detective's old trilby hat she hands to him. As Potter's script puts it, "Marlow winks at her, veritabily The Singing Detective and puts the hat on, jauntily."¹¹⁷

Thus the writer cracks the case of his own recovery, symbolically 'pruning' his old weak, sick self and transforming himself into his own fictional ideal: The Singing Detective. The final confrontation with the mysterious men allowed the true villain of the drama to be unmasked. The

'Author' of the conspiracy - the arch-manipulator behind all the events in the thriller fantasy - was the writer himself. He was the 'Counter-Intelligence' behind the mysterious men; the patient who secretly did not want to get well.

The slaying of the ill writer and his resurrection in the garb of the Singing Detective thus becomes a metaphor for a psychological/ spiritual renewal that takes place within Marlow. It also echoes the ending of Hide and Seek in which a troubled novelist achieved 'release' from his paranoid fiction by becoming his own fictional alter ego, Daniel Miller. (: § 3.1) In Hide and Seek, as the 'Author' got closer to himself through the Miller persona, he realised that his suspicions about his wife's infidelity were false. It was his own compulsive desire for prostitutes and corresponding inability to make love to her which had been the real problem in their marriage. In The Singing Detective, too, Marlow suspects Nicola of having an affair but as the drama progresses, it becomes clear this is simply a figment of his paranoid imagination. In a key flashback scene in Episode Five, the truth is revealed: the writer is shown in bed with a prostitute, just as earlier, a fantasy scene from his 1945 thriller had portrayed his fictional 'villain', Mark Binney, sleeping with a glamorous Russian prostitute.''⁹ As with the 'Author' in Hide and Seek, Marlow's sexual angst is thus suggested as the cause of his estrangement with his wife. It is his attempts to submerge his sexuality which lie behind his drowning of female characters in fiction and in 'reality', his own furtive liaisons with prostitutes.

In both works, by confronting this guilt, the writer character becomes in a position to banish it. Facing up to his guilt over his adultery with prostitutes (and in the rewritten ending, his love for Nicola), Marlow is

able, like his counterpart in Hide and Seek, to recognise himself as 'Author of his Fate'. Reshaping reality to become his own character, he escapes out into the 'open air' beyond the fiction (: § 3.1). As Potter's script describes it, Marlow heads out of the ward with Nicola and "along the corridor to freedom", his slow progress accompanied by "the sound of Vera Lynn sweetly promising 'We'll Meet Again'"; until, eventually, disappearing from view, "the empty corridor is resonant with... birdsong and the sound of the wind in the leaves."¹⁹ In the best traditions of the romantic hero, Marlow 'the detective' thus 'gets the girl' in the end. Reunited with ('meeting again') his estranged wife, he heads off into the sunset - off the page; the screen - in order to live happily ever after.

This fictive fairy tale quality is emphasised through the figure of Reginald, a fellow patient in Marlow's ward. Throughout the hospital scenes, he has been shown engrossed in an old paperback thriller which, by dramatic coincidence, just happens to be the same novel Marlow is rewriting in his head. Even stranger, Reginald's progress through the book seems to keep pace with the writer's own mental review (and by extension, the audience's knowledge of events in the thriller strand). By Episode Five, Reginald has plucked up enough courage to ask the writer "Do killed 'er, then ?", at the exact moment Marlow himself is ruminating on the mystery of the drowned woman in his novel. All he can mutter by way of reply is "Christ. A reader."²⁰

In this way, Reginald the 'reader' assumes the role almost of viewer surrogate in the drama, confronting the 'Author' character with the audience's own unanswered questions. By having Reginald's progress through the novel mirror the progress of the TV audience through the drama, Potter draws attention to the 'manufacture' of The Singing

Detective - of his TV text as a process unfolding to design.¹²¹ As viewer surrogate in the ward, it is highly appropriate that by the end of Episode Six, Reginald should reach the very last page of Marlow's 'Singing Detective' novel, just as we, the audience, have come to the end of Potter's drama. In the final scene, as Marlow heads out of the ward to freedom, Reginald reads aloud: "And - her - soft - red - lips - clam - clamp - clamped - themselves - on - his. The - End -." He looks up from his paperback and mutters: "Lucky devil !"¹²²

The story Reginald is reading - of a 'lucky devil' who cheats death and runs off with the girl at the end - is thus literally that of the writer, Marlow, unfolding before the TV audience's eyes. Not only does this self-reflexively gesture at Marlow's own fictionality (his status as a fictional Potter character), it also, within the drama, suggests he has become fiction. Like 'the Author' in Hide and Seek, he has transformed his life to become his own fictional character, The Singing Detective, in such a way that reality and fantasy have completely fused: reality has become fantasy (Marlow a fiction) yet so too have Marlow's dreams and fantasies become reality within the ward.

Akin to Double Dare, The Singing Detective in this way sets up distinctions between reality and fantasy, in the form of separate narrative strands within the drama, only to collapse them at the end in order to show that all such boundaries are fluid and ultimately arbitrary. If at the beginning, external 'reality' seemed to reside in the hospital scenes, 'fantasy' in the 1945 thriller strand, by the end of The Singing Detective, these two realms have become thoroughly blurred: characters from Marlow's imagination appear in the ward yet so too, through his slaying by the fictional Singing Detective, is the apparently 'real' writer

shown to be a fiction. The diseased novelist is killed off at the end as a surface 'lie': a misanthropic public self behind which the real, inner 'private eye' was hiding from (self-)exposure.

The sense of this 'true' inner self re-emerging is emphasised right at the very end of the drama as the adult Marlow's progress out of the ward "yields up fleeting images" from his past - flashback images of his home in 'the Forest'; his dead father; 1945 London - before the figure of himself as a boy, perched on top of his favourite tree in the Forest, asserts itself on screen. The child stares out of the tree and straight to camera, as he delivers the last line of the drama: "When I grow up I be going to be a detective." Then, unexpectedly, he grins, "as all the while", superimposed on screen, the adult Marlow "struggles on, leaning on Nicola."¹²³

Hence not only is the "We'll Meet Again" refrain suggestive of a reunion with Nicola, it also hints that the adult Marlow has regained touch ('met again') with his younger self; recapturing the 'wonder' of childhood, in the manner of Sylvia Calvert in Late Call or Alice Hargreaves in Dreamchild (: § 3.0). As with them, memory and imagination are shown to be the tools by which the middle-aged Marlow re-achieves a sense of harmony and integration between himself and the wider world. Reality and fantasy, present and past, memory and imagination are fused in the final image of the 'long-lost' child from Forest days wishing he could grow up to be the fantasy alter ego of his adult self. The transformation of the adult Marlow into The Singing Detective symbolises the re-emergence of a vital, younger self which he had previously kept hidden away behind the diseased cynicism of a public adult exterior. When that surface persona

is finally jettisoned at the end of Episode Six, the inner child is free to emerge at last.

With its common emphasis on 'getting back into the tree' by becoming an 'Author of one's Fate', The Singing Detective thus draws heavily from its sister work, Hide and Seek. Proof that this is no coincidence of theme but a conscious attempt to explore on TV ideas and obsessions which first surfaced in prose, is provided by the fact that Potter makes direct allusion to his first novel in Episode Two. In an initially hostile encounter with Dr Gibbon, a hospital psychotherapist, Marlow is forced to listen to the other man reading a 'purple passage' from his out-of-print detective novel; a disgusted account of sexual intercourse: "Mouth sucking wet and slack at mouth, tongue chafing against tongue... skin... against skin... This is the sweaty farce out of which we are brought into being..."¹²⁴

The 'purple passage' which Potter ascribes to Marlow is in fact taken from Hide and Seek where it forms part of the paranoid 'Author's' apologia in Section Two (: § 3.1). It is thus possible to link Marlow's 'soiled paperback', the old out-of-print novel in which he too closely revealed himself, to Hide and Seek. By implication, Hide and Seek must have some bearing on The Singing Detective's theme of a fictional work providing the road to recovery for its 'real' writer.

If Hide and Seek explains the significance of The Singing Detective's final image - of Marlow 'getting back into the tree', re-achieving the sense of integration and 'wonder' he thought he had lost - it also begs the question of whether, in the drama, there is a 'Fall' comparable to that which dislodged the child of the novel from the security of the oak

and his sense of an 'Author-God' within as well as without. While there is no depiction of childhood assault in The Singing Detective, there is a direct structural equivalent embedded right at the very heart of the six-part serial - almost exactly at the drama's mid-point, near the end of the third episode. This is the famous controversial sex scene in which shots in 'the present' of the elderly George's death are counterpointed with Marlow's childhood memories of secretly witnessing his mother commit adultery with his father's best friend (: § 5.3 a; d). Moreover, through his handling of the lovers' dialogue prior to the adultery sequence, Potter implicates this as a 'Fall'. From his tree top hideout, the young Philip Marlow spies his mother walking down below with his father's best friend, Raymond. Significantly 'descending' from the oak onto the Forest floor to have a closer look, he overhears Mrs Marlow teasing Raymond as "you dirty devil."²⁵ After the pair unknowingly make love in full view of the boy, Raymond tells her he could "bite" her. To him, she is as "sweet as an apple."²⁶

This 'Fall' imagery of the male as 'devil' and sex the fruit of temptation has been used before by Potter - for example, in A Beast with Two Backs which also contained a Forest adultery scene that seemed to stand for something else (: § 1.3). As Chapter One noted, Michael Teague's encounter with the local 'whore', Rebecca, was sex that blurred into assault. It ended in her murder. Likewise, in The Singing Detective, sex and death are not only linked through juxtaposition of the Forest lovemaking with George's death labours in hospital. Within the adultery scene itself, sex is portrayed through the child's eyes as if it were an assault. Over point of view shots of the urgency of the lovers' struggle comes the troubled voice of the child on the soundtrack: "Wos him a-doing? Wos him doing to our Mam ? Mam !"²⁷

If this suggests adultery as assault, also similar to Hide and Seek is the effect both have on the child's relationship to his world. In the novel, the shock of sexual assault changes even the boy's "way of looking at" his beloved Forest Paradise, draining it of 'wonder'.¹²⁸ Even more explicitly in the drama, Philip's 'Fall' - his premature discovery of the 'Forbidden Knowledge' of how he came to be - leads directly to his exile from 'Eden'. Immediately after the adultery sequence, the scene cuts to a train, inside of which Philip is travelling with his mother away from the Forest to a much less certain destination (: to the 'moral murk' of post-war London; the eventual setting for the adult's noir detective fantasies). The train journey thus functions as an objective correlative for the central protagonist's own emotional rite of passage: his journey away from the security and integration of childhood towards the strange, less morally stable, world of adults, in relation to which he feels anxious and separate.

Crucial to this growing disjunction the child perceives between himself and the world is his relationship to his parents. Metaphorically 'expelled' from Eden, it is significant that he is accompanied by his mother. Ostensibly, they are heading to London without his father because the latter has to remain as a miner in 'The Forest'. As Philip has learned, however, the real reason is the irreparable state of the couple's marriage. Within the symbolic and narrative logic of the drama, Mrs Marlow thus functions as Eve, the 'Fallen woman', to her son's Adam, exiled through 'Forbidden Knowledge'. This is made clear through the adult Marlow's detective fantasies in the same episode (Episode Three) in which, juxtaposed with his childhood memories, are scenes depicting The Singing Detective's encounter with Lili, a prostitute cum Russian spy who haunts the street lamps directly outside Mark Binney's mews flat. As

repeated shots show her peering up at Binney's window, it becomes clear that "except for the colour of the hair and the luxury of the clothing", this mysterious femme fatale is "Mrs Marlow." In short, "it is... the same actress."¹²⁹

The model for 'Lili' in Marlow's fiction is thus his own mother, as he remembers her circa 1945. She has become equated in his imagination with the 'fallen women' who haunt the London streets. The link becomes crucial at the end of the third episode, when Lili approaches The Singing Detective as he is leaving his client Binney's flat. Just as she is about to reveal vital details of an Allied plot to smuggle Nazi scientists out of Germany, shots ring out and two mysterious men in raincoats are glimpsed making their escape. With blood oozing from her mouth, the 'fallen' Lili dies, cradled in Marlow's arms, as his own suspicions of a conspiracy are confirmed.

Structurally, Lili's disclosure of secret knowledge to the detective Marlow at the climax of Episode Three parallels the disclosure of 'forbidden' knowledge which the child Marlow received earlier within the same episode from spying on her counterpart in the Forest. Within each narrative strand, the male protagonist's discovery, via a 'fallen' Eve figure, of a secret world behind the everyday world provides him with the crucial evidence he needs to unravel his 'case' - in the thriller fantasy, the mystery of the drowned woman; within the flashbacks, the possible roots of the adult's illness. Note too how such revelations are intimately connected to death - the slaying of Lili in Marlow's thriller; the death of George in hospital, against which the adultery flashback is juxtaposed.

Such a connection between Mrs Marlow and death is in turn explicitly developed in later episodes. In word association games with his psychotherapist Gibbon, the ill writer in Episode Five suddenly finds himself having to confront his own attitudes to women, when he involuntarily blurts out the word-string: 'Woman. Fuck. Fuck. Dirt. Dirt. Death.'³⁰ Later, within that same episode, a flashback to 1945 provides the clearest answer yet as to why sex is so closely associated in his mind with death. Standing on a platform on the London Underground, waiting for a train to come, the young Philip Marlow reveals to his mother what he has seen in the Forest. Shocked by his knowledge, Mrs Marlow slaps him hard across the face; an action which only serves to worsen the boy's existing panic and fear. Taking off from her side, he runs along one of the many endless tunnels of the Underground. As Mrs Marlow makes to give chase, suddenly, from one of the tunnels, an on-coming train emerges.³¹

The 'killer' of the 'fallen' Mrs Marlow / Lili is thus revealed in the penultimate episode to be Marlow himself. It was his revelation of sexual knowledge that directly contributed to her fatal collision with an Underground train and in turn it is his subsequent guilt which has outcropped in his detective novel, both in terms of the murdered Lili and in his penchant for drowning his fictional femmes fatales. Just as Episode Six subsequently shows in relation to the wider 'conspiracy' of the mysterious men and the patient's resistance to recovery, all clues lead back to the writer himself. If, within The Singing Detective, Mrs Marlow's accident provides the specific motivation for the drama's sex-death connection, it is significant to note how the relationship between the death of a mother and a child's acquisition of sexual knowledge echoes that of previous Potter works.³¹

Just as with A Beast with Two Backs and Hide and Seek, the effect of the revelation of 'forbidden' knowledge is a loss of integration between the child protagonist and his world - a breach in the child's bond of absolute security and trust in his parents which comes to be expressed in terms of the 'death' of a mother yet also estrangement from a hitherto God-like father (: § 1.3; 3.1). In The Singing Detective, this estrangement is literally physical - after the 'Fall' scene comes the boy's exile to London, far away from his father and the Forest 'Eden'. On another level, it is also an emotional and spiritual separation.

This is well illustrated by comparison of flashback scenes between father and son prior to the Forest adultery in Episode Three with those that follow after. In Episode Two, a scene in the local village working man's club conveys the depth of the son's affection and admiration for his father. Sitting in a corner of the club, listening to his 'dear old Dad' sing to a local audience, the young Philip stares "wide-eyed across the smoke-filled room at his 'singing' father, glowing with pride."¹³³ Such public admiration is in marked contrast to scenes after the Forest 'Fall' when the son deliberately seeks to avoid contact with his father. In Episode Six, after Philip has returned home from London and his mother's death, Mr Marlow is seen searching deep within the Forest for his son. Perched on top of his favourite oak, Philip, however, refuses to answer even though, as Potter's script makes clear, "he can clearly hear his father, and even see him through the bare branches, way below."¹³⁴ The Biblical parallels are unmistakable: just as with Adam after he had eaten forbidden fruit from the Tree of Knowledge, Philip is too afraid and ashamed to answer when 'God his Father', the site of all his values and affections, comes looking for him in his Forest Eden. The boy's 'Fall' from sexual innocence has not only fractured relations with his mother

but his father as well. The result is a sense of loss - a loss of integration between himself and the world which in turn breeds self-consciousness and an unwillingness to express emotion in relation to his father.¹³⁵

This edgy self-conscious relationship between son and father is by no means unique to The Singing Detective. As we have seen, it is a key preoccupation of many Potter plays: Stand Up, Nigel Barton, Lay Down Your Arms, Traitor, Son of Man and so on. In each of these, the figure of the father (God The Father in Son of Man) functioned as the prime site of values for the 'torn' male protagonist, as he struggled against the world and himself in the name of 'conscience', like some latter-day Hamlet seeking revenge in the name of a ghostly patriarchal ideal (: § 3.3). A similar sense of the father as the ghost of a lost past is strongly present in The Singing Detective. In another flashback to the village club in Episode Two, Mr Marlow once more is seen singing to an enraptured local audience. This time, however, things are not right. Instead of the young Philip glowing with pride at his father's performance, it is the hunched figure of the adult Marlow who is sitting in the corner - disfigured by disease and dressed in pyjamas, just as he has been seen in hospital. As the song on stage ends and Marlow tries to join in the applause for his father, he finds, to his horror, that he cannot clap his arthritically buckled and crippled hands - not even for his "dear old Dad". The scene cuts to a wide shot, taking in the whole of the interior, as Marlow sees he is now alone in the long-abandoned club: "But he was there - he was !" he cries out to no-one in particular. "My lovely dear old Dad was there... All the birds in the trees - all the love in the world - I heard him. I saw him." It is only as this scene gives way to shots of the delirious patient in hospital that it becomes clear

this eery tableau has been Marlow's fevered nightmare. Through self-consciousness and the suppression of emotion, things the son had always wanted to say to his late father can now no longer be said. As Marlow cries out in the deserted club: "There's so much I want to say - I need to talk to him very badly"³⁶. It is too late, however. Like Hamlet's ghost, the 'airy' guilt spectre of the dead father haunts the living son.

The common 'Hamlet structure', noted with many Potter single plays, is thus readily visible in The Singing Detective (: § 3.3). While previous Potter protagonists like Nigel Barton and Jesus in Son of Man were haunted by the patriarchal ideal of the father, Marlow's is literally incarnated as a ghost from the past. Also in common with Shakespeare's Hamlet, it is the specific knowledge of adultery between his mother and his 'uncle' (his father's best friend, Raymond) which is motivated as the source of the ghostly displacement of the father within the moral universe of the young 'student Prince', Philip. From being the centre of his childhood affections, Mr Marlow evaporates to become the spectre of guilt that haunts the ramparts of the adult's imagination. In this light, Marlow's psychic quest for 'clues' to his own past becomes a search for atonement (a longing to be 'at one' again) with this spiritual ideal of the father. As with the tragic hero of Shakespeare's play, the motivation of the adult Marlow is 'revenge': a redressing of disorder (the psychic disorder caused by the adultery), in the hope of re-achieving the sense of integration he once felt in childhood between himself, 'God his Father' and the world. Like Hamlet, knowledge of his mother's adultery has tainted his view of the world, giving him a sense that all around "something [is] rotten...."³⁷ As previously noted, the hospitalised Marlow is characterised by a deep misanthropy. This outcrops in his noir detective fantasies which are played out against a cynical post-war

London backdrop of paranoia, suspicion and conspiracy. It is precisely this 'moral mess', both within the fiction and the wider 'reality' of the writer's life, which The Singing Detective is charged with clearing up. Hamlet-like, he pledges himself to the redress of all disorder. As he puts it on voice-over at the end of Episode Three, "Something needed doing. I had to do it".¹³⁸

Nevertheless, like Hamlet, he too is haunted by doubt. As with many Potter protagonists, Marlow is a 'torn' hero - almost literally so since there are two Marlows: the ill writer and his imaginary detective alter ego. Moreover, just as it was shown that most of Potter's protagonists are 'torn' between flesh and spirit, so too is this the case with Marlow. As noted previously, the world which the ill writer inhabits is one entirely 'of the flesh': a hospital landscape of bed, bodies and death (: S 5.3 (a)). As Potter consistently makes clear throughout Episode One, this is hell: "A living Hell" is how Reginald's fellow patient, Mr Hall, complains of life in the ward, in the first few minutes of the drama.¹³⁹ This is echoed later by Marlow himself, as disease makes his body temperature spin out of control: "Hot. Why is it so hot? Why am I so hot?" he mutters.¹⁴⁰

Marlow's 'hell', however, is as much spiritual as biological. This becomes clear in the penultimate scene of Episode One, when he is confronted by a hospital registrar, who chides him for his despairing attitude to illness. Most patients, he is told, "don't rail against the world and all that is in it." When, Marlow is asked, is he "going to find any equanimity?"¹⁴¹

It is precisely this sense of finding equanimity - of restoring a balance that will allow him to recover from illness and so escape his

hospital hell - which becomes Marlow's goal throughout the rest of The Singing Detective. His task is to heal the divisions in his personality: the flesh-spirit dichotomy which has 'torn' him, ever since the Forest 'Fall' of his boyhood. The fracture between the world and the self which childhood discovery of sex prompted has thus been internalised by him as a pull between inner and outer worlds - a tension between spiritual yearnings and fleshly desires; the strivings of the mind versus those of the body. In this way, Marlow's illness becomes symptomatic of a more profound mind-body schism: literally the eruption onto the body of feelings and desires which the mind has guiltily tried to repress. Healing this dichotomy is the only way for Marlow to heal himself from illness.

His imaginary alter ego, The Singing Detective, becomes the means of restoring psychic order. If, caught in a hospital hell of bodies and death, the figure of the diseased writer symbolises the 'flesh' side of the dichotomy that is tearing Marlow apart, The Singing Detective represents the 'spirit': an inner not an outer self. It is only by turning this 'private eye' inwards to probe the roots of his body-mind disjunction that Marlow will ever be able to achieve liberation from illness in the 'real' world outside. Moreover, how deep this flesh-spirit dichotomy goes, is indicated by a number of key flashback scenes in which the protagonist is seen as a child within the village school of the 'Forest', during the crucial year of his boyhood: 1945. As previously noted, these classroom scenes are a conscious reworking of the Georgie Pringle scenes in Stand Up, Nigel Barton (: S 5.3 a). There are, however, a number of significant differences between the 1965 and the 1985 versions:

Thus while Nigel Barton and the young Philip Marlow are both shown to be bullied by the other children of the village, on account of their scholastic abilities, their means of revenging their classroom ostracisation are markedly different.¹⁴² While Nigel Barton steals a daffodil from the classroom windowsill, the extent of the moral 'mess' which the young Philip Marlow is in is graphically indicated by the fact that his rebellion is to sneak into the schoolroom after hours and defecate on the teacher's table.¹⁴³ As with Stand Up, the teacher turns detective, interrogating the class in an attempt to uncover the culprit. Like Barton, the young Philip eventually cracks under this pressure and is hauled out to the front for further questioning. How this happens in The Singing Detective is significant since the drama links this 'unspeakable' classroom crime with that other 'crime of the flesh' for which the boy also feels guilty: the 'Fall' in the Forest. This is first hinted in Episode Three as the village schoolteacher is seen in flashback giving her pupils a patriotic lesson on the Good Allies' routing of the Evil Nazis, together with a promise that come V.E. Day all their futures will be glorious.¹⁴⁴ Over shots of rows and rows of her optimistic pupils, arms folded, "eyes alive", intrudes a more cynical voice-over - the familiar side-of-the-mouth narration of The Singing Detective; the adult whose perspective on post-war Britain is much more jaundiced: "I knew I was ankle-deep in the mess", it states. "What I had to do now was to decide whether to let the ooze get up to my knee bones. Something needed doing. I had to do it..."¹⁴⁵

His voice carries over into the next scene, easing the visual transition from 1945 flashback to 1945 fantasy as Lili, Marlow's maternal femme fatale, gazes up at the window of the mysterious Mark Binney's flat. The counterpoint is thus a stark one - the teacher's V.E. optimism displaced

by post-war cynicism and disillusionment; her simple black and white view of a world of Good versus Evil undermined by a London landscape of shadows in which the moral 'mess' is literally too close to home and family. As the detective Marlow puts it, the 'ooze' is seeping up to his knee bones. He will have to do something about it. By Episode Four, it becomes clear what the disillusioned 'fallen' child of the Forest has decided to do. His defecation 'crime' in the classroom functions both as his reaction to the Forest adultery and as his rebellion against the moral authority of the teacher and her too easy promises of a post-war heaven. Akin to his detective alter ego's uncovering of conspiracies in the 1945 thriller, the child Marlow has unwittingly seen behind the rhetoric of adults, discovering in the Forest a gap between public postures and private deeds.

Moreover, through his handling of the dialogue in the classroom scene, Potter implies that what the young Marlow is ultimately rebelling against is patriarchy itself - the authority of traditional patriarchal structures. Hitherto the 'clever dick' amongst all the children, the young Philip, on being suspected by the teacher of complicity in the classroom crime, finds himself under threat of the "Big Stick", precisely because of his superior knowledge over all the others (his knowledge of the 'flesh-crime')¹⁴⁶. If such phallic imagery, centring around observation and secret knowledge, again links the classroom scene with the Forest adultery, equally important is the sense of repression and punishment as essential for the continuation and maintenance of the phallo-centric patriarchal order. Like God expelling Adam from the Garden of Eden, Philip is to be humiliated in front of his peers because he has seen and knows too much of what that order likes to keep suppressed: namely (as suggested by the linkage of the classroom defecation with the Forest

sex), anything connected with the body; 'the flesh'. Such a sense of patriarchal authority repressing as 'bestial' all bodily functions is explicitly invoked by the teacher, on first discovering the 'crime' on the school table: "Cows do it in the field and know no better..." she cries. "They are animals !... But we are not animals... God allowed us to tell the difference between the clean and the dirty..."¹⁴⁷

As indicated earlier, it is precisely this flesh-spirit dichotomy ('flesh': of the animal; 'spirit': of Man made in the image of God) which lies at the heart of Marlow's illness. Thus what the classroom scenes seem to reveal implicitly, through the dialogue, is its broader foundations within patriarchy itself. When the child defecates on the teacher's table, he rebels against a patriarchal authority structure that represses as 'bestial' anything connected with the body. Like Edmund in relation to his Old Testament patriarch of a father in Where Adam Stood, Philip rebels against a world-view that seeks to suppress knowledge of Man's 'animal' nature. (: § 2.3 (b)) Nevertheless, like Nigel Barton before him, when he comes under severe psychological pressure from the teacher to confess what he knows (and hence absolve his sins against the patriarchal order he has violated through acquisition of knowledge of 'the flesh'), he seizes on a Georgie Pringle figure to blame - a backward child in the front row of the class who had earlier been pulling faces at him. He points to the supposed villain and utters his name to the teacher: "Mark Binney, Miss. It was Mark Binney !" ¹⁴⁸

At the climax of Episode Four, the identity of the mysterious shadowy client within Marlow's detective story is thus revealed to be, like 'Lili', a figure drawn from the writer's own past - a fictitious noir villain to rival the villain the child invented for the teacher in 1945. By the time

of Episode Six and the unmasking of Marlow himself as the true villain of the thriller strand, these connections have become even more pronounced. Just as Binney the child functioned as a convenient scapegoat for the young Marlow's 'flesh-crime' in school, so too is the fictional Mark Binney finally shown to be a mere red herring in the novel's drowning of female characters: a cover for the adult writer's own sexual guilt.

Likewise, what the parallel flashback and fantasy strands draw attention to is the notion of the writer figure as liar. This is made explicit in a key scene in Episode Six in which the ill Marlow relives his classroom guilt in the presence of his psychotherapist, Gibbon. Echoing the Georgie Pringle scene in Stand Up, Marlow recalls how the other children in the class, sensing blood, quickly seized on the chance to persecute an innocent, nailing the "backward lad hands and feet to [his] story".¹⁴⁹ As the crucifixion image suggests, the backward child 'dies', Christ-like, so that others may live - in this case, saving the clever child by literally washing away his sins: allowing him to remain blameless within the patriarchal authority structure in order that he can carry on up its academic ladder of success¹⁵⁰.

Breaking down in front of Gibbon, as he recalls his guilt over the classroom betrayal, Marlow, by so doing, finds a way of literally excreting the pain of the past from his life in order to achieve a form of catharsis. This is indicated by Gibbon's call, immediately after he has wiped away his tears, for Marlow to stand up. For the first time in all six episodes of the drama, the protagonist finds he is able to struggle up from his wheelchair and take the first few faltering steps on his own previously crippled legs. His illness and attendant progress to health are thus inextricably linked with his attempts to overcome the

repression and guilt which the authority structures of patriarchy, with their underpinning flesh-spirit dichotomy, have engendered in him.

Not only that but while the classroom scene itself exposed the child Marlow as a villain, a liar, recollection of it gives the adult a sense of a vocation, a shape to his chosen life as a writer. Under pressure in the classroom, the child in essence became a writer, learning that by 'telling stories', he could save himself. Likewise, this is precisely what the adult Marlow re-learns in a different way in hospital - that through fiction, he can save himself from illness and change his reality for the better. While originally the source of the 'fallen' child's guilt, recollection of the classroom scene points the way to the adult's liberation.¹⁵¹

Hence behind the 'fallen' child's guilt and feelings of separation from his Forest roots lies the seeds of reintegration with that world: his seeming vocation as a writer which culminates at the end of the drama in his liberation through fiction. A clear example of such a movement to reintegration is Marlow's reunion in flashback with the 'ghost' of his dead father, near the end of Episode Six. In flashback, the boy Philip is seen, as before, in the Forest, hiding up a tree, while down below, 'God His Father' comes looking for him in 'Eden'. As the child silently observes, he witnesses a secret event on the Forest floor, every bit as significant as his dead mother's adultery in Episode Three. Dejected that he cannot find his son, Mr Marlow walks slowly on through the Forest. Then, when it seems no-one is looking, he stops dead, throws his head back and utters what Potter's script describes as "one long and strange and almost animal-like cry of absolute grief and despair... [a] terrible release of anguish." The young Philip stares, eyes wide. The scene

switches to the hospital 'present' and the figure of the ill Marlow in bed, as tense and motionless as the boy of memory. In the Forest, the young Philip suddenly breaks cover and runs up to be beside his father: "Oh. There thou bist," mutters Mr Marlow. "Aye. Here I be," answers the son. They walk on but now, "almost slyly, certainly shyly, Philip reaches for and then curls his hand into his father's hand, as they walk."¹⁵²

As suggested by the juxtaposition of the remembering adult, this simple scene on the Forest path seems to carry a much wider symbolic resonance within the drama as a whole - representing nothing less than the spiritual atonement and reunion of the middle-aged son with the 'ghost' of his dead father, after years of emotional separation. The key to understanding this lies in Mr Marlow's cry of grief for his dead wife and 'lost' son which Potter's script directions liken to being 'animal-like'. Coming in the same episode after the adult Marlow's own tears of grief over Mark Binney, middle-aged son and dead father are at last united through a common release of hitherto repressed feeling. Most importantly, it is this notion of repressing what is 'animal-like' which links them. Just as the young Marlow had to repress his guilt over the 'flesh-crime' at school, so too does he discover that his father has 'animal' feelings and instincts that he too has to bottle up. As with his mother's adultery, the child once more gains secret knowledge in the Forest of the 'flesh' side of Man which patriarchy and its authority structures (the village school) had taught to keep hidden.

The difference here is that it is the ultimate image of patriarchy to the child - his own father; the living 'God' he so loved and admired - whom he realises and comes to accept as 'animal' just like him. The feelings of inadequacy - of having 'fallen' from the grace of The Father - which

prompted him to hide when 'God' came looking for him in Eden are thus banished. The child of memory is able to be reunited with his father on the Forest floor in an integration of equals. What is important to note is how, through the juxtaposition of scenes, this is achieved only by means of the ill Marlow's recollection. The disillusion and cynicism engendered by the 'fallen' youth's shock that all Mankind, including his own father, was an 'airy beast', gives way in middle-aged memory to a greater 'equanimity'; a sense of re-integration with the father as equal, precisely because he too is recognised and accepted as 'animal', just like him. As suggested by Marlow's tearful release of guilt over Mark Binney, what is no longer accepted is the notion of a flesh-spirit dichotomy - the guilt structure of patriarchy which erected emotional barriers in the relationship between father and son. By the time of Episode Six and the symbolic reunion scene with Marlow senior, the 'flesh' and 'spirit' sides of this dichotomy have blurred together. The ghost of 'God the Father' is shown in the Forest to be a Man with 'flesh' instincts.

Hence the healing of the relationship between son and father also marks the healing of divisions within the protagonist between flesh and spirit - part of the "We'll Meet Again" of the final song. The writer's imagination and his memories of the Forest blur to produce the symbolic reunion with his father on the Forest path. One of the most significant aspects of The Singing Detective is thus that it offers a critique of patriarchy from a male perspective. The flesh-spirit dichotomy which the drama implicitly postulates as underpinning patriarchy is shown to be destructive, particularly to relations between father and son. The Judaeo-Christian ideal of God the Father that traditional authority structures taught to worship and obey is revealed to create a false or idealised image within the family, suppressing Man's 'animal' aspects

while elevating the father, in the child's eyes, into a God beyond 'the flesh'. In turn, this creates extreme guilt feelings in the child when he feels he has 'fallen' from the God-like standards of the Father or alternatively, extreme cynicism and disillusion if either parent is seen to deviate from the standards they themselves embody. Far from the black and white view of the world taught by his village teacher, what Marlow's recollection of events reveals is a world not of 'either / or' but 'both and', in which events are not either good or bad but can have both positive and negative effects. What, to the child Marlow, seemed to be the nadir of his 'Fall' from grace (his classroom lying and betrayal of Mark Binney) is recognised from the vantage-point of middle-age as the first step on his pathway to an eventual redemption through fiction. Similarly, as the child's secret observation of his father in the Forest seems to attest, the same curiosity to see and to know which led to his Forest 'Fall' also provides the means to his eventual reintegration with a world (and a father) from which he felt estranged and separate. The desire for knowledge that lies behind the drama's 'detective' metaphor thus functions as both the source of Marlow's 'Fall' and ultimately that of his Redemption; a Redemption which allows him to see beyond what led him to the sense of a 'Fall' in the first place: the flesh-spirit dichotomy of patriarchy. Jettisoning this, the protagonist is at last able to recognise the moral 'mess' or 'murk' that engendered cynicism and disillusion in his 'fallen' youth, as part of a movement away from the simple moral absolutes of an Old Testament upbringing, towards a 'deeper', more complex understanding of the world and his relationship to it.

It is this sense of a progression or journey from youthful cynicism to middle-aged 'equanimity' which ultimately seems to represent the narrative trajectory of The Singing Detective. The underlying structural dynamic is

precisely that noted for Potter's 1976 'trilogy' of plays as well as for Pennies From Heaven - a movement away from the antinomies of 'Evil' versus 'Good', reality versus fantasy, 'flesh' versus 'spirit', towards a blurring and eventual collapse in distinctions between these categories (:that is, a move from a simple 'either / or' view of the world to a more complex, even mystical one of 'both / and'). The difference with The Singing Detective is that whereas this movement from despair to hope was previously traced across a series of consecutive works, here, it is entirely internal to one work, dramatised over six episodes in the mental journey Marlow makes from misanthropy in Episode One to rejuvenation in Episode Six: from a 'Fall' back to Redemption.

If this is Marlow's spiritual journey through the drama - from Paradise Lost to Paradise Regained - it can be seen how closely it conforms to a Christian structure. Indeed The Singing Detective is a veritable 'Pilgrim's Progress' in which the protagonist finally has to die in order to live again. Akin to the hanging and reappearance of Arthur Parker at the end of Pennies, Marlow's outwardly sick persona - his worldly or 'fleshly' self - has to be sacrificed ('crucified') at the end in order for his true inner self (his 'spirit') to be resurrected as The Singing Detective (: § 4.1 c). Only in this way can he depart his hospital hell towards the Heaven of freedom he knows lies just beyond the everyday terra firma of the ward.¹⁵³

In turn, this helps provide a context for understanding the relationship of The Singing Detective to Dennis Potter's own autobiography: the 'fact'; 'fiction'; 'truth' distinction which so complicates any assertion of his work as a simple factual account of the writer's own life story. As with Hide and Seek, Potter closely weaves the 'facts' of his own life into The

Singing Detective (illness; career as a writer; Forest childhood and so on), wilfully blurring the distinctions between autobiography and fiction. At the same time, other events, such as the Forest adultery scene, are demonstrably pure fabrication.¹⁵⁴ In this way, the writer invents an authorial alter ego in his own image - a writer character with the same skin disease who also chooses to work in popular forms; in this case, detective stories. As this authorial alter ego embarks on his interior journey, the 'truths' he uncovers go beyond the literal facts of the 'real' writer's own past - his progression from crisis to recovery functions not as literal but something closer to emotional or spiritual autobiography.

That is, Marlow's journey in six episodes from cynicism and despair to equanimity mirrors the progress that previous chapters have noted across Potter's work of the previous twenty years - from the angry pessimism of his first Wednesday Plays to the sense of spiritual renewal detectable in such later scripts as Pennies from Heaven and Dreamchild. This seems ultimately to be the reason for The Singing Detective's reworkings of scenes and themes from past Potter TV plays. The review of twenty years work is the story of Potter's own 'Pilgrim's Progress' as a writer: Marlow's journey to recovery over six episodes functioning not as a literal, factual account but as a metaphor for the writer's own journey over two decades. Though many of the themes of The Singing Detective, such as the resolution of a flesh-spirit dichotomy, had been explored in earlier TV plays, never before had Potter encapsulated so many of them in one work and through an authorial alter ego whose biographical 'facts' so closely resembled his own. Such a choice, in turn, helped emphasise how much the drama was a mirror of his own experience. As with Hide and Seek, the similarity of surface 'facts' served as a guarantee of the authenticity of the 'deeper' metaphorical or spiritual 'truths' lying

underneath (: S 3.1). Delving down through layers of surface 'fact', underlying 'fiction' and deeper 'truth', the writer, like the 'Author' character in the novel, succeeded in getting 'closer to himself' than he had ever done before. It is in this way that The Singing Detective should be seen as nothing less than a synthesis and summation of Potter's entire writing career in television. Little wonder that after watching the transmission of the first episode in November 1986, Potter could comment to the London Evening Standard: "I feel as if I've scraped out my own bone marrow with a spoon to offer viewers".¹⁵⁵

5.3 d) Reception

The question raised by subsequent reaction to The Singing Detective was whether Potter scraped away too much ? Both the writer and the BBC combined forces to trail the drama heavily, prior to the transmission of the first episode on Sunday November 16 1986. The writer embarked on a lengthy round of interviews with the British press, whilst the BBC (perhaps mindful of the amount they had lavished on Potter to secure his return to the Corporation), heavily promoted the drama on-air, even using its own news programmes to carry items.¹⁵⁶ Thus before the first episode had even been broadcast, the line between publicity and 'news' had been successfully blurred with respect to The Singing Detective. An air of expectation was generated in which the drama came to be "touted as this year's artistic biggie à la Edge of Darkness."¹⁵⁷

At least one reason why Potter's return was much heralded by the BBC was because of the very real difficulties the Corporation faced at the end of 1986. After an autumn in which the BBC, under Director-General Alasdair Milne, had been subject to almost constant external attack - from the Conservative Party over TV news coverage of the U.S. bombings of Libya; from the Murdoch press (whose proprietor had his own ambitions in television); from assorted right-wing Conservative M.P.s and Clean-Up TV campaigners who harried it for 'unacceptable' levels of sex and violence - the return of Potter in the fiftieth anniversary year of BBC TV seemed to mark continuity with a happier public service past, at a moment when the very existence of the Corporation itself seemed to be under threat. As Alasdair Milne adroitly phrases it in his memoirs, the transmission of The Singing Detective at the end of 1986 showed "it was not all trouble [at the BBC]... After a slight stumble, the Television Service was back in its stride again..."¹⁵⁸

The BBC thus had an instinctive vested interest in promoting The Singing Detective as a television event at the end of 1986. As suggested by the extent of the drama's pre-publicity and its prime-time BBC-1 scheduling, in seeking to uphold public service broadcasting in the face of external attack, the BBC elevated the hitherto 'controversial' Potter into a brand-name of 'quality'; marketing him as an example of all that was distinctive about the Corporation. The Singing Detective almost came to be seen as a Pennies from Heaven Mark II. Akin to the December 1978 repeat of Pennies, it was positioned in the schedules to maximum advantage - November to December: at the peak of the autumn drama season - in an attempt to catch the eye of jurors, as they made up their nominations for the British Academy television awards the following spring.

Just as the BBC sold it as a symbol of the public service ethos, so too did Potter market The Singing Detective quite aggressively via dozens of pre-transmission interviews; using the press to try and maximise the audience for the drama. The inevitable price he paid for such a strategy was that by trying to sell the work in as high-profile a manner as possible, he to some extent became forced into selling himself.¹⁵⁹ Such a Faustian bargain with the eighties press is what is suggested by the tenor of the pre-transmission interviews he gave in 1986, all of which hinge on one factor: the links between The Singing Detective and his own illness. Thus two weeks before the transmission of the first episode, The Mail on Sunday described how The Singing Detective was the first work "in which Dennis Potter has revealed his illness".¹⁶⁰ Likewise, in an article two days before the transmission of Episode One, Adam Mars-Jones of The Independent dwelt almost exclusively upon Potter's relationship with his illness and how "anyone who has an illness more than fleetingly must form a relationship with it."¹⁶¹

In turn, this sense of a blurring between the writer selling the work and the writer selling himself affected the way in which The Singing Detective was subsequently reviewed by the British press. Given the extent of the pre-publicity, Episode One was widely reviewed and almost without exception, the critics were kind. Noticeably, however, and somewhat to the chagrin of the director, neither Amiel nor the quality of the production itself received much of a mention.¹⁶² Instead the focus was almost exclusively on the figure of Potter 'the author' and his courage in supposedly unpeeling himself and his illness, for all the world to see. Thus Martin Cropper in The Times, November 17 1986: "Laughing to keeping from crying is one way of coping with a chronic medical condition such as psoriasis..."¹⁶³. Likewise Christopher Dunkley in The Financial Times: "... It is impossible to avoid the feeling that the writer is at last portraying himself directly in his work..."¹⁶⁴

By the transmission of the Forest adultery scene in Episode Three, general press construction of The Singing Detective as autobiography had shifted to consideration of the ethics of depicting sexual intercourse on television. Predictably, a gap in attitudes opened up between the mass market tabloids and the more 'high-brow' broadsheets. Libby Purves in The Times launched into an intense discussion of the scene in terms of the relationship between mothers and sons, even quoting a psychotherapist "who had found the programme true to many of his male patient's nightmares: 'one of the most appalling things is for a boy child to see his mother being dominated and transported like this. Even by his father.'"¹⁶⁵ Inevitably, the tabloids took a less angst-ridden, more sensationalist line: "Storm Over The TV Sex Scenes in Potter's Singing Detective" ran the Daily Express, complete with a still from the scene "which shocked viewers last night".¹⁶⁶ As this suggests, in relishing

the opportunity of condemning Potter and the BBC for 'shocking' their readers, the tabloids simply served to further their cause by maximising public interest in the drama. Prurience masquerading as condemnation, the tabloids' emotive headlines and publication of stills helped transform The Singing Detective from a television into a bona fide news event.

The result was that Potter's drama quickly became yet another political football for those on the Right who had already spent much of that autumn attacking the BBC. In response to Potter's defence that the adultery scene was part of "a very old tradition" depicting the "relationship between sex and death", Mary Whitehouse fuelled the controversy by retorting that "to link sex with death and violence is an insult to sex."¹⁶⁷ Questions about the sex scene even came to be asked in the House: Conservative M.P. Gerald Howarth (a keen supporter of legislation to bring broadcasting under the terms of the Obscene Publications Act), complained to the Commons that even within the context of drama, "it was no part of public service broadcasting... to put on the television explicit scenes of sexual intercourse. Why is it suddenly in 1986 that it becomes acceptable...?"¹⁶⁸

In fact, according to the director Jon Amiel, the final decision to screen the adultery scene had been arrived at only after lengthy debate between himself and Director of BBC TV Programmes, Michael Grade, as to whether it was indeed 'acceptable' to broadcast. Because of the tight production schedule, post-production on Episode Three had only been finally completed on the Thursday before its scheduled Sunday transmission of November 30. On Friday the 28th, Grade met Amiel and the producers Trodd and Harris to view the scene in advance. Almost two hours were spent debating the pros and cons of broadcasting it uncut - was there

anything prurient, pornographic or gratuitous about the content which could not be justified in terms of the dramatic context and the writer and director's intention that the scene be deliberately shocking in order to convey the extent of the central protagonist's shock? Should perhaps one or two seconds be cut from the Forest love-making sequence, to spare the distress of anxious viewers? After two hours of what Amiel describes as 'very vigorous' debate, Grade finally accepted the argument of the production team that to lessen or mediate the impact of this pivotal scene would undermine the entire dramatic sense of The Singing Detective. Amiel states of Grade: "I commend him for that. I commend the process by which it was argued and finally in which he allowed it to go out..."¹⁶⁹ Tellingly, in his statement to the press on the night of Episode Three's transmission, Grade defended his decision by stating "There are very few people in television drama that you are prepared to trust with scenes like this. But Dennis Potter is one of them". Significantly, he added that critics were already hailing The Singing Detective "as the best television drama of 1986."¹⁷⁰

Hence if Grade knew the scene would create a fuss in the tabloids and amongst Tory M.P.s, he was also secure in the knowledge that criticism of his decision would be effectively neutralised by others in the press and media who were already singing the drama's praises - a classic example of the BBC employing its cherished notion of 'balance' to justify its own position on an issue. The Corporation would be able to defend itself from those against the drama by pointing to the equal numbers in favour, thus bolstering its claim to be a neutral reflector rather than an active participant in events. Certainly, this is what the aftermath of the Episode Three screening suggests. If, as Amiel claims, the controversy over the sex scene was sucked into a much wider "carefully orchestrated

campaign" by the tabloids to undermine the BBC in the name of the television ambitions of their own newspaper proprietors, this was counter-balanced by the eulogies of the TV critics in the British press.¹⁷¹ Even in the case of journalists in the tabloid press, this was true. Whilst excoriating the BBC and Potter for "explicit sex in our living-rooms", The Daily Mirror could simultaneously hail the drama as "undoubtedly brilliant television".¹⁷²

Such a schizophrenic quality - of critical praise yet rejection of its 'controversial' nature in equal measure - continued on into the TV awards ceremonies the following year. The Singing Detective was nominated for no less than eleven British Academy Awards - including Best Drama Serial, Best Actor (Michael Gambon), Best Actress (Alison Steadman) - and was widely expected to sweep the board.¹⁷³ In the event, at the main ceremony on 22nd March 1987, it picked up only one major award, that of Best Actor. Asked about BAFTA's decision to give the best serial award not to The Singing Detective but to a BBC adaptation of the Fay Weldon novel, The Life and Loves of A She-Devil, Jon Amiel simply states, "In the year Pennies from Heaven was produced, BAFTA in its infinite wisdom gave the best serial award to Edward and Mrs Simpson. That explains the history of BAFTA awards."¹⁷⁴ Despite the BBC's best efforts to schedule the drama to maximum advantage for the awards, BAFTA jurors had once again gone their own way.

Meanwhile, what of the attitude of the general public to the work? As Potter attests in interview, in terms of simple ratings, The Singing Detective "held its audience", averaging eight million viewers for the first three episodes - a total which then crept up to ten million, in the wake of the controversy over the sex scenes.¹⁷⁵ On the most basic of

empirical evidence, audiences seemed to remain gripped by the work and were able to cope with its non-linear multi-narrative complexity. At least in the case of the 1986 drama, Potter's democratic faith in the possibility of television drama to cut across socio-economic hierarchies of class and education seemed to find some justification.

Though it is beyond the scope of this study to offer any detailed sociological evidence on audience attitudes to the drama, viewer reaction, as gauged by the Radio Times, is worthy of note. The Singing Detective produced one of the magazine's biggest mailbags, with letters on the drama still coming in, months after the original transmissions. Predictably, most of the correspondence polarised around the debate about sexual explicitness on TV - those violently against, followed up by subsequent correspondence from those seeking to defend the BBC and Potter from this kind of attack. Some viewers found the drama "extraordinary and compelling" in the sense that all of the elements - flashback, fantasy, thriller - combined "to give the clearest impression... of the way in which thought itself works". Others found it "fidgety, sadistic [and] semi-pornographic..."¹⁷⁶

Regardless of like or dislike, what the volume of correspondence reveals is the drama's impact upon the cultural landscape of the British television audience. Constructed in pre-publicity as a television event, transformed into a news event by the tabloid headlines following Episode Three and hailed by key opinion-formers as a 'masterpiece', audiences tuned in to The Singing Detective literally to see for themselves what all the fuss was about.¹⁷⁷ In so doing, they collaborated in the final stage of the process by which Potter's drama moved from production to reception, transforming it into a social event.¹⁷⁸

The drama's undoubted impact on audiences brought almost instant accolades for Potter. Just over a month after the last episode was transmitted, he became the subject of a BBC-2 Arena documentary which interviewed him about his life and work. Later that summer, a BBC retrospective of some of his past television plays culminated in the first television screening of the hitherto banned Brimstone and Treacle - a fact which appeared to owe much not only to the self-vindicating precedent of Michael Grade's 'permissiveness' over The Singing Detective sex scene but also to the enforced departure from the BBC earlier that year of the play's original censor: the Director-General, Alasdair Milne.¹⁷⁹

Even more was to follow as Potter rode this post-Singing Detective wave of canonisation as television auteur. Just as in the late seventies, the original Pennies from Heaven had been bought and transmitted by American PBS, so too in 1987 did the BBC succeed in selling The Singing Detective to public broadcasting stations in the USA. In New York, it was first aired in early 1988, somewhat tentatively by Channel 13 in an 11 pm Thursday night 'graveyard' slot. The following July, however, it gained a repeat in a more prominent slot: at 9pm across three consecutive evenings; a scheduling decision which suddenly got Potter noticed in a very dramatic way. Having seen the work on TV, the film critic, Vincent Canby, suddenly launched into thousands of words in praise of it in a New York Times article that asked 'Is The Year's Best Film on TV ?' He even compared the work in favourable terms to Welles' Citizen Kane.¹⁸⁰

This, however, was only the start of Potter's rehabilitation in the U.S., after the partial decline in interest which had accompanied the box-office flop of the MGM Pennies from Heaven. Spurred on by Canby's

ecstatic praise, 23 TV stations bought the drama by October 1988. By November, it was on the front cover of the New York Times Magazine, fortified by Canby's quote that the work was "Better than anything I've seen this year in the theater (live or dead)." At the same time, those very theatres were beginning to take notice. In December, the Joseph Papp Public Theater in Manhattan (which had previously screened Dreamchild to large audiences) decided to premiere The Singing Detective on the big screen, running all six episodes together as if they comprised one seven hour long movie. These weekly marathon screenings were so successful that an initial six week run was extended to a sell-out twenty performances, lasting right through to 23rd April 1989. As a consequence, the Public Theater was honoured with a DW Griffiths Award from the National Board of Review for its efforts in bringing the work to the big screen.¹⁸¹

As all of this suggests, Potter's work was reclaimed and promoted by Canby and others as a cinematic 'discovery' - a pearl fished out from the general cess-pool of television. If much of this confusion had to do with US cultural privileging of cinema over television (the feeling that any work as complex as Potter's must by definition have its true place in a medium other than television), at the same time, the rapturous reception given to The Singing Detective in New York and elsewhere seemed to indicate a largely unfulfilled American appetite for more 'demanding' material on TV.¹⁸² If this was the view in fashionable New York, Hollywood too began to take interest. After completing his first theatrical feature film, Queen of Hearts in Britain in 1988, Jon Amiel was invited to the U.S.A. to direct Aunt Julia and The Scriptwriter (released 1990) and subsequently Sommersby, with Richard Gere and Jodie Foster (released 1992). Meanwhile, similar to Potter's experience with Pennies,

the possibility of turning The Singing Detective into a Hollywood movie became mooted. In 1990, Potter wrote an American screenplay version, though to date this has not yet been produced.¹⁸³

The Singing Detective thus rehabilitated Potter in the eyes of Hollywood, investing him, along with the director, Jon Amiel, with the ability to have his projects and ideas considered seriously in LA. Similarly in Britain, as the retrospectives and interviews seemed to attest, the social event of the transmission of The Singing Detective marked Potter's transformation within media discourses from 'distinguished television playwright' into genuine 'television auteur'; a fine distinction but one nevertheless with significant material effects.

Despite all the adulation, by 1988, Potter had grown worried. As he suggested during a guest appearance that year on Terry Wogan's chat show, how was he going to get away from The Singing Detective ? Because it had reached so close into his own experiences "in terms of health and background and so on", it had become "potentially very dangerous" to his continuation as a writer. "It threatens me now...", he claimed.¹⁸⁴

Potter had already felt the inhibiting effects of The Singing Detective, prior even to its first British transmission. As an Observer profile of 'the author' recorded in December 1986, all through that year, he had been afflicted with a writer's block - ever since The Singing Detective had started shooting. He blamed this on having created Marlow too closely in his own image: "'Without planning it, I have got too close to something'", he said.¹⁸⁵

Akin to the relationship between author and character in Hide and Seek, Marlow, having been endowed with so many of the 'facts' of the writer's own life, had apparently slipped from Potter's control, almost without him realising it. In trying to create a character in his own image who would come across as 'true', this particular creation had got too close for comfort. He had become too larger than life; too 'real'. The self-referential notion of showing to audiences how a work could only be about itself and its writer had impelled Potter to create characters and situations ever closer to himself and his own experiences. The question he faced at the end of 1986 with The Singing Detective was whether having got, like the 'Author' in Hide and Seek, 'nearer and nearer to himself', he had not exhausted himself as a writer; literally using himself up ?

As he suggested at the time, there was one hope, however, of clearing this writer's block that seemed to get more and more threatening as he watched each transmission of The Singing Detective in Autumn 1986. At the end of the sixth episode, there was a violent dénouement. Perhaps this might finally crack the block. He hoped for more too: "'My disease is to some extent psychosomatic and in finally exorcising Marlow, I hope that somehow I may leave my illness behind'" he told The Observer.^{es} Just as with Hide and Seek where the 'Author' changed his own reality through the 'release' of the fictional Daniel Miller, so too was Potter apparently hoping that Marlow's recovery from illness would free him from his own. The traffic of biographical 'fact' into fiction which had so worried him with the creation of Marlow might become two-way, as in Hide and Seek - the recovery at the end of the fiction might translate itself into physical 'fact'. Like Marlow at the end of The Singing Detective, he could kill off his old sick self.

In the event, if the biological reality of illness proved more resistant to change than Potter had hoped, equally problematic was press and public reaction to the drama.¹⁸⁷ As Potter put it in interview, too many reviewers and commentators made the "crude and philistine assumption" with The Singing Detective that Marlow was literally him.¹⁸⁸ Seeing only the surface level of the 'fact', 'fiction', 'truth' distinctions that Potter was trying to motivate by fictionalising details of his own life, critics had equated Marlow too easily and threateningly with the writer himself. Having played the press game of satisfying curiosity about the life of the 'author' in order to maximise audiences for the work, Potter was now in danger of being framed by the very media discourses which he had attempted to manipulate to his own advantage; condemned to be ever more the 'author of the autobiographical Singing Detective', with all the attendant dangers of a writing block that that entailed. Little wonder, as he put it to Wogan in 1988, that the Canby eulogies in the New York Times had left him feeling "like a dead man".¹⁸⁹

By Christmas of 1986, Potter's immediate solution to the problems presented by the British reception of The Singing Detective was to turn to writing a novel: Blackeyes, begun on Boxing Day, 1986. If this produced the much needed freeing of his writer's block, nevertheless, as the plaudits in 1988 from the USA showed, exorcising the ghost of Marlow and The Singing Detective would prove altogether more difficult, perhaps even impossible. As Potter put it on the Wogan show that year, this was why he hoped the public reaction to two of his forthcoming works would be favourable: "I hope Track 29 works now. I hope Christabel, which is on BBC next, works. In other words, I've got to get away from The Singing Detective."¹⁹⁰

5.4) Conclusion

Hence although the eighties had been good to Potter, they brought their own sets of problems. Thatcherism had transformed Britain into a much more market-orientated environment in which, as Potter had rightly suggested, everything had become 'consumerist, including television'. The rise and rise of a tabloid press culture (which Potter had foreshadowed as early as Paper Roses as 1971) placed new demands upon a writer's dream of a 'common culture'. To get space for his work, Potter, in common with many writers in the eighties, had to market himself much more aggressively, often until the lines between publicity and self-publicity, writer and celebrity, became hopelessly crossed.¹⁹¹

Already in place by the time of The Singing Detective, these 'consumerist' tendencies were only heightened by the impact of a third Conservative election victory under Margaret Thatcher in 1987, with its manifesto promises of a shake-up in broadcasting and the imposition of a quota upon the BBC which would compel it to take 25 % of its programmes from independent producers. The resulting Government White Paper on Broadcasting the following year only further demonstrated that the Corporation had to change with the times, if it was to engage with seemingly imminent deregulation of the television environment and domination of market forces.

As the fast-talking American producer, Rick McCallum (himself symbolic of this new more competitive era) expressed it in 1990:

It's a whole new world now... [the BBC] have got to get their house in order... It has to be able to compete now... Ten years ago Channel 4 didn't exist - all the rest of the world was a different place... plus the BBC fiscally has to get its act together... Agents don't want to send a script to the BBC when they can send it to Channel 4, to ITV - Anglia, Granada - and they'll respect them just as much, let them do

it just as much, give them more money to make more the film... Times are not only tough but they're competitive now...¹⁹²

The appointment of Mark Shivas as Head of BBC TV Drama in 1988 (a former BBC producer who had also worked as an independent feature film producer in the world outside) was one more symptom of the BBC's feeling that it had to adjust to the new prospect of more competitive times. Changing the name of BBC Plays to BBC Films ("because we make more plays than films"), Shivas, by 1990, had moved the Corporation into a far firmer engagement with the world of feature film production outside, than had ever been the case before. Gone were the days of the single studio play, epitomised by Play for Today; in were the one-off single films of Screen One and Screen Two.¹⁹³ Being a more costly product, this meant the BBC could produce only twenty a year, with up to half a dozen films on 35mm, the rest on 16mm. All, however, were financed with the help of co-production money. For Potter, whose whole aesthetic had originally been founded on the 'non-naturalistic' electronic studio drama, the effects of this change were undoubtedly disorientating: "You spend your life on building a structure and suddenly the ground on which it rests is taken away", he told me in 1990.¹⁹⁴

On the other hand, the success of The Singing Detective left him in a better position than most to exploit the changes. He was marketable: an international commodity to barter with. Nowhere was this more reflected than in the rival claims of his two producers at this time for his attention and his work - Rick McCallum eventually succeeding in turning Potter's old Track 29 script into a feature film in 1988; Kenith Trodd producing a four part BBC serial, Christabel, that same year.

What both these works had in common was, similar to Dreamchild and Late Call, the centrality of a female protagonist and a feminine (even feminist) perspective. If, as Potter suggested, all his "work is about what goes on inside people's heads", then something of a shift took place during this period whereby a focus on 'what goes on inside a man's head' was replaced for a time by 'what goes on inside a woman's'; a shift that as the next chapter will show, culminated in Potter's 1989 television serial (adapted from his 1987 novel), Blackeyes⁹⁵ (: § 6.0; 6.1)

Behind the scenes, however, a very male battle was taking place as the always uneasy relationship between Potter's two producers, McCallum and Trodd, finally began to crack apart. The following final chapter will trace the circumstances of that split which eventually led to the break-up of the partnership between Potter and his oldest friend and colleague, Kenith Trodd. This is detailed through (sometimes wildly diverging) first hand accounts from all sides involved; accounts which in one sense are symptomatic of the wider uncertainties that were current within BBC TV Drama at that time. As a result, far more than any previous chapter, Chapter Six records a plurality of opinions and statements which hopefully serve to reflect the uncertainties (and possibilities) of a period when a hitherto public service institution attempted to adapt to a more market-orientated environment - when getting 'the deal' often became more important than making the programme.

CHAPTER SIX

LIVING DOLLS: FROM "TRACK 29" TO "BLACKEYES"

6.0 a) 'Young at Heart': Rick McCallum and "Track 29"

Track 29 opened at the Lumière Cinema, St Martin's Lane, London on August 5th 1988.' As Chapter Five outlined, it had had a long history of production, having originally been intended as a BBC film under director Joseph Losey, until financial complications caused the dramatic collapse of the project only days before shooting in August 1983. (: § 5.1)

Four years later, Potter and his movie producer, Rick McCallum, decided to have another go at filming the 1982 screenplay - this time, as an independent feature outside the BBC. Though Losey had died in 1984, the choice of director for the new version never seemed in doubt. Immediately prior to returning to Track 29, McCallum had produced Castaway for the eminent British director, Nic Roeg and found it one of the most delightful of collaborations. According to McCallum:

That thing was such a great experience for me... I wanted, desperately, for Dennis to get into part of that because he had made a first step with Jon [Amiel on The Singing Detective] that was unlike any other collaboration I've ever seen?

In common with most of Potter's produced screenplays, the script which Roeg was then given to read was essentially a reworking of material originally written by Potter for television - in this case, his 1974 TV

play, Schmoedipus (: § 2.2). As with the play, the film revolves around a female protagonist who is trapped in a childless suburban marriage and frustrated by her husband's obsessive toy train hobby. One day, while he is out at work, she is apparently visited by a strange young man who claims to be the child she had some twenty years ago when, as a schoolgirl, she was seduced in a near-rape by a youth at a fairground.

With a more international audience clearly in mind for the film, Potter's script moves the action from London to the U.S.A. and transforms the central protagonist into an American called Linda: a more "attractively late thirtyish" version of Elizabeth, the central character of the TV play.³ In another change, Elizabeth's husband, Tom, becomes Henry Hendry: a doctor who is carrying on an affair with one of his nurses at the local clinic. This culminates in an illicit trip he makes to a convention of toy train enthusiasts, where he gives a comically evangelical address that ends with the entire gathering miming to Glenn Miller's "Chattanooga Choo Choo"; its chorus providing the title of the film: "Yes! Yes! Track Twenty-nine!"⁴ Meanwhile, Glen, the visitor from Canada in Schmoedipus, is transformed into Martin: an Englishman who tells Linda he has hitch-hiked "across the pond in search of [his] mama"⁵ (In a clear borrowing from Martin 'the Devil' in Brimstone, he is described in the original script as "demonic" and "satanic", with a breath of "sulferous hatred"⁶).

While interior locations still predominate in Track 29, the domestic confines of the studio-bound television play are transcended through the use of American highway landscape exteriors, as well as flashbacks to Linda's fairground seduction/ rape by a 'Martin look-alike' sporting a 'MOTHER' tattoo across his chest. Recurring at key moments throughout

the film, these make explicit what was only implicit in Elizabeth Carter's climactic speech at the close of the TV play.

This is also true of the central relationship between Linda and her 'son' Martin, where the connotations of incest of the earlier play are heightened and made explicit in the film version. While Glen in Schmoedipus, only asked breathlessly if Elizabeth ever breast-fed him as a baby ("Wow ! I wish - I could remember - "), Martin in Track 29 is far more daring.⁷ The script describes how, at one point, he pinions Linda with "his knees, raunchily", whilst later, lying on top of her, "he kisses her passionately".⁸

Roeg read the film version and liked it, choosing to shoot from Potter's original 1982 screenplay rather than ask for a rewritten script. After a long period in which McCallum scoured the world for funds, finance for the project was finally secured from Handmade Films in Britain. The resulting \$5 million movie began shooting on location in the U.S.A. in the summer of 1987, with a cast that included Gary Oldman as Martin, Christopher Lloyd as Henry plus Roeg's wife and regular lead in his films, Theresa Russell, in the central role of Linda Hendry.

To McCallum, out on location as both producer and production manager, it seemed full creative freedom was being enjoyed on the project in the absence of Handmade's two executive producers: George Harrison and Denis O'Brien. Despite his credit on the film, Harrison, the ex-Beatle, had no involvement at all in Track 29, McCallum claims.⁹ O'Brien, however, appeared more supportive; sending out many telexes to the cast and crew, indicating his love for the project.

When it came time to show him the final film, however, things became different. As McCallum explains, Handmade had concluded the deal for Track 29 very quickly. On delivery of the film, it became clear the company had not realised when it originally financed Track 29 that it was a movie with an 'incest' theme. McCallum has his own opinions on how such an apparently astonishing gaffe could have happened:

... Denis O'Brien... is a businessman, he's a banker... And he sees films as part of a portfolio - you know, the certain 'blue chip' films and the certain 'high risk' films... But he was jet-lagged when he read the script - ... He had literally come in on a Monday morning; had to have read it Monday because I was meeting with him on Tuesday to do the deal... And you get into a lot of things with these guys and you think... they control millions of dollars, they can't behave in such unprofessional ways. But they do, thank God they do !!!°

McCallum's guerilla tactics had succeeded in getting backing for a very 'high risk' film but only finally to be locked into a battle with Handmade over its release. Despite a reputation for novelty and eccentricity, incest was apparently just too 'dangerous' a subject for Handmade to handle. O'Brien threatened not to release the movie unless cuts were made and it was only the intervention of Potter which finally saved the day. As McCallum recalls, Potter suggested that cuts be made but only certain cuts that would allow the incest theme to remain in the movie and perhaps even be highlighted. In this way, the sequence described in the original screenplay where Martin pinions Linda in her bedroom 'with his knees raunchily' was edited out of the final film but the passionate on-screen kiss left in. As McCallum puts it, the process was like a 'negotiation' in which O'Brien thought he had won by getting the film-makers to acquiesce to cuts but where the film-makers themselves managed to retain the 'explosive' incest theme they had wanted all along.''

After a delay, the picture finally opened in London in August and in Los Angeles in September 1988, mostly to good reviews.¹² Some critics loved it. Margaret Walters of The Listener described it as having "more zip and extravagant comic energy than any British film in years."¹³ At the box office, however, it did little business. As McCallum states, all his 'independent' film work with Potter had this one thing in common. While being relentlessly uncompromising in artistic terms and hence often a critical success, financially, all the films were unsuccessful. He states:

Between Dennis and I we've probably come close to losing \$100 million. On one level I'm very proud of it in terms of guerilla independent film-making but as a lifestyle it's fucking appalling, I can tell you!¹⁴

In much the same way, when film critics have considered Track 29, they have tended to focus upon the uncompromising nature of its two acclaimed British 'auteurs', Roeg and Potter, and whether their conjunction on the same project was a collaboration or simply a collision of different oeuvres?¹⁵ Adam Barker in Monthly Film Bulletin has argued the latter. Whereas Potter's is a dynamic, psychoanalytic kind of drama, he suggests the films of Nic Roeg create a world in which nothing makes sense except at the level of "formal relations established within the film itself, which are abstract, objective relations between shapes, colours and incidents rather than subjectively motivated, psychological connections."¹⁶

McCallum, who has worked with Roeg on three films to date, agrees: "That's where Nic is brilliant". he states. "Taking random events and putting them altogether." He suggests that that is all Roeg ever looks for in his work: "It may have no connective tissue immediately but he finds one in the film."¹⁷ If the director's world is one where coincidence rules,

then clearly this is why he would be attracted to the Track 29 script, with its apparent coincidence of Martin the Englishman who bears an uncanny resemblance to Linda's fairground seducer of long ago.

Meanwhile, what of Potter ? Like Schmoedipus and much of his other work, Track 29 makes 'subjectively motivated psychological connections'. As with the earlier play, the film finally makes it clear that Martin is a projection of Linda's own tormented psyche. He is her 'dreamchild', returned to liberate her from an infantile childless marriage (as symbolised by her husband's obsession with toy trains). The difference from Schmoedipus is that while the earlier play ended as anxiously as it began with the return of husband, Tom and a general retreat of the couple into a deluded infantilism, Track 29 offers its female protagonist the possibility of liberation from this domestic prison:

In a substantial revision of the TV play, Track 29 ends with the murder of Linda's husband who is stabbed by Martin, significantly with Linda's own kitchen knife. If Linda is freed by this, the film at its close makes clear that the murder has been not 'real' but 'imaginary'. After the audience has seen Martin stab Henry, the latter is still heard, apparently alive and well, calling to Linda from the room in which he is playing with his toy trains. Meanwhile, immaculate for the first time in the film in a white fifties style suit, Linda calmly packs her luggage into the back of her convertible and drives off, leaving Henry still calling, as Rosemary Clooney's version of "Young At Heart" plays on the soundtrack.

The message is the same as Dreamchild and The Singing Detective and confirms the progression to optimism which previous chapters traced in

Potter's writing from the early seventies onwards. In contrast to the stalemate ending of Schmoedipus, it is that psychological redemption from past trauma is possible but only, as the song says, if you become 'Young At Heart' and get 'in touch with your younger self' by confronting that past. Ironically, escape from the infantilism of grown-up life (as represented by Henry's toy trains) comes for Linda by recapturing the 'wonder' of being a child again, through the child-like development of a rich imaginative life. In Track 29, she fantasizes a 'dreamchild' who will be a 'devil' and murder Henry. Akin to his namesake in Brimstone, Martin's apparently evil act brings a greater good. In the 1988 film, as opposed to the 1974 TV play, 'the outsider knocking on her door' functions as a dynamic agent of psychological healing for Linda who, like Philip Marlow in The Singing Detective, cures herself through her own imagination, thus freeing herself to become 'the Author of her own Fate' at last.

In terms of narrative coherence, the film leavens this moral with ambiguity, however, for under Nicolas Roeg's direction, the audience is teased right to the very end. As the "Young At Heart" melody starts up, the camera begins a slow zoom to the ceiling of the ground floor lounge in the Hendry house. There, a blood stain is picked out, slowly spreading over a spot which the audience knows is directly below Henry's toy train room upstairs. Could it be that Martin is real and if so did he really kill Henry ? Or perhaps it was Linda ? Is it all really her fantasy ? If Potter's script emphasises imaginative liberation, Roeg's direction attempts to resist any definitive reading. As critic Richard Combs has put it, this is a common feature of Roeg's cinema:

... - The theme of nothing is what it seems but also the way visual patterns and correspondences don't just reveal but stand in for psychological reality, creating a reality of their own (the slow zoom

into the blood stain at the end has an autonomous force, independent of any question as to whether Martin has 'really' killed Linda's husband).¹⁸

With all of Potter's work revolving around 'what goes on inside people's heads' while Roeg's interest clearly lay in the 'formal relations within the film itself', it is therefore possible to argue a 'collision' of oeuvres. Perhaps, however, for a film with such apparently 'explosive' subject matter as Track 29, that was no bad thing.

6.0 b) 'Casualties of War': Kenith Trodd and "Christabel"

While Rick McCallum was fighting battles in 1988 over the release of Track 29, Kenith Trodd was busily engaged on his own pet project, based upon a Potter script:

Unusually for Potter, Christabel fictionalised the experiences of individuals still living. Based upon Christabel Bielenberg's 1968 autobiography The Past Is Myself, the drama tells the story of Christabel, an upper class 'English rose', who married a German lawyer, Peter, in 1934, only to find herself living through the whole of the Second World War in Nazi Germany. This included her husband's arrest and detention in Ravensbrück Concentration Camp as a result of his links with a failed German resistance plot to assassinate Hitler. Her subsequent bravery in securing his release culminated in an extraordinary episode in which she volunteered to be questioned by the Gestapo.

As we have consistently seen, Potter was always adept at drawing his material from any number of sources - real-life incident, historical detail, his own life and past work, even the Gospels - reworking it into a potent vehicle of personal expression and/ or exploration.¹⁹ Christabel, too, can be seen in this light but it also has to be related to Potter's 'new entrepreneurism' period of the early eighties, when, flush with money from his lucrative Hollywood ventures, he optioned The Past Is Myself after reading a review of it in The Economist. The superlatives of that review give a clue to his interest in the material. The autobiography was praised as "a magnificent contribution to international understanding and as a document of how the human spirit can triumph in the midst of evil and persecution."²⁰

Originally, Potter's plan had been to turn the book into a movie, under producer Rick McCallum. The financiers of Dreamchild, EMI Films, were offered the material but as McCallum recalls, the problem was the deal that Potter had got himself locked into with his real-life subjects which prevented much dramatic licence being taken with their story.²¹ The writer had been by no means the first to approach the Bielenbergs with the offer of a film deal. Various companies had tried in the past to buy the rights but had always been refused on account of their desire to 'sex' the book up - for example, by having Christabel have an affair in the film and so on. Potter managed to persuade the Bielenbergs that he would do an honest, fairly literal job with the script and indeed granted them consultation rights on the project.²² It was this which limited the story's box-office appeal to McCallum. When EMI Films collapsed, he no longer became interested in the Christabel project and the story went instead to the BBC and Kenith Trodd in the form of a four-part TV serial.²³

Hence, initially attracted by a powerful Singing Detective-like story of the triumph of the human spirit against all odds, Potter was unable, because of the deal with his real subjects, to transform his fact-based material into a non-naturalistic 'Dennis Potter work' along the lines of a Dreamchild or Casanova. This is not to say that unfettered by contractual obligations, he would have wished to write Christabel in such a way. He later maintained there was "a deeper need for me to do a piece of naturalistic chronological narrative as an act of writerly hygiene, just as you might wash your brain under a tap". Clearly, however, he was deprived of a rather important option; a familiar way of proceeding, as he himself conceded: "I felt it hard to write, actually, because there was a real person out there who had the right to comment on the script... and

because I didn't want to intrude in any way with my own box of tricks." He endeavoured instead to make each scene "a bit like a soap but full of reality and economy".²⁴

Nevertheless, while forsaking his familiar 'box of non-naturalistic tricks' in favour of dramatising the book into a series of pared-down episodes which are relayed naturalistically, Potter has still filtered the factual source material through his own imagination. Christabel's autobiography is reworked into a fictional form consistent with the mythic pattern of his own The Singing Detective: namely, the emotional journey of a central protagonist from darkness to light; despair to hope.

This is best illustrated by the climactic scenes in Episode Four when Christabel is interrogated by the Gestapo. In her autobiography, she describes how, during her visit to Ravensbrück Concentration Camp where her husband was being held, she received a smuggled note from him, outlining the story he was sticking to under interrogation with regard to the failed plot against Hitler. Later, she wondered "Why did he give me that note ?", until it dawned on her - "... Of course... Peter had given me the message in case I should be interrogated - our evidence must tally".²⁵ This is why she subsequently volunteered to be interrogated by the Gestapo, sensing a means to free her husband from suspicion by matching her testimony to his.

In Potter's version, however, Christabel is given no note by Peter. Indeed her encounter with the Gestapo immediately precedes the visit to her husband. In terms of narrative logic, the opportunity to see him thus comes as a reward for her confronting 'the heart of Gestapo darkness' singlehandedly. Moreover, just as Philip Marlow overcame his

particular 'darkness' in The Singing Detective, imagination is demonstrated to be the key to survival and eventual liberation. Unlike the original book, Potter has a female friend of Christabel's tell her, prior to the interrogation: "Say anything ! Promise anything ! It's your only chance."²⁶ As a result, she mentions to the Gestapo, faux-naive, that Winston Churchill is a friend of her family, remembering her friend Lexi's advice that with German surrender imminent, "some of the rats have enough sense to be frightened out of their filthy skins."²⁷

As with The Singing Detective, fiction (or 'lies') is therefore highlighted as the key to individual liberation. In contrast to the autobiography, it is also important to note that it is a liberation achieved wholly by female initiative and bravery (Christabel and Lexi) with no male help (no note from Peter). Like Track 29 a year before, it may be no exaggeration to see Christabel as thus a feminine (even feminist) reworking of the narrative trajectory of The Singing Detective. This may explain, too, why, despite the apparent literalism of treatment, Potter's scripts were finally credited in the TV serial as not 'adapted from' but 'based on' The Past Is Myself.

Nevertheless, Potter was unhappy about the way Christabel eventually turned out, as many of those who worked on the production confirm. The drama's sound recordist Peter Edwards states: "Dennis didn't like Christabel. He wanted nothing to do with it really towards the end... His criticism was it wasn't flexibly shot."²⁸ Similarly, its film editor, Clare Douglas, claims Potter's hatred of Christabel was one of the reasons he decided to direct Blackeyes the following year. Being shot very conventionally by director Adrian Shergold, she asserts very little

of "the feeling of menace in Nazi Germany" which Potter's scripts had evoked found its way onto film.²⁹

As noted with regard to his involvement on The Singing Detective, Kenith Trodd, however, had been extremely keen to make Christabel and in pre-publicity, he was able to endorse it enthusiastically, hailing this 'faction' as a "breakthrough" for Dennis Potter.³⁰ Certainly, in terms of pure ratings, it seemed to be Trodd's not Potter's view of Christabel which prevailed when the drama was transmitted on BBC-2 between 16 November and 7 December 1988. If many newspaper reviewers regarded it as deeply disappointing in terms of Potter's reputation for complex non-linear narratives ("Dennis Potter's War Drama Fails To Ignite" ran one headline), each of Christabel's four episodes topped BBC-2's ratings with an average audience of seven and half million - very high for a drama serial on BBC TV's minority channel³¹. With Potter, however, preparing for the first time to direct his next production and disdaining to engage in substantial pre-publicity for Christabel, a series he would later deem a 'mistake', there can be no doubt, as Clare Douglas states, that Trodd "knew Dennis hated Christabel and was very upset that he hated Christabel".³²

- There can be no doubt either that these animosities spilled over into the production of what was Potter's own pet project: Blackeyes.

6.1) BLACKEYES

a) 'Too Many Producers...'

As we have seen over many chapters, Kenith Trodd had always been the figure most associated with the production of Potter's work. In January 1989, however, this erstwhile friend was to find himself unceremoniously axed from the production of Blackeyes. In the course of an interview, Trodd provided a detailed account of this extraordinary, apparent end to what had hitherto seemed one of the most successful creative partnerships in British television:

On 14th December 1988, Michael Grade, recently appointed as Chief Executive of Channel 4, announced to the press that he had pulled off 'a major coup' by signing up two of Britain's top television writers, Alan Bleasdale and Dennis Potter. Potter, he indicated, was writing a six part serial for Channel Four called Lipstick on Your Collar which was going to be "a partly autobiographical picture of post-war Britain from the 1950s onwards."³³

Trodd was furious since he claims this was a project which he and Potter had been developing: first as a movie and then as a six-part serial for the BBC. No-one had told him about any Channel 4 deal. He felt betrayed and impulsively decided to resign from the Blackeyes production, protesting that the arrangement between he and Rick McCallum, whereby both were sharing production duties on Potter's work, was simply not working.

Despite his assertion that "all... on the show" (bar Potter and McCallum) urged him not to go, Trodd then resigned from the production, though later over the Christmas period, he claims he and Potter made up their

differences so that things were "kind of going to be alright again". In the New Year, however, on returning from Los Angeles where he had been promoting Christabel, he was subsequently to discover production on Blackeyes had been moved from his office at BBC Television Centre; McCallum having renegotiated his BBC contract in order to assume the role of sole producer.

To Trodd, a 'coup' had been staged - one in relation to which he could find no support from the Head of BBC TV Drama, Mark Shivas. He also asserts that during the course of the next fortnight, following his return from Los Angeles, he had several phone conversations with Potter which were the worst he had ever had with anybody: "They were just horrible and [so] that was that..."³⁴

As Trodd later discovered to his annoyance, the irony of the whole affair was that Grade's announcement which had sparked off the dispute had been very premature since neither Potter nor McCallum had at that point signed any deal with Channel 4. Trodd states he should have known on the basis of his previous experience of Grade at LWT, that the Lipstick announcement was a characteristically self-publicising gesture on the part of the executive, as he tried to consolidate his presence at Channel 4. According to Trodd, Grade "will do anything to get in tomorrow's papers".³⁵

Both Potter and McCallum portray events in a somewhat different light to Trodd. For them, their negotiations with Channel 4 were no betrayal of Trodd, simply good business and none of his. They also deny his claim that he 'made it up' with Potter over the Christmas period of 1988. According to Potter:

... Michael Grade made this premature [announcement]... and he resigned - I mean he's a resigner is Ken. He resigned... and then Mark Shivas said don't resign, you know, and I said don't resign. He didn't talk to me at all so we had no row, nothing and then he finally withdrew his resignation and Mark wouldn't let him. It was as simple as that.³⁶

For his part, Mark Shivas asserts he did not allow Trodd back on to Blackeyes because having two producers on it was proving "unproductive"³⁷. Clearly, behind the specifics of the Lipstick dispute lay a much deeper source of friction in Trodd and Potter's relationship, stemming from the latter's decision earlier in the decade to involve Rick McCallum in the production of his work. McCallum has no doubts why Potter hired him, claiming that while Trodd satisfied Potter's needs within the BBC, he was completely at sea in the outside world of independent production: a world of deals and the movement of money.³⁸ Potter echoed this: "...The other thing about Ken is that he doesn't know anything about film, movies, money, structures, all those things a producer is - I mean he wouldn't exist outside the BBC". A BBC producer, Potter stated, is basically "a story editor".³⁹

Trodd would clearly deny he cannot function 'outside the BBC'. As Chapter Two made clear, long before the advent of Channel 4, he helped form Kestrel in the late sixties - one of the first British independent production companies (: § 2.0 (a)). Also, besides his credits on the Potter movies Brimstone and Treacle and Dreamchild, he produced the feature film A Month in the Country for Channel 4 and PFH Limited in the mid eighties. Calling himself an 'independent' within the BBC, Trodd retorts that McCallum is a 'line producer' who is good at dealing with budgets and logistics: "the end... which I am not particularly interested in and which, if you've worked in institutional television, you haven't had to be". Potter's original production ideal of having McCallum handle

budgets whilst retaining Trodd for the 'creative rub of ideas' proved to be wrong, the latter states: "It was like a writer writing a script... It wasn't actually... taking into account the inevitable rivalries, jealousies and conflicts that would... arise between those two people."⁴⁰

In addition to the arrival of McCallum on the scene, there was one other major source of strain on the Potter - Trodd relationship which had been brewing throughout the eighties and which finally came to a head on the Blackeyes production. This was Potter's growing desire to direct his own work - a desire which Trodd was clearly unhappy about and yet one which in many ways was a reaction to his own increasingly successful campaign of the seventies and eighties to have TV drama made on film as opposed to recorded in the electronic studio. In marked contrast to Trodd's rampant enthusiasm, Potter worried about the disappearance of studio drama and the rise of the BBC film, fearing television would become a director's medium with no place for the writer (: § 5.2).

"A self-defensive structure" is therefore how Potter described his move from writer to writer-director on Blackeyes; an attempt to prevent the 'appropriation' of his work by directors.⁴¹ Though the writer's reaction to Christabel undoubtedly contributed to the move, Trodd believes the idea of Potter as director had long been on the cards. As long ago as the writer's unusual casting suggestions for Pennies from Heaven, the producer knew directing would someday have to happen (: § 4.1 b). It was not a prospect he relished. Despite his attempts to provide Potter with the best that was available in terms of production values and personnel, the writer, he felt, was still "in a mean way" dissatisfied, believing there was something not being realised in his work: "What it was that was missing", Trodd states, "I don't know".⁴²

It was during the mid-eighties, when the writer's fear of 'director power' had reached a peak, that Trodd first remembers Potter explicitly voicing a desire to direct his own work. This surfaced in the wake of the tensions surrounding the production of Dreamchild and soon became concretised around the notion of the writer directing the screen version of his own stage play, Sufficient Carbohydrate (: § 5.2). According to Trodd:

The... idea was that Dennis would direct that because I had always envisaged that if we gave him the opportunity it would be in those rather limited, protective conditions ie small cast, virtually one location, BBC-2, if it died it wouldn't matter that much and you know, there wouldn't be that much pressure on him.⁴³

Potter, however, was later to claim that Trodd sacked him from the production which originally he was going to direct in the Autumn of 1985 under the title: All of You⁴⁴. It was instead 'postponed', resurfacing a year later under Trodd, with a new title, Visitors and a different director, Piers Haggard. Whilst agreeing that he and Potter fell out wildly over Visitors (tx. BBC-2 22.2.87), Trodd's version is that co-production money for the project simply fell through and so it could not be made. The following year, when funds became available, Potter was either "ill again or writing... or both" and so was not able to direct it. As a result, Trodd offered the material to Haggard and hence the "opportunity had passed for Dennis to direct."⁴⁵ The next the producer knew was a year later when, out of very different circumstances, Potter suddenly decided he would direct the much bigger project of Blackeyes.

According to the producer, the different circumstances that pushed Potter into directing were simply that no other suitable director for Blackeyes could be found. Jon Amiel was offered the material but for

straightforward career reasons turned it down, stating he did not want to work in television and direct another serial, even for Potter.⁴⁶ Meanwhile, as Rick McCallum confirms, Nic Roeg, fresh from the Track 29 collaboration, was offered the material but also turned it down, claiming it was not 'the way he looked at women'. Roeg replied that the vision in Blackeyes was so personal that only the writer should direct it. It was "actually Nic's enthusiasm that pushed Dennis over into directing", McCallum asserts.⁴⁷

Thus one can see how far apart Trodd had become from both Potter and McCallum on the issue of the writer directing Blackeyes: to Trodd, it was because no-one else would do it; to McCallum, it was a matter of extending the individual artist's freedom of personal expression. What is also evident is that both Potter's desire to direct and the hiring of McCallum were reactions against an increasingly competitive environment outside, yet also within the BBC Drama Department in the age of the 'independent' producer; drama on film and the international co-production. As Potter affirmed in interview, production manoeuvres such as directing or becoming executive producer of his own work were simply attempts to "take charge" in what he perceived to be "an increasingly hostile environment" for his type of work.⁴⁸ Ultimately, this was leading to an increasing search for 'the perfect deal' that would be both financially rewarding and provide the optimum production environment for his work.

In terms of TV, if that meant abandoning the BBC for a spell and Kenith Trodd, then so be it. By 1988 and the invitation to work for Channel 4, it seems Potter had to find a project quickly in order to negotiate a deal with Grade. The result was Lipstick On Your Collar, regardless of whose feathers it ruffled. As Rick McCallum crudely puts it, when "... a

kind of window opens up,... you've to got to make a deal before that window closes or you're fucked".⁴⁹ In this much more competitive environment, with its emphasis on the 'brand name' artist and the quick deal, the need for what Potter and McCallum term a 'story editor' producer had become increasingly redundant. When Trodd resigned from Blackeyes, he was therefore perhaps only conceding a battle which, in the course of the previous decade, had long since been lost.⁵⁰

6.1 b) Sources

Blackeyes was transmitted on BBC-2 as a four part television serial between 29th November and 20th December 1989.⁵¹ The most immediate source of inspiration for Potter's scripts was his third novel of the same name, first published in Britain by Faber and Faber on September 28th 1987.

As the writer attested in interview, Blackeyes was first written as a novel as part of a deliberate attempt to escape from the enormous success of The Singing Detective which had begun to threaten him as a writer because audiences were making "the crude and philistine assumption" that the central protagonist, the misanthropic and misogynistic Philip Marlow, was in fact Potter himself.⁵² (: § 5.3 d) Written quickly during the winter of 1986/7 (from Boxing Day to St Valentine's Day) the Blackeyes novel can thus be seen as both a general exploration of man's inhumanity to women and an attempt by Potter to confront head-on the issue of his own treatment of women in previous work:

The plot itself is a demonstration of the not always straightforward connections between life and art. Maurice James Kingsley, an ageing half-forgotten literary roué, 'steals' his beautiful niece Jessica's account of her exploitation as a professional model, embroidering it into a sexy best-seller about the character of Blackeyes, a standard male fantasy figure who becomes a successful model, only to end up taking her own life by drowning herself in the Round Pond in Kensington Gardens: a passive victim of all the men who have used her. Thoroughly inter-textual, Potter's novel mixes Kingsley's account of Blackeyes' rise and fall with description of Jessica's angry attempt to 'rewrite' Kingsley's book (Sugar Bush) and so reverse Blackeyes' fate and by implication her own

and those of all women abused by men. Woven into this narrative tapestry are flashbacks to Jessica's childhood that gradually reveal she was sexually molested by 'Uncle Maurice'. These are juxtaposed with a satiric account of an interview given by Kingsley to a self-professed New Journalist from 'Kritz' magazine. As the narrative progresses, the reader is also gradually made aware that yet another man is trying to break into Jessica's narrative (and her life): someone who has been watching her from the mews flat opposite in a kind of Hitchcockian Rear Window scenario. By Chapter Twenty-Three (of Thirty One), he feels able to step out from behind the narrative, with an omniscient 'I':

It ill becomes the present writer to make snide remarks about his elderly colleague, for I have used the old fellow's narrative as the basis of my own account...

Jessica, trying to do the same thing, was not up to it.⁵³

Although the novel never explicitly makes the connection, it becomes clear through juxtaposition that this 'other writer' is Jeff, the male hero of Kingsley's narrative: an advertising copywriter who has been trying to woo Blackeyes. Like the mysterious men in The Singing Detective, he functions as a kind of 'floating signifier' in Blackeyes, having the apparent ability to cross over from Kingsley's prose into 'reality' as another would-be novelist who is also rewriting Sugar Bush (: § 5.3 (c)). Though this writer appears to be a 'New Man' sensitive to women's needs, the last chapter of Blackeyes warns the reader of the gap between truth and illusion:

In this final chapter, Jessica, having invited her uncle to her flat for dinner, murders Kingsley, stabbing him with her stiletto heel. Then, in the dead of night, she drags him outside and buries him in her backyard. "Rewriting was painful but now she had stepped forward into genuine

first-order creation", the narrative states, as Jessica makes her way to the Round Pond of Kensington Gardens, just as Blackeyes had done at the end of Kingsley's novel.⁵⁴ If, by this act, Jessica believes she has become the 'Author of her Fate' and escaped the clutches of men, the final paragraph of the novel reminds the reader that yet another male 'Author' is lurking in the narrative; one who, like Kingsley and all the others, is intent on appropriating both Jessica/ Blackeyes and her story for his own ends. This becomes clear in the very last sentence:

As her lungs filled, she had the satisfaction of knowing that Blackeyes was free. Well, sort of free, anyway, for it is me that is waiting outside her door, ready to claim her.⁵⁵

Clearly, even before its transformation to screen, Blackeyes was a complex narrative. Akin to The Singing Detective, however, it conforms to a basic noir narrative structure: a male investigation into disruptive female sexuality which is here focused around several male authors' attempts to 'know' the enigmatic Blackeyes. Jessica's rewrite of Kingsley's novel even deploys a stereotypical hard-boiled investigator: the cynical Inspector Blake who, suspecting there has been foul play in Blackeyes' death, goes hot on the trail of her male 'killers' and becomes obsessed by the dead girl. Echoing that of Philip Marlow in The Singing Detective, Blake's name symbolises his ambiguous status within the narrative: dedicated detective (Sexton) and deep romantic (William) (: § 5.3 (c)).

Also in common with The Singing Detective is the manner of the elimination of 'disruptive' female sexuality within one of the narrative strands: death by drowning. Kingsley's novel within the novel ends:

The water came over her shining boots, swallowed up her knees and long thighs, and then made a line around the naked swell of her belly. In next to no time, there was nothing but her head to be seen and then a few strands of floating black hair and soon she was completely submerged, with no sign of fuss or struggle. Whatever traces she may have made on the lives of others, this girl, she had gone now without a ripple. The water smoothed itself flat and reflected back the sky.⁵⁶

Just as in the 'pulp thriller' strand of The Singing Detective, patriarchal order can only be restored in Kingsley's narrative by the complete submergence of the woman with no 'fuss or struggle'. As Christine Gledhill has observed, one of the delineating features of noir, however, is "the heroine's resistance to the male control of her story". Feminist interest resides in the general "proliferation of points of view and struggle within the text for one viewpoint to gain hegemony."⁵⁷

Potter, too, is clearly aware of these possibilities. In Blackeyes, Jessica attempts to rewrite Kingsley's male narrative, resisting his convenient portrayal of Blackeyes as a passive suicide victim by inventing Blake as an agent of retribution whose task is to prove that someone else (some man) gave her "a helping hand".⁵⁸ As the investigation narrative proceeds, however, it becomes obvious that like The Singing Detective, the real culprit of the story is its own ageing misogynist author. Given that the narrative logic of thrillers always dictates the villain must be unmasked and eliminated for there to be any kind of resolution, the child abuser Kingsley therefore has to be killed at the end of the novel, just as the hospitalized Marlow had to be despatched at the end of The Singing Detective. At the same time, however, Kingsley's death at the hands (or heel) of a woman, driven mad by jealousy and loathing, also conforms to a typical noir stereotype: that of the 'unstable' 'treacherous' heroine whom it is the task of the male investigation narrative to bring under control.⁵⁹

The last paragraph of the Blackeyes novel achieves just this. Jessica goes to her death, believing she and Blackeyes have achieved "autonomous identity".⁶⁰ She has rewritten the second last paragraph of Kingsley's novel in order to ensure that by his murder, both she and Blackeyes do not sink without a "ripple"⁶¹. Achieving such negative, oppositional power to male control within the narrative does not, however, mean Jessica's viewpoint has gained hegemony for to be true to the typical trajectory of the noir narrative (a narrative constructed by men), such a struggle of viewpoints must always end in a reaffirmation of patriarchal power (and the inevitable male master 'waiting outside her door, ready to claim her'). Indeed the last sentence of Potter's novel hints that it can be no other way for Jessica / Blackeyes, whether in terms of art or religion. If, earlier works such as Follow the Yellow Brick Road and Hide and Seek sought to show that the 'God of Creation' is like a writer then, in dying, Jessica / Blackeyes has been 'claimed' by the ultimate male Author. At the same time, if, as those works also showed, a writer is like the 'God of Creation', then it is impossible for Jessica to escape the ultimate male 'Author' in Blackeyes: one who in the very last sentence both acknowledges his gender and foregrounds his anxieties that inevitably too, he has 'stolen' like Kingsley and Jeff; appropriating feminist discourses for his own male ends.

At the same time, besides the general influence of the roman noir, other more specific sources suggest themselves for Blackeyes. The novel itself helpfully yields these, when Jessica is described at one point taking Kingsley's novel down "from the shelf where it was sandwiched between a novel called Laughter in the Dark and another volume in fierce black and red covers called The Myth of Women's Masochism which she had only recently purchased".⁶²

The former is Vladimir Nabokov's first novel to be translated into English.⁶³ Like his more famous Lolita, it concerns itself with a middle aged man - a prosperous Berlin art dealer - and his obsession with a 'nymphet', a seventeen year old cinema usherette called Margot Peters. First encountering her at a movie house, he embarks on a scandalous affair that brings him financial ruin, blindness and eventually death, when, at the close of the novel and after a grim struggle, she kills him with his own revolver.

Published fifty years after Nabokov's novel, The Myth of Women's Masochism by American feminist Paula J. Kaplan is an attempt to explode the myth that women are inherently masochistic. Kaplan asserts that on the contrary, the "'Masochian' woman is the construct of a male imagination and acts in accordance with some men's fantasies; such men wish for women who would suffer for them."⁶⁴ Examining the pervasiveness of this myth in various aspects of women's everyday lives, the book ends on a somewhat ominous note by suggesting that if women could understand how much of their behaviour has been misinterpreted as masochistic "then we will be better able to search for the real sources of our suffering and begin to cleanse them from our lives".⁶⁵

The reference to these texts within Potter's Blackeyes seems clear for they both deal in contrasting ways with a related pair of male misogynist myths: the sadistic and the masochistic woman. Significantly, Kingsley's novel is 'sandwiched' between the two in Jessica's library, perhaps illustrating that both myths belong to the same lecherous male fantasy. In turn, the influence of these very different books seems to provide Potter's novel with its general narrative dynamic. On the one hand, there is the influence of Nabokov's roman noir with its narrative

playfulness, shadowy voyeurism and above all its focus upon a middle aged man's sexual and metaphysical obsession with a 'dark lady' which leads, in a spiral of misogyny, to his murder at the hands of a heroine who defies patriarchal order. On the other, there is a recognition in Blackeyes of the contemporary feminist view of women as defined by the patriarchal order in terms of their relationships to men and castigated as passive victims due to male fantasies of domination and control.

The resulting novel, when it appeared in 1987, gained wide, if not always favourable, reviews. Lorna Sage in The Observer, for example, called it "a richly devious tale" (and was promptly quoted on the cover of subsequent imprints of the novel).⁶⁶ Writing in The Listener, however, Julian Symons pre-empted the critical furore which would erupt around the later television version: "This would-be moral tale", he wrote, "surely finds its resonance and interest in the very material it deplores."⁶⁷

6.1 c) Production

Having "felt that niggle that it wasn't done with", Potter subsequently adapted Blackeyes as a screenplay and four part TV serial.⁶⁸ Both sets of scripts are dated September 1988 and it seems Potter worked on them simultaneously "with the various versions... feeding off each other": the screenplay ending up as essentially an edited version of the longer TV material.⁶⁹ Both TV scripts and screenplay stick closely to the novel. While Potter changes the order in which some appear, almost every scene from the book is dramatised with a minimum of alteration and with little hint of the substantial alterations he would later make as director of the production.⁷⁰

As noted with the Trodd dispute, pre-production on Blackeyes took place throughout the Autumn and Winter of 1988-89, with Potter preparing to sit in the director's chair for the first time. (: § 6.1 (a)) For BBC Head of Drama, Mark Shivas, this was surely an enormous gamble. Not only was he allowing a literal novice (in poor physical health) to direct an expensive addition to the BBC's 1989 Autumn schedules, he had also given the go-ahead for Blackeyes to be shot simultaneously on 35mm as a feature film - as one of the first batch of such BBC films to be made for theatrical release abroad. According to Shivas, probably only the BBC would have said yes to Potter's idea to direct for the first time. He recalls that Blackeyes was initially not going to be made on 35mm until the fact it could be done "as a series and a movie came up as something [Potter] had wanted to do before but had never managed industrially..."⁷¹

While times had certainly changed since Potter's aborted 1983 attempt to give Track 29 such a 'double life', as Kenith Trodd makes clear, the BBC still had to be made an offer it could not refuse. He states one of the

reasons the Corporation was 'outmanoeuvred' when concluding the Blackeyes deal in late 1988 was that the novel had recently been published in the United States. Although the book was not terribly well-received, this was at a time when Potter's reputation was sky-high in the U.S. in the wake of the tremendous success of The Singing Detective. (: § 5.3 (d)) As a result, various companies made a number of early offers to turn Blackeyes into a movie. These were probably just 'straws in the wind', Trodd states but they were enough for Potter and his associates to go back to the BBC and say that unless they were given what they wanted, in terms of a production shot on 35mm with Potter as director, the Corporation could find itself with a competing feature film version of Blackeyes the following Autumn. Trodd states: "It was bullshit really but it was sharp, fair negotiating practice..."⁷²

As a result of these pressures, the BBC agreed to put up half the total £2.4 million budget of Blackeyes; the other half being made up of a variety of co-production monies.⁷³ By Corporation standards, this was a sizeable budget for a 4 x 55 minute drama serial. Undoubtedly it reflected both a desire to keep Potter working for the BBC and to share in the fruits of his now sizeable international reputation.⁷⁴

By the same token, Potter also succeeded in securing perhaps the most generous shooting schedule ever for any BBC drama production: six months in which to shoot four hours of material ⁷⁵. This commenced on February 6th 1989, with a cast that included Michael Gough as Kingsley, Carol Royle as Jessica, Nigel Planer as Jeff and a relative unknown, Gina Bellman, in the eponymous role of Blackeyes. In subsequent publicity for the serial, Potter consistently claimed that as director he had "to fall in love with" Bellman as Blackeyes, if he was to make the production work

on any emotional level.⁷⁶ The closeness of their working relationship is attested by Blackeyes' sound recordist, Peter Edwards (who also worked on Christabel). Edwards states Potter 'fell in love' with Gina Bellman: "I'm not talking physically of course but he felt he had to..." He states they grew closer as the production went on.⁷⁷

The atmosphere on set, however, was often tense during shooting. According to Edwards, Potter was a very autocratic director who had definite ideas on what he wanted. There are many directors, he states, with whom members of the crew can collaborate in the form of suggesting ideas during shooting. This was definitely not the case with Potter - a fact Edwards puts down to his inexperience: "Obviously the more experienced you are, the less worried you are about people saying 'Well let me do this'..."⁷⁸

Potter's carefully worked out style of directing inevitably contributed to the lack of spontaneity on set since as Edwards well remembers, it was very difficult to achieve technically. Much of Blackeyes consists of long single takes that often last five or six minutes and are broken up only by single flash edits or short montage sequences taken from other scenes in the film. Within these long takes, Potter deploys a series of intricately designed camera movements which circle around the actors in a kind of prowling ballet and which resemble nothing more closely than the wanderings of a restless voyeur. In pre-publicity, Potter was happy to expound on the philosophy behind this style. In The Listener, he asserted film was completely unaware of the techniques that had revolutionised literary fiction in the early twentieth century: "We've got an infinite relativism of moral values, which only throws into question all the more urgently what is of value..."⁷⁹. Similarly, on Channel 4's

The Media Show, he claimed the 'grammar' of film had been for too long taken for granted. In Blackeyes, he maintained, he was consciously striving against a certain form of shooting that imposed a certain rhythm: "the two-shot, the one-shot, the medium shot, the long shot, the close shot [which] imposes itself upon everything you see ..." ⁸⁰

Undoubtedly influenced by the experience of having written Blackeyes first as a novel, Potter clearly saw his aim as 'breaking up the grammar' of film in line with modernist innovations he knew from literature. Producer Rick McCallum is scathing, however, about this philosophy, claiming this was simply "bullshit" concocted for the media.⁸¹ He believes Potter's rationale was simply a cover for the fact that he "was desperately intimidated and afraid about... breaking up the action because it's much more technical that process". Potter, he asserts, was "absolutely able to rationalise it" because the shooting schedule had been planned in such a way that the very first scene he had to direct was the relatively simple one of Kingsley waking up alone in his 'loft' apartment (which occurs in Episode One of the TV serial). McCallum alleges the scene had always been planned as a simple long take in order that Potter's transition from writer to director could be made as gentle as possible:

That's why I planned it that way. I wanted him to start off in a room with one person, not have to worry about reverses and cut-aways and have to... overlap dialogue, deal with movements that are based on total continuity... But... that was only going to be one section of the film because the loft is interspaced through all four episodes. And then once we got to the photographic studio [The next scene to be shot - between Blackeyes and a photographer: occurs Episode Two of the serial]... he started in it again. And we had a huge scene then. I said it's wrong, it's a mistake, you're not connecting, you're afraid... We didn't speak for a couple of days. There was a bit of tension: major tension on the set and everything else...⁸²

McCallum believes Potter limited himself as a director due to this lack of 'coverage' - that is, his refusal to shoot additional footage which could then be utilised in post-production. For Potter, this was too much like 'playing safe' in terms of a capitulation to the conventional film grammar of continuity editing. For McCallum, it was a case of the writer/ director depriving himself of one of his greatest gifts: his ability to manipulate images in post-production.⁹³

Sound recordist Peter Edwards provides further revealing insights into relationships between Potter, cast and crew during the rehearsing and shooting of Blackeyes. Because of the generous schedule won from the BBC, Potter had the film-maker's dream of copious amounts of time available for meticulous rehearsal. Unusually, both camera and sound man were invited. Edwards recalls that in rehearsals Potter would pace round and round the actors when they were rehearsing a scene, making jottings beside the script. Then, when it came time to shoot, the crew would be asked to repeat Potter's movements using the camera equipment - with the grips pushing the camera around on tracks in exactly the same manner and direction in which Potter had moved around the actors during rehearsals. For Edwards, this made Blackeyes the most difficult film he had ever worked on. Despite stressing his admiration for Potter, he admits the writer / director "did not understand or appreciate the difficulties that [he] as a sound mixer on location or Andrew Dunn the photographer were going through to get him what he wanted".⁹⁴ For the actors, the long ten minute takes were also very difficult - rather like a return to the theatre in terms of the acting out of long scenes but with the added pressure of having to negotiate a constantly moving camera. Edwards well remembers the tension:

... At one time I had sixteen pages of script taped together with all the actors ringed with different numbers on, according to which mikes and channels and you just went through the whole thing a bit like a live show. It was very, very nerve-racking...⁶⁵

Potter, however, was impatient about too many technical rehearsals for the crew. Edwards states he would get bored with the whole business of film-making very quickly. The crew were also aware that because of his ill-health, they could not wear him out by having rehearsal after rehearsal. This therefore created the added pressure of getting these very intricate tracking shots right almost first time. Normally, Edwards states, one rehearses and rehearses at the BBC until the technical aspects are right but "with Dennis you did it until Dennis was fed up and then you moved on and if Dennis was fed up on take one that was it, you never got anymore..."⁶⁶

Much of Blackeyes was shot at the BBC's Ealing Film Studios in order to provide Potter with a 'safe' environment. In addition, various sites in London and around Eastbourne were used for location shooting. A favourite Potter location, Hammersmith Bridge, features at the beginning of Episode One, whilst the hotel used in Cream In My Coffee to such effect (the Grand at Eastbourne) was revisited for those scenes where Blackeyes first encounters the copywriter Jeff. Surely these location scenes, featuring a great many extras, must have proved difficult for a first time director ? According to Edwards, Potter rose to it all. His confidence curve as a director grew with his learning curve and he was very confident by then.⁶⁷

Certainly directing Blackeyes seems to have been something of an emotional journey for Potter; a shedding of reclusiveness. Rick McCallum asserts: "Every day tapped into new emotions with him about how to deal

with other people... all the unbelievable and difficult emotional context he's not had for twenty five years."⁸⁸ During pre-publicity for Blackeyes, Potter confirmed that since taking up directing he felt "an utterly different person to the one who set out on the first day of rehearsals in the middle of January", having significantly made touch with his younger self.⁸⁹

By August 1989, Blackeyes had gone into post-production under Christabel's film editor, Clare Douglas. As we have seen, Potter always had a fascination with the cutting room and on The Singing Detective he made considerable creative contributions (: § 0.1; 5.3 b). With Blackeyes, Douglas describes post-production as 'tightish', principally because of the complex soundtrack which, for the first time on a BBC production, was of feature film quality, having been recorded on Dolby SR. In fact, post-production on the TV serial went on almost up to the first transmission date; a temporal constraint which Douglas in retrospect regrets as "there was no time to have debates on what was working and what wasn't."⁹⁰

At the same time, Potter was constantly refining the material and testing new ideas in the cutting room, regarding the editing stage as the 'final rewrite'. In fact, all the way through Blackeyes, he had been making many changes to the original scripts, bringing in new ideas with a freedom he had never had before as a writer, when he had always been forced to hand his material over at a certain stage to another director.

For example, the television serial opens with a highly stylised sequence in which Blackeyes, surrounded by mannequins in an otherwise empty set, is hounded by Potter's voyeuristic camera to the strains of "I'm Getting Sentimental Over You". This appears nowhere in the original scripts and

indeed according to Peter Edwards was in fact the very last scene to be shot. Similarly, an explicit sex scene between Blackeyes and her employer, Jamieson, is included in the serial whereas merely portrayed 'post-coitus' in both the novel and original scripts. The frequency and haste of many of these changes is perhaps best exemplified by one of the serial's most pervasive features - Potter's addition of a voice-over (read by himself) which both narrates and makes ironic comment upon the action unfolding on screen. How this works aesthetically will be examined in the next section but it is important to note that nowhere is it mentioned in the original scripts. Indeed according to Edwards, its inclusion in the final version was a big surprise to many in the crew since at no time during the shooting was it mentioned. Clare Douglas confirms that the decision to add a voice-over was made "during the editing."⁹¹

Asked what the reason for this was, Douglas claims Potter was being a little bit Brechtian: "He was trying to distance you from those characters", she states. "He didn't want you to like any of them. He didn't want you to like Kingsley because Kingsley was a child-molester... even though he was a very attractive character".⁹²

Could there perhaps have been a more mundane reason, however? We have seen how much of Blackeyes consists of long tracking shots designed to mimic the restless gaze of a voyeur and how during shooting, Potter was much criticised by Rick McCallum for his lack of 'coverage'. Is it conceivable that a voice-over was added in post-production in an attempt to paper over the visual tedium of these long single takes? After all, none of the scenes with long tracking shots could be broken up visually without a loss of continuity since Potter had shot them in such a way that precluded the possibility of shortening. Peter Edwards states:

"That's what we said all along. We said if you do this all in one long track, great ! But how are you going to cut it ? 'Don't worry about that', he would say".⁹³

Because of Potter's shooting style, the way in which Blackeyes was finally broken up visually through editing is therefore the only way it could have been broken up by the post-production stage: namely, by elaborate montage sequences using images taken from other scenes in the serial. With Potter directing long scenes with long tracking shots and long pauses between actors, perhaps the only option available by post-production to lend the resulting collection of long single takes and jump cuts any coherence within the framework of a television narrative was the use of a voice-over to bind it all together. When pressed, the editor Clare Douglas concedes just this. She admits that the producer Rick McCallum thought "the whole thing was totally incomprehensible and it needed someone to explain it".⁹⁴

6.1 d) Interpretation

Given the many changes Potter made both during shooting and production, is it even possible to 'interpret' the finished TV version of Blackeyes ? On one level, it might seem an impossible job but on another it is important to note that the inclusion of explicit sex scenes; the stylised opening; the use of a voyeuristic camera ballet and the addition of a voice-over provided by the 'author' himself, all perform a similar function within the narrative: they all foreground issues of spectatorship and authorship and by this signal the manufacture of the drama.

In terms of spectatorship, Blackeyes attempts to position its viewer as self-aware voyeur by forbidding a perspective of detached or passive omniscience with regard to events taking place on screen. Employing few reverses or cut aways, Potter's long tracking shots only ever provide the audience with a single means of viewing each scene, through the eye of a moving camera as it circles and prowls around the protagonists in a voyeuristic sweep. The eye of the camera is thus made synonymous with the eye / I of the audience: its movements around the characters becoming the viewer's movements. With its shifting point of view on events, the single moving camera also draws attention to the subjectivity of that view; to the directorial artifice of it and to the audience's own position at the heart of events as an active, not passive producer of meaning. By presenting the sexual exploitation of the model Blackeyes as if through the eye of a restless voyeur, Potter's aim is clearly to produce an ambivalent spectator; forcing the audience into the uneasy position of recognising and confronting its own complicity with that exploitation.

All of this seems to be what Potter had in mind when he asserted he was 'breaking up the grammar of film' in line with modernist innovations in

literature. His emphasis on subjective, as opposed to omniscient, viewing positions closely parallels the displacement in the early twentieth century literary novel of omniscient modes of narration with a variety of fractured, modernist perspectives. For Potter, as we have seen, most television is still 'pre-modernist' insofar as it conceals its own manufacture and the inherent subjectivity of the 'truths' it offers (: § 0.1; 3.4). Blackeyes, by contrast, not only signals that manufacture and subjectivity by foregrounding the act of spectatorship but to a considerable extent by highlighting its own authorship as well, as the stylised opening of the serial and the addition of a voice-over both confirm. Just as the audience is forced to confront the ambivalence of its own viewing position with regard to the serial, the identity and attitudes of this 'author' who inserts himself into the drama by means of voice-over are also rendered deeply ambiguous. Is he exposing exploitation or merely revelling in it? Does this authorial character wish to liberate Blackeyes or capture her for his own male ends? These questions come into sharp focus at the very end of the serial, which differs markedly to that of both the novel and the original scripts:

After Jessica has drowned herself, Blackeyes is shown in Jeff's clutches at his manor in the country. He looks directly to camera and informs the viewer that Blackeyes "is free. Well sort of free, anyway". He kisses her: "Because now she's mine".⁹⁵ Whereas the novel and the original scripts both end here on this pessimistic note, in the finished television version, an authorial voice-over intervenes:

But pardon me, Mr Smug. There's just one thing. You're in front of this camera, right? And if she's a character, a piece of make-believe then so are you. Lights, music, speech, it's beyond your control... Watch what I can do. Yes, me, because of course I'm the man who's made all this up.

The voice-over announces to Blackeyes: "I have plans for you, my angel. Feminism is all very well but in this business someone always gets the girl. It's known as a happy ending."⁹⁶ Stated authorial intention is contradicted, however, by the mise en scène - Blackeyes shakes her head in refusal at Jeff, yet significantly at the camera as well. She runs out of Jeff's house and into his garden, making to escape from all these male authors through a gate at the far side. Meanwhile, the now seemingly helpless authorial voice-over is left pleading: "Hey Blackeyes ! Come back ! ... Don't you start rewriting !"; his increasingly desperate calls finally petering out into an ambiguous sigh: "Oh, Blackeyes. Thank you for breaking my heart."⁹⁷

On one level, the addition of the voice-over is simply an extension of the ending of the original novel but with another male author taking over from Jeff. At the same time, however, in marked contrast to both novel and scripts, the heroine does appear to succeed in resisting the male narrative, escaping its pressure for the recuperation of feminine disruption within patriarchal order through the traditional device of the 'happy ending' where the hero always 'gets the girl'. The female protagonists of Blackeyes at last seem to succeed in their aim of 'rewriting the book'.

What made Potter change his mind about the chances of a successful female challenge to male control ? In interview, he stated it was simply that since writing the novel, he had 'learned' a little bit more: "The man took possession of her at the end [of the novel] and [in the serial] I just allowed her to say 'No'".⁹⁸ Rick McCallum confirms it was the experience of directing Blackeyes and of working with actress Gina Bellman which prompted the change of heart: "[It] had to do with Dennis'

feelings about Gina when he was making it... She's playing victim and it's very hard to be with somebody who's not a victim... You have no control over them...⁹⁹

As the final ambiguous words of the authorial voice-over demonstrate, however, the serial's continual oscillation between the possibilities of male authorial possession and female liberation is sustained right to the very end of the narrative. Can a character really escape its creator or is it all simply a cruel trick on the part of a malevolent male 'author'? As film editor Clare Douglas confirms, Potter wished to keep his audience guessing even to the final frame and beyond. She states that as Blackeyes is seen making her escape through the garden gate at the end of the serial, Potter, in the cutting room, deliberately insisted on freezing the image before she could make it through the door - in this way, sustaining the ambiguity right to the very end.¹⁰⁰

The reasons for this were clearly spelled out by the director himself during his extensive pre-publicity for the serial. They also explain his positioning of the audience as ambivalent voyeurs. As Potter suggested:

... No matter how 'feminist' some of the aspirations might be, the basic fact remains that I am a man writing it. So I wanted to bring that ambivalence right into the centre... The narration aches with that ambivalence. In fact it is very much the dramatic tension of the piece: are you complicit with what you are allegedly exposing?... At the end of Blackeyes it is clear for all to see that there is complicity but the complicity itself is shown for what it is...¹⁰¹

At the same time, however, Blackeyes' central conceit of a character attempting to escape its malevolent 'Author' is one which Potter has clearly borrowed from his own first novel, Hide and Seek (: § 3.1).

Moreover, just as was shown with The Singing Detective, this work is demonstrably a major influence on Blackeyes:

For example, both works foreground the creative process (of writing a novel) and both significantly adopt a recursive narrative strategy. In Hide and Seek, Daniel Miller was a character attempting to escape from a malevolent God-like 'Author' but the question the novel raised was whether this 'Author' himself was merely a character in someone else's book? As Chapter Three noted, that was both an aesthetic and a religious question for ultimately what was being examined was not only the relationship of character to author but of Man to God.

Similarly, in Episode One of the TV version of Blackeyes, the authorial voice-over asks: "I wonder. Do we invent ourselves? Or have others already done it for us? Do we think? Or are we thought?"¹⁰² As we have seen, Blackeyes the novel was about a character (Blackeyes), written by a male author (Kingsley) and rewritten by his niece (Jessica); all of whom were in turn being written by a male author (Jeff). Just as with Hide and Seek, the television serial takes that recursion one step further in order that the identity of the ultimate male Author (and exploiter) of the narrative may be revealed.

That is, in the serial, the 'real' author of Blackeyes is exalted into the 'God of Creation', as he delights in his new power as director to manipulate reality and create new versions of it (- as he tells Jeff at the end, "Lights, music, speech, it's beyond your control... Watch what I can do").¹⁰³ Moreover, just as Daniel Miller in Hide and Seek felt himself to be "written about, pinned down" by "an inescapable Author with evil designs and total power", so too is Blackeyes: for example, in the

stylised opening of the TV serial where she finds herself hounded by a voyeuristic camera and the attendant male voice-over, with its snide observation: "My own yearning sneaked up on me as I hunted her down... I'll have to hide my face but she can't hide, not here in this inky nowhere".¹⁰⁴ In Hide and Seek, it was shown that the way to escape this manipulative Author was to become one yourself: "the narrator. The Author. Creator of all!"¹⁰⁵ Similarly, in Blackeyes, the eponymous heroine can only become the 'Author of her own Fate' by confronting and rejecting the ultimate male exploiter of her narrative: its malevolent God-like Author.

All of this is not to say, of course, that the manipulative male oppressor whom she ultimately rejects is the 'real' Dennis Potter simply because he provides the authorial voice-over. As noted with both Hide and Seek and The Singing Detective, Potter likes to play with autobiographical conventions in order to lend his work extra potency by giving it a much more 'personal feel' (: § 3.1; 5.3 (c)). At the same time, the TV serial's recasting of the novel's original noir ending does serve to place greater emphasis on the exploration of the relationship between Blackeyes and the 'Dennis Potter' voice-over: that is, between a beautiful young woman and a (middle-aged) male 'author'. In turn, this recalls the theme of another earlier Potter work, Double Dare. Indeed the TV Blackeyes makes explicit reference to the 1976 play when, in one scene in Episode Two, a poster of Blackeyes advertising a 'Fraggie Bar' is made clearly visible within the mise-en-scène.

As Chapter Two noted, Double Dare dealt with the often blurred relationship between life and art, as symbolised by a writer's relationship with a young actress (: § 2.3 b). One of the questions it

raised was to what extent one can separate role-playing from 'reality' - is it possible to distinguish ? Does the acting out of a role not hint at a deeper 'truth' behind the surface illusion ? Likewise in Blackeyes, at the end of an explicit sex scene between Blackeyes and her advertising employer Jamieson, the authorial voice-over intervenes:

Fiction. How strange a thing it is. Was that a real orgasm, do you think ? No. All a fake, of course. But what happens to her, to me, if made to pretend, we pretend too often ? When do you collect the bill and how pay it ?'⁶⁶

By raising questions about the relationship between role-playing and reality, Potter is clearly seeking to demonstrate the fragility of conventional lines between 'truth' and 'fiction', in much the same way as Double Dare sought to do. At the same time, however, he has also extended the theme of the earlier play, moving it beyond its limits within a clearly delineated work of fiction and literally putting it into practice as writer-director of Blackeyes. Is it not the case that by portraying a character in a drama who is exploited by a male God-like Author, the actress who played Blackeyes has in some way 'really' been exploited ? If so, what does that make the writer-director playing the exploiter ? The answer, as we have seen, comes at the end of the serial. Just as with other writer characters like Martin in Double Dare and the diseased Marlow in The Singing Detective, the 'Author' finds himself to be guilty of a crime against women, with the result that punishment and relief from guilt can only come through self-recognition and public atonement - in the case of Blackeyes, by the 'Author' undergoing the public humiliation of the heroine's rejection of him in front of the watching TV audience.'⁶⁷

At the same time, also echoing other Potter works is the use of fairy tales in Blackeyes as bedrocks of narrative structure. If Kingsley is Jessica's 'wicked old uncle', appropriating his niece's life for his own ends, he is also the evil hobgoblin, Rumplestiltskin, locked in his "wintry attic", spinning the straw of Jessica's life into literary gold.¹⁰⁹ Meanwhile, first encountering Jeff in a ballroom inside a 'Grand Hotel', Blackeyes is Almost Cinderella.¹⁰⁹ As the morgue pathologist makes clear to the vengeful noir investigator Blake, in looking for a suicide note to explain her subsequent drowning: "We're playing Hunt The Slipper, Mr Blake".¹¹⁰ In appearance, however, she is most definitely Snow White, as Kingsley makes clear to Jessica at the very beginning of the TV serial, when he tells her that out of her experiences as a model, he proposes to create an enchanted fairy-tale creature: "Her skin... as white as snow, her hair as black as ebony and her lips as red as the blood that had not yet been spilt..."¹¹¹

Given her shifting identities within the narrative, who, then, is the mysterious Blackeyes ? Or rather, perhaps the question should be who is the 'dark lady' that haunts much of Potter's work ?

In Casanova, for example, the central protagonist is haunted by perhaps the only woman he has loved amongst all those he has known: a dark haired country girl called Cristina. Casanova enthuses to a friend: "Her big black eyes look right into your soul, deep into your heart".¹¹² Similarly, in Hide and Seek, the troubled 'Author' of the Daniel Miller narrative describes another 'inaccessible lady': one he has spied in a tawdry coffee bar. As with Casanova's Cristina, the sight of this woman is like an epiphany to him. She is described as an "entrancing creature,

pale and dark-haired" and wearing long, red, shiny boots.¹¹³ To him, she resembles "Snow White in the glass case, the Princess at the ball..."¹¹⁴

There are many other such 'dark ladies' in Potter's work: creatures of male desire, of overpowering, almost disruptive sexuality; usually prostitutes. For example in Potter's 1986 novel Ticket To Ride (remade in 1991 as a feature film, Secret Friends), the main character, John Buck, is both fascinated and repelled by prostitutes. From the window of his tiny Paddington mews flat, he regularly watches one patrol the street below. She has "long black hair, small white boots, long legs and a slender figure"¹¹⁵. Likewise, in the forties noir thriller strand of The Singing Detective, Sonia the Russian agent cum prostitute whom Mark Binney takes back to his mews flat, is described in the original scripts as "a sad-eyed beautiful girl with long black hair."¹¹⁶ She is later found drowned near Hammersmith Bridge. (: § 5.3 (c))

Questioning him about the similarity of these figures, Potter, in interview, comically refused to be drawn: "Is there ? Yeh. I don't know... Well there you are ! God only knows... !"¹¹⁷ With the writer amused but giving no clues as to the inspiration for his 'dark lady', perhaps Blackeyes itself can furnish some more evidence. One of the pieces of music used to great effect in the serial first occurs towards the end of Episode One when Blackeyes auditions for a television commercial in front of a group of leering advertising men. The scene is a long set piece and in both the novel and TV serial, Potter specifies that the music to which Blackeyes should provocatively audition is "Eric Coates' 'Sleepy Lagoon'" (its title carrying obvious resonances with the model's ultimate watery fate).¹¹⁸ To British viewers, this piece of music is instantly recognisable as the theme tune to the long-running BBC radio

programme, Desert Island Discs. Curiously, however, when it recurs in Episode Four, just as Jeff is about to 'claim' Blackeyes, Potter's authorial voice-over intones: "The song is stolen. The sweet sweet song. My song."¹¹⁹

Perhaps it is merely a coincidence but in December 1977, Potter himself appeared on Desert Island Discs, selecting the eight records he would most wish to have with him if stranded on a desert island. He explained his fourth choice by means of a strong adolescent image of liberated female sexuality: an image which just perhaps became the basis for an entire television serial twelve years later:

Well the next one I've chosen is "Twelfth Street Rag"... especially because I had this particularly strong image of Form 2A at Bells Grammar School in Coleford. When the teacher left the room for a rather prolonged period and seeing this thirteen year old startlingly attractive black-haired girl, cheekily going to the front and to the desk and picking up a twelve inch ruler and beating out with enormous vigour "Twelfth Street Rag" at the top of her voice and... all the signals, the sort of adolescent sex... flaring up at the sight of this pretty girl doing "Twelfth Street Rag". I can never hear "Twelfth Street Rag" without being reminded of some of the great joys of life. And I think on my island I would need to think about; not just about that thirteen year old but of all of the women of the world...¹²⁰

6.1 e) Reception

By the time its last episode was transmitted by the BBC on 20th December 1989, the TV version of Blackeyes had been written off as an abject failure by almost all the reviewers of the British press. Richard Last of The Daily Telegraph summed up the critical mood:

All freedom corrupts and absolute freedom corrupts absolutely... If you remove time, place and reality, as the four episodes of Blackeyes successively did, there's not much left except incomprehension... And Dennis, as author, confessed what had been apparent to the least sophisticated all along, namely that he had been writing out his own sick fantasies at inordinate length and huge cost...¹²¹

In terms of its audience, Episode Four of the serial was watched by 3.87 million viewers. This compares with 5.32 million for Episode Three; 5.73 million for Episode Two and a record 7.15 million for Episode One: the highest BBC-2 audience that year for a single screening, aside from sporting events. Unlike The Singing Detective or Christabel, Blackeyes failed to hold its audience, though it is fair to point out that to maintain nearly four million viewers is a very respectable achievement for a drama on BBC TV's minority channel.¹²² Nevertheless, Blackeyes' 'audience appreciation' ratings were not good. As the drama's chief 'patron', Mark Shivas, confirms, BBC audience research showed that while viewers did not switch over to anything else, they did not like what they saw.¹²³ Thus while Potter maintained that Blackeyes "defied its slot" in terms of ratings, there can be no doubt much of its audience hated it.¹²⁴

Why, then, did the serial fail in Britain? What made it different from Potter's other work - most of which had been judged a critical and often popular success in the past? Although it is beyond the scope of this study to offer detailed empirical evidence on audience attitudes,

nevertheless several reasons for the drama's failure can be adduced from its ratings, the pre-publicity and not least the actual production itself.

One reason was that the drama was massively 'overhyped'. To some extent, it was inevitable that the British tabloids would have a field day with Blackeyes, given the drama's apparent concern with that great newspaper selling point: sex. This was doubly true in the light of the previous controversies the press had whipped up surrounding this subject in Potter's work, particularly with regard to The Singing Detective

(& § 5.3 d). True to form, The Sun thus crowned Potter "telly's Dirty Drama King" for his work on Blackeyes whilst the News of the World branded him "Television's Mr Filth."¹²⁵

If one can sympathise with Potter as a victim of the animus of the British tabloids, at the same time it is clear that all the press was doing was reacting, in its own predictable way, against pre-meditated construction of Blackeyes as a media event. Potter did an enormous amount of pre-publicity for the drama prior to its transmission - much of it, whether intentionally or not, selling the work on the basis of its sexual content. A clear example of this was an interview he gave to Sue Lawley on her BBC TV chat show, Saturday Matters, two weeks before the transmission of the first episode.¹²⁶ In the course of the interview, a short illustrative clip from Episode One was shown - namely, the scene in which Blackeyes strips at an audition in front of leering advertising men. Taken out of context in this manner, such an extract could only help foster the misleading impression in the public and press mind that Blackeyes was synonymous with sexual titillation. If this was a strategy to lure a mass audience to a work with 'feminist aspirations', it was, as

subsequent reviews would prove with their accusations of 'sick fantasies', a grave miscalculation.

As one previewer from The Independent observed, the combined effect of all this pre-transmission hype was that when the serial finally hit the screens, one had "the impression of [it] having been around for some time already".¹²⁷ Four days before Episode One was even transmitted, he could make the following self-fulfilling prophecy (as much to his journalistic colleagues as his readers): "Any takers for the Potter backlash?"¹²⁸

Who was responsible for all this publicity? Clare Douglas states: "Potter connived in it but it was set up by Rick". She claims that every other day during post-production, Rick McCallum would send along journalists and film crews to interview Potter, until at last the writer refused to do any more. The final straw came, she states, when Potter discovered his producer had sent him someone who turned out to be writing a house magazine for a bank!¹²⁹ McCallum, for his part, admits his desire was for a 'popular' as opposed to 'critical' success but denies the charge of too much publicity, stating he set the 'platform' right but "then this juggernaut took over... It was tabloid-driven".¹³⁰

Having secured, by a variety of means, a record 7.1 million viewers for the first episode of a BBC-2 drama, what went subsequently wrong? Those involved with the production have their own theories. Clare Douglas believes the drama's main problem was its complexity: "It had just one level too many for most people." She adds that as a woman, she felt the character of Blackeyes was not properly focused, being half 'real', half fantasy. Because of the tight post-production schedule, she claims, however, there was no time during editing to discuss these

matters.¹³¹ Meanwhile, Potter in interview stood by the work but stated the thing that most upset him about Blackeyes was how personal the reviews were: "Instead of dealing with the work... they were dealing with me and the work", he stated.¹³²

All these points - its complexity; the characterisation of Blackeyes; the press reception - are valid reasons for the dwindling of the drama's audience. One other reason suggests itself, however, both from the evidence of the ratings and the comparative success of past Potter works like The Singing Detective: that is, the lack in Blackeyes of any strong narrative thread corresponding to 'external reality' which an audience could then follow from week to week. As Potter demonstrated decisively with The Singing Detective, a mass television audience could enthusiastically embrace a multi-narrative serial drama structured in a non-linear fashion. What the evidence of Blackeyes suggests is that many of those same viewers found themselves lost by the lack of a consistent narrative thread denoting 'external reality', by means of which they could orientate themselves in the work. Thus although, as we have seen, Potter wilfully blurred distinctions between external and internal 'reality' at the climax of The Singing Detective, for most of that drama, the hospital scenes fulfilled such a function for viewers (: § 5.3 c). They served as the anchor-point of external reality around which Marlow's memories and fantasies could swirl. With Blackeyes, however, all such notions of external reality are constantly undermined. Kingsley may, like Marlow, be revealed as the 'real' writer of one of the fantasy narrative strands but he is subsequently revealed to be a fictional creation of Jeff who in turn is revealed to be a fictional creation of the 'Dennis Potter' voice-over and so on in the recursive manner of Hide and Seek. As with many of his 'non-naturalistic' techniques, Potter is clearly trying to suggest the

existence of deeper 'truths' behind normal assumptions of 'reality' but for most of his viewers, it seems, the drama lacked a 'point' precisely because it was not founded upon any consistent representation of external reality.¹³³

Certainly, analysis of the viewing figures provides circumstantial evidence that in 1989 Britain, Potter's television audience was extremely unwilling to have its assumptions of 'reality' unpicked in such a manner. If, between Episodes One and Two, as might have been predicted, the serial failed to hold the high audience lured to BBC-2 as a result of media hype, the equally large fall between the third and final episodes (from 5.32 million to 3.87 million) seems to suggest that many of those who stayed with it finally lost patience by the end of Episode Three. It may be no coincidence that this episode concludes with the revelation that Jeff is not only a character in the unfolding narrative but an 'author' as well.¹³⁴

At the same time, there can be no doubt the drama's production of an ambiguous viewer-voyeur also uneased the audience, splitting it along clear gender lines. As one viewer commented in a letter to The Observer: "Most of my female friends angrily switch[ed] off, while I felt seriously challenged by having my private fantasies so roundly exposed. I can't be the only male to have winced, can I?"¹³⁵.

If clearly not the way to boost TV ratings, what do such sharp gender divisions reveal about Potter's treatment of women? Writing in The New Statesman just prior to the transmission of Blackeyes, John Wyver voiced concerns about representations of women in Potter's writing as a whole. Women, he wrote, are invariably cast "in the conventional stereotypes of

angel and whore". Potter's male protagonists "are afraid of women's sexuality and disgusted by it" while sexuality is also frequently connected to death: "often to the violent death of a woman..."¹³⁶

On a superficial level, many of the works examined in this study provide an abundance of evidence to support Wyver's assertion. Rather than fully rounded characters, women are often portrayed in Potter's work as whores and 'dark ladies' who seek to tempt the male hero from the purity of his ideals. On the other hand, they can also be angels: 'unattainable ladies' like Cristina in Casanova or Eileen in Pennies From Heaven, capable of being idolised by the male protagonist since they seem to offer the keys to that elusive 'Eden' for which he is constantly searching (: § 4.0; 4.1 c).

Nevertheless, it is important to note that such a dichotomy is simply a function of the much wider schism between 'flesh' and 'spirit' which, as successive chapters have shown, runs right through Potter's work and which 'tears' at many of his male protagonists. Moreover, as Wyver correctly states, notions of 'whore' versus 'angel' are also simply 'conventional stereotypes', embedded deep within our culture. They are, in fact, Western society's traditional way of looking at women.¹³⁷

Thus in sharp contrast to the view that Potter's representation of women is peculiarly problematic, it can be argued that what his work is actually trying to do is to explore and expose this as a problematic at the very heart of patriarchy itself. The dichotomy between 'flesh' and 'spirit', embodied in the disjunction between woman as 'angel' and woman as 'whore', is precisely the dichotomy which his work as a whole is seeking to overcome. As Chapter Five suggested with The Singing

Detective, when Philip Marlow succeeds in coming to terms with patriarchal guilt over his 'animal' nature, he does so in order to progress beyond the 'disgust' with sexuality and the images of 'violent female death' that Wyver sees as so disturbing in Potter's writing as a whole. Dramatising what goes on inside his male character's heads, Potter is ultimately investigating the nature of patriarchy itself and how men have traditionally been taught by their culture to view women. As with many of his other 'non-naturalistic' techniques, he foregrounds this as a problem in very bold terms, through the use of traditional patriarchal imagery of 'angel' versus 'whore'. It is this very dichotomy which his work is struggling against.

Moreover, as this chapter has outlined, in the late eighties, the writer increasingly began to explore the implications of that dichotomy from a female, as opposed to male angle - moving on from dramatising what goes on inside a man's head to investigating what goes on inside a woman's as, like Marlow before them, various female protagonists tried to 'rewrite the book' and overcome patriarchal repression, albeit from a different perspective. In works like Track 29 and Blackeyes, it is the female not the male characters who are emphasised as the 'suffering martyrs' of patriarchy. The male protagonists are portrayed as abusers and manipulators from whose control figures like Linda Hendry and Blackeyes must extricate themselves if they are ever to overturn oppressive patriarchal structures and transform themselves, God-like, into 'Authors of their Fate'. As Blackeyes cries to heaven towards the end of Episode Two of the serial: "Jesus, why weren't you a woman ?"¹³⁸

It is in just such terms that Potter himself regarded the shift of emphasis which took place in his work of the later eighties. In

interview, he rejected the charge of misogyny, claiming many commentators seemed to have lost sight of what fiction is. At root, he thought there was a confusion between his explorations in drama of traditional male attitudes to women and assumptions about his own views. He himself neatly sums up the counter-argument to this position:

... I believe that men treat women badly. I know they do... I take it for granted that men exploit women as a fact to deal with and show. That doesn't mean that a) I do (because I don't believe I do as a person) but b) that I approve of it... I'm at a loss when given that as an attribute of my work...¹³⁹

CONCLUSION

End of the Road

Potter was speaking in 1990, when the wounds caused by the British reception of Blackeyes were still very fresh: "the pain" of the personal attacks "still bumping within".¹ In interview, he was always generous, co-operative and above all highly skilled and articulate in fielding questions about his work. Ultimately, he asserted that his life as a television writer had been an attempt to build, over more than a quarter of a century:

... a body of work that is consistent with itself, that does send out tentacles and relationships and nudges and hints to other work within the sequence of work and will unashamedly repeat themes, motifs because... that would be acceptable in a novel, it would be acceptable in the theatre, it would be acceptable in any other... form. But because television is so unregarded and treated normally with such intellectual contempt, it became all the more imperative, having thought about it and thought about it and thought about it that I tried to do what other television writers had not tried to do... because they usually then wanted to go on and write for something else...²

The aim of this study over six chapters has been precisely to unravel those many 'tentacles and relationships'; to follow the successful 'yellow brick road' which Potter himself followed for nearly three decades, with a view to showing a consistency and progression of 'authorial' themes. Now, having examined the works in turn, it is possible to fit them together, like pieces in a mosaic, in order to offer an overall view of the shape of that 'road' which Potter both followed and built throughout his career.

The first and perhaps even the most important 'brick' in Potter's writing strictly speaking pre-dates it. The 1958 Does Class Matter ? interview, together with his subsequent Between Two Rivers documentary and

experiences as a political candidate, were all crucial to the early work insofar as they were what it was implicitly reacting against. Through his experiences of TV current affairs and the actuality of political campaigning, Potter learned how 'facts' could be 'lies' because they so often served to obscure the underlying truth of a situation: "what was on either side of the camera" (: § 0,1).³ Turning away from the world of facts towards writing dramatic fiction, Potter, in The Nigel Barton Plays, was able to say all he had wanted to say about social class in his TV documentary and political campaign but in a more effective way, with less risk of engendering a personal sense of betrayal or incurring the wrath of his local village. Plays, by definition, were not as 'real' as current affairs. They could not harm anyone in quite the same way. What they could do, however, was present a more 'truthful', rounded picture of the effects of class upon an individual - its emotional pressures, tensions and ambiguities - than any number of interviews or documentary voice-overs.

This seems to be where Potter's 'non-naturalism' fits in - the distinctive dramatic style which is clearly present even in his very first plays. 'Non-naturalistic' techniques, such as use of flashbacks, characters' direct address to camera and adult actors as children, were all important to Potter because unlike current affairs, they were a means of showing 'what was on either side of the camera' - the "frame in the picture" rather than "the picture in the frame", as he subsequently was to put it in his 1977 "Realism and Non-Naturalism" paper.⁴ Where current affairs presented, uncontextualised and in its immediacy, the 'picture in the frame' of an individual addressing the issue of social class, with drama, there was the possibility of getting behind the picture - of sketching in and explaining all the pressures, motivations and tensions which underlay

a particular individual's need to grapple with the issue of class at a particular moment. If this is precisely the trajectory of Stand Up, Nigel Barton - the tracing of a personal history of class tension, stretching back to schooldays, which finally leads the central protagonist to a 'present' moment of public confession - it can be seen how much this owes to Potter's sense of the underlying 'truth' of his own experience: his need to retrace old ground becoming a need to explain the circumstances and motives which led him (twice) to discuss class in personal terms on television.

Stand Up is also important to Potter's writing overall in terms of the link it forges between the clever child (the 'liar' or embryo 'storyteller') and the backward child (the village 'idiot') as the same type of persecuted outcast from the community. As many chapters have noted, this clever child-backward child symbiosis is traceable across many plays. It is present, for example, in the figure of Willy Turner in Where the Buffalo Roam. His plight is the flip side of Nigel Barton's for unlike Barton, he is the 'outlaw' from the working-class community who cannot get away. It is also there in the relationship between 'looney' outcast and artful traitor that links Jesus and Judas in Son of Man; the Accordion Man and Arthur Parker in Pennies; Mark Binney and Philip Marlow in The Singing Detective and (implicitly) Donald Duck and Wallace Wilson in Blue Remembered Hills. Lying behind this symbiosis between 'outcast' and 'hero', 'victim' and 'villain' is a relativism of perspective in which characters are made ambiguous and 'rounded'. Potter endows his central protagonists with a series of shifting identities: hero-outcast; villain-victim; 'looney'-dreamer; writer-detective and so on; a feature which is at least partially due to the fact that as the writer acknowledged about himself, "ambiguity haunts one's mind".⁵

Particularly in the early work, his protagonists are 'torn'. Ambiguity not only haunts their creator's mind, they themselves are unsure as to whether they are heroes or villains. The trajectory of many of the plays is precisely a psychological quest by the protagonist to answer this very question of his identity. This is what links disparate works such as Stand Up, Traitor and Son of Man, each of which portrays a character on the rack, haunted by doubt - in the case of Christ in Son of Man, doubt, even, as to whether or not he is the Messiah. As many of the chapters have noted, this 'torn' quality in characterisation resolves itself into one central dichotomy that runs through all the work: a schism between material and non-material desires; between flesh and spirit.

The key recurring theme in Potter's writing, the problem posed by each of the plays is precisely the problem of how to overcome this felt dichotomy. Moreover, in many works, the protagonist is not simply caught between the rival claims of the material and spiritual. Rather, as in The Nigel Barton Plays, Traitor and Son of Man, there is a conscious attempt to oppose one over the other - a battle of the 'spirit' over the 'flesh'. What feeds the 'torn' nature of protagonists like Barton, Adrian Harris and Potter's Christ is not so much indecision or hesitation as to which 'yellow brick road' (material or spiritual) to follow but rather doubts, fears of failure and rival temptations, attendant upon doggedly choosing to pursue a transcendent spiritual ideal in the face of what are seen to be the vagaries and hostilities of an external, wholly material world. As with Son of Man where the metaphor is made literal, crucial to this is the sense of a father, in whose name the protagonist struggles, as being perceived almost as God. The quest of the male protagonist becomes that of atoning (being 'at one') with this God-like patriarchal authority. What haunts and tears at him is the doubt that this ideal of the father

to which he aspires is just too high; that the mortal frailties of the material world (the 'flesh') to which he is heir will always in the end defeat and punish him.

As Chapter Five noted with reference to The Singing Detective, this elision of the father with God can be related to the traditional authority structures of patriarchy itself (: § 5.3 c). Judaeo-Christian worship of a male 'God The Father' traditionally mirrored and helped legitimate the authority of the father within the patriarchal family group. In this way, it became easy for the child to elide the identity of his father with that of God as 'the progenitor of all things'.

Thus the 'spirit' in the name of which many male Potter protagonists struggle against the material world is a patriarchal ideal. If this is so in Traitor, in terms of Adrian Harris' search for his father's Camelot, it is also true for The Nigel Barton Plays. In his climactic speeches at the close of both Stand Up and Vote, Vote, Vote, Barton's detailed references to the life of his coalminer father make it clear how much the latter functions as the site of all his values and is the reason for the various 'stands' he adopts in each play (: § 1.1). Similarly, in the tellingly named Son of Man, Christ the 'Son's' struggle to oppose His 'spirit' over His own physical suffering and instinctual fears is explicitly undertaken in the name of His Father - God the Father. In each instance, a relationship with a father plays the crucial role in fostering 'conscience' within the central character. The quest of the son is to follow that patriarchal ideal of 'conscience': indeed to be it. As with Christ's crucifixion in Son of Man, the Son longs to join His Father; to be 'at one' with him. To do so is to be in 'heaven'.

To reach this idyllic state, however, the son must go through agonies, repressing the 'flesh'; forsaking the pleasures and temptations of the material world. If, as in the case of Potter's Christ, that struggle against the world and the body is an apparent success, sustained to the last, in other works like Stand Up and Traitor, failure fully to live up to the demands of conscience leads to a sense of guilt or self-questioning. To understand why, it is necessary to examine one of the key recurring motifs in Potter's work; one which many of the plays posit as the root of the flesh-spirit dichotomy that 'tears' at their male characters: namely, the notion of a 'Fall' from a childhood Eden of innocence, wonder and above all, integration.

In various graphic ways, a number of works portray a traumatic 'Fall' experienced by the central protagonist which results in a shock that "change[s] even the [very] way of looking" at things.⁶ In Angels Are So Few, Biddle the 'angel' loses his wings and his child-like wonder in Creation as a result of seduction by a serpentine suburban housewife. In Hide and Seek, the traumatic event is childhood sexual assault by a man with "spiky hair... and eyes... the colour of phlegm", just as with Potter's 1969 play, Moonlight on the Highway.⁷ For the female protagonists of Schmoedipus and the reworked Track 29, it is forced teenage seduction / rape. In Brimstone and Treacle, meanwhile, a teenage daughter's shock of sexual discovery in relation to her father literally, within the play's dramatic logic, strikes her dumb. Finally, in A Beast with Two Backs and The Singing Detective the trauma is assault / adultery in the Forest, witnessed by a 'child' protagonist, in which sex and death become intimately connected and blurred (: § 1.3; 5.3 c).

As both Hide and Seek and The Singing Detective particularly illustrate, the aftermath of such a 'Fall' is the sense of a loss of wonder. Through flashback, both works portray their central character as a child, perched on top of his favourite oak, from which he views his Forest Eden from all sides, with a sense of security and integration that later comes to be lost through his 'Fall'. Far from being a 'torn' hero, striving to be at one with a patriarchal God, as a child on top of his oak, the central character feels in perfect peace and union with the external world and 'God His Father'. At that moment, God is seen not as a goal, an authority without to be striven for but something within him: "a protective grace moving above... and yet within itself... in and of things... breathing through them, breathing out of them..."⁹

It is this sense of a God within which the subsequent 'Fall' comes to shatter. Most important in this respect is the sense of this 'Fall' fracturing the child's relations with his parents, particularly his father. In The Singing Detective, the 'shock' of the child's sexual discovery as a result of witnessing the Forest adultery, leads not only to the death of his mother but an estrangement from the warmth and intimacy of his coalminer father. A similar fracture in the child's relations with a parent is portrayed in A Beast with Two Backs. Significantly, however, it arises not through a son's feelings of unworthiness but quite the opposite: an undermining of the moral authority of the father, in the eyes of a child. As the Old Testament-like patriarch within the village, Ebenezer's murder of Rebecca - his repression of a sex-crime before Rufus' very eyes - destroys his moral authority within the play, reducing him, as he himself confesses later in the pulpit, to an 'airy beast' (: § 1.3). Far from being God-like, the patriarch is revealed to be only too human, consumed with a guilt that leads eventually to his suicide.

Through a dead 'mother' and guilty father, Rufus' separation and loss of integration with the Forest around him is thus complete. The horror from which he flees at the end of the play is the realisation that far from being God-like, Man, (indeed his own father, not the bear) is the real 'beast'. Faith in a father-God and a set of patriarchal moral absolutes is destroyed, seemingly forever.

As with Philip Marlow in The Singing Detective, the result of this changed way of looking at the world and 'God the Father' is cynicism, misanthropy and despair. In turn, as illustrated by Barton's stealing of the daffodil and Marlow's defecation, this seems to be what lies behind the rebellion of the child protagonist against patriarchal authority at school. It is important to note that while secretly in rebellion against it, both the protagonists in Stand Up and The Singing Detective publicly submit, via their betrayals of the class 'looney', to the structures of patriarchal authority. The key to understanding this lies in 'the Hamlet structure' which as Chapter Three noted, is common to many Potter plays (: § 3.3). Haunted by doubt and 'torn' between flesh and spirit, protagonists like Nigel Barton nevertheless make their 'stands', fighting for truth and honesty in the name of a ghostly patriarchal ideal. As demonstrated by the portrayal of incessant conflict between father and son in Stand Up and also Lay Down Your Arms, though the protagonists' relations in adulthood with their real fathers may be fractured and 'fallen', nevertheless what they are striving for is a lost childhood ideal of atonement and integration (: § 2.1). By submitting to patriarchal authority and climbing its ladders of success, protagonists like Barton and Private Hawk 'get on' in the world in order to try to change it in the name of that ideal. Theirs is the revenge quest of Hamlet for a lost, ghostly ideal of the father: an attempt at resolution

of the loss of integration they feel between their adult selves and the wider world.

As all of this shows, the general terrain of Potter plays is that of anxiety, persecution and separation from class, home and ultimately parents. Characters like Barton and Harris the traitor are failed idealists: persecuted outcasts of a world that does not want to know their visions of the truth. Gloomy about the prospects of political change, many of the works take an equally gloomy view of humanity which is by turns depicted as 'bestial' and narrowly conformist in terms of its capacity to transform any lie into a truth for the sake of persecuting an innocent who is 'different'. Underlying all this is the sense of a 'Fall' from a childhood characterised as a bright 'lost land', via a traumatic childhood event that is implicitly related to the shock of sexual discovery. As a result, many Potter protagonists find themselves prematurely forced into adulthood, 'torn' between flesh and spirit. Doubting yet driven, they comply with patriarchy and its authority structures only in order to try to 'get on' and change them. Like Harris the double-agent in Traitor or the left-wing Hawk ensconced within the War Office in Lay Down Your Arms, they are moles within the system, impelled by their need to struggle for a lost ideal which they once thought they knew in childhood. Their goal: a re-integration with the world in relation to which, as adults, they feel anxious and separate. Their sense: that that goal is an impossible dream, destined always to defeat and failure.

This, however, is only half way along the yellow brick road of Potter's writing career. As Chapters Two, Four and Five suggested, there is another half to the journey: exactly akin to the structure of The Singing

Detective, an upward progression in the work; a movement from a sense of Paradise Lost to Paradise Regained (: § 5.3 c). It starts at the very nadir of despair in Potter's work; the period he himself has labelled as one of "in-turned spiritual nihilism": around the time of his 1972 play, Follow the Yellow Brick Road.⁹ As Chapter Two argued, Son of Man in many ways led Potter into consideration of the 'deeper' spiritual questions which had underlain the broadly political concerns of his sixties plays. By 1972, with Follow the Yellow Brick Road and the Hide and Seek novel, his own previously attested position of atheism had been replaced (in the work at least) by characters who felt themselves hounded by a malign God-like 'Author' - not an oak-top integration with a God within but a wrathful Old Testament authority from without, in relation to which central protagonists felt themselves entirely separate and pushed around as innocent victims.

If atheism had evaporated, only to be replaced by spiritual disgust with a malign external deity, Follow the Yellow Brick Road touched on a theme that would form a crucial part of the upward progression in Potter's writing. In the world of the commercials, the central character, Jack Black, found a perfect world of happy families that appeared to him like a dream of perfection; a religious radiance. As Potter was later to put it, with Follow the Yellow Brick Road, he himself had begun to come to an understanding that "the human dream for some concept of 'perfection', some Zion or Eden or Golden City, will surface and take hold of whatever circumstances are at hand - no matter how ludicrous."¹⁰ Even in the dead, material world of money and commercials, the 'spirit' would always outcrop.

Meanwhile, in the conclusion of Hide and Seek, there was also a similar optimistic qualification to the general sense of disgust in a malevolent Creation. Persecuted protagonist and God-like 'Author' were shown to be one and the same at the close of the novel. By recognising that every character was their own 'Author' and vice versa, both as one realised they had the power to reshape reality as their own God, thus gaining a renewed sense of the Forest integration of a God within they had felt as children. By 1976, these optimistic strands within the work had become more fully developed in terms of a loose 'trilogy' of television plays in which there was a detectible movement away from antinomies of Good v Evil; reality v fantasy; flesh v spirit, towards a blurring and coalescence of each of these categories. Instead of characters 'torn' between either flesh or spirit, there was a more complex sense of 'both and'. The sense of a 'Fall' and an attendant loss of faith which had marked much of Potter's earlier writing came to be replaced with a more 'holistic' awareness of a world of blurred categories in which instinctive faith in an ultimate Good (God) was posited as an alternative response to despair and disgust with the world. In many ways, the key to understanding this was the third play in the 1976 'trilogy', Where Adam Stood. As symbolised by young Edmund Gosse's rejection of his Old Testament-like father as potentially threatening to his own survival, 'Where Adam Stood', in terms of childhood belief in moral absolutes, literal Old Testament notions of Man suffering a 'Fall' from grace were thrown off in favour of a more mature religious view of the world. When Edmund rejected his father, he was, in effect, overthrowing patriarchy itself: traditional patriarchal suppression of Man's 'animal' nature which Darwin's theories also challenged in the play. Notions of somehow having undergone a 'Fall' from God could thus be jettisoned. 'Where Adam Stood', there was now a sense in Potter's work of Man and God once more equal;

of Man having a God within that allowed him to shape his own destiny. This jettisoning of the concept of a Fall from innocence in turn had important repercussions for work that followed the 1976 'trilogy'. It allowed childhood in Blue Remembered Hills, for example, to be characterised not as a pre-lapsarian state of innocence but one in which the children were already 'fallen' and in possession of 'original sin'. Just as with the 1976 plays, simple moral antinomies of Good versus Evil; spirit versus flesh were jettisoned: the children were shown to be both innocent in their unknowingness and guilty in their sins.

A similar 'both and' treatment of the central characters can be found in 1978's Pennies from Heaven in which Arthur Parker was shown to be simultaneously innocent and guilty of the murder of the blind girl for which he eventually hanged. Moreover, in Pennies, Arthur's 'spirit' outcropped in his material dreams to such an extent that it was impossible to separate the 'flesh' from the 'spirit' in his character. Just as Potter first began to sense with Follow the Yellow Brick Road, so Arthur's 'Zion or Eden or Golden City' expressed itself in material terms: through his dreams of wealth, his compulsive womanising and above all in the cheap commercial songs of the day he peddled. Hence by the time of Pennies, the flesh-spirit dichotomy in Potter's writing had blurred irrevocably. In stark contrast to earlier Potter protagonists, Arthur was not an agonised figure, 'torn' between flesh or spirit and haunted by doubt as to whether he was a villain or a victim. Rather, he was both and: an unrepressed integrated personality whose battle was entirely with the repressions of patriarchal society outside.

Thus the upward journey of Potter's work from 1972 on was a journey towards an integration of the flesh-spirit dichotomy, together with a

jettisoning of the simple antinomies and traditional moral absolutes of patriarchal social structures. As Chapter Five argued, one of the most significant aspects of Potter's work was thus that it critiqued patriarchy from a male perspective. If this was what made Potter seek common cause with feminist critiques in Blackeyes, perhaps the clearest example of his jettisoning of the traditional values of patriarchy was the work that most definitively summed up this upward curve from despair to hope in his writing: The Singing Detective. As Chapter Five noted, the central protagonist Philip Marlow was able in middle age to achieve psychological atonement with his dead father, not by striving to impose his 'spirit' over the desires of the 'flesh' (as earlier Potter protagonists had tried to do) but by jettisoning this notion of a flesh-spirit dichotomy altogether - the traditional guilt structure of repression of the 'flesh' and elevation of the 'spirit', underpinning patriarchy. By recalling his father's 'animal-like' cry of grief, Marlow was able to be 'at one' with him again on equal terms; no longer with the awe of the God-like patriarch which had resulted in his original emotional separation and feelings of unworthiness after the 'Fall'.

If, in the later work, notions of a 'Fall' were thrown off, it was in the name of this striving for re-integration with the lost father that was also more generally a striving for re-integration between the self and the world: the 'oak-top' integration which the child in Hide and Seek had once felt in the Forest. Moreover, this suggests deeper roots behind Potter's early socialist idealism and the later commitment he made to write for television. The striving to communicate with a working class audience, to create a 'common culture', can be related to the striving for community and integration with working class childhood roots which was felt to have been lost at an early age. As Potter himself once expressed

it, the desire to write for TV was like "being [back] in the primary school again and making everything alright".¹¹ It provided a means of overcoming feelings of separation from others of the same class as a result of knowledge of and guilt over a 'crime' which, as the various false scapegoats in the work attest (Georgie Pringle; Mark Binney; the Italian intruder unfairly persecuted by the villagers in A Beast), the child of the Forest subsequently tried to pin on others.

If such a search for a lost integration between the self and the wider world is ultimately what lies at the end of Potter's yellow brick road, as the writer acknowledged in interview, it was always the 'seeking' that was the engine which drove his work. His weaving of threads and connections between disparate works was not, he asserted, a deliberate game of 'hide and seek' for its own sake. At the same time, it was not unconscious either. In his view:

... The closer writing approaches to therapy, the worse it becomes. I believe that passionately. So you've got to have that ruthless discipline about whether you're doing this to ease and soothe or as a balm to your soul or not - I mean I've destroyed lots of things where I felt that was happening... So there's always that monitoring eye ...¹²

As this suggests, his work was not simply the unconscious "disembowelling of his own psychological condition".¹³ Akin to the progression in his writing away from simple antinomies of flesh versus spirit, the question of how consciously or unconsciously the connections between works were forged, was ultimately not one of 'either or' but of 'both and'. Potter was conscious of building a body of work and of making connections between works but not so explicitly during the act of writing that it became mere manipulation or games-playing. Conversely, there were 'personal connections' buried in the writing of which the

writer may have remained only half aware, yet not to such an extent that the work could be labelled therapy. As he put it, "just letting it out" is one of the definitions of bad art..."¹⁴ His work was much more disciplined and self-conscious than that - equipped as it always was with a protective 'monitoring eye', vigilant against too much self-revelation.

In turn, this conscious - unconscious, both and synthesis helps provide a final answer to the question of the relationship of Potter's work to autobiography. He himself quoted H.G. Wells: "Who would write novels if they could write autobiography flat out?" He also referred to Nabokov's comment about the links between life and fiction: "Of course it's not me but if what I was writing was not in some sense true other than my imagination, it wouldn't come across as true".¹⁵ As with the fact - fiction - truth distinction of Hide and Seek, imaginative writing functioned as an indirect means of truth-telling about the writer. The works were deliberate artifice but through their very indirectness as fiction, the writer could be more freely and deeply 'truthful' about himself than he would have ever allowed himself to be by means of direct autobiographical confession.

Potter's work is thus a much more ambiguous fragile structure than that covered by the simple categories: 'autobiography', 'dramatic fiction', 'personal therapy'. It is both him and not him: clear fictions yet also the 'truth' about himself. As he put it, this 'both and' status meant his was a very fragile enterprise because of "the delicate danger of both dealing and not dealing" in works like Hide and Seek and The Singing Detective with obsessed and tormented characters whose lives "certainly medically, geographically, age terms, socially" mirrored his own.¹⁶ Though in a sense, this blurred relationship between life and art is true

of every writer (an inevitability of all writers that their own closest experiences or emotions will sooner or later outcrop in the work), the difference with Potter was that he chose to foreground this interplay between the life and the work in a much more explicit way, endowing characters like Philip Marlow or 'the Author' in Hide and Seek with many of the well-known 'facts' of his own life. Sprinkled upon the surface of the fiction, the use of his own biographical 'facts' was a means of hinting that underlying the artifice were emotional or 'spiritual' truths within the work; that the plays and the novel were in a sense works of personal spiritual exploration, with hidden depths.

The work was thus the life - not in the straightforward sense of factual autobiography but in terms of the 'deeper' emotional or spiritual concerns to which it gave expression. Certainly, it was in these religious terms that Potter saw his own writing. He talked in interview of having a "longer purpose" and vocation as a writer, believing that because of his religious temperament, he was "cursed with the desire to have a vocation of one kind or another".¹⁷ Akin to the 'Author' in Hide and Seek who got closer and closer to himself through fiction, Potter's weaving of work so close to himself (through, for example, the creation of writer characters in his own image) was one way of emphasising his religious sense of the work as a product of the 'spirit'. Because of this feeling of vocation, Potter made his work run alongside his life and vice versa. Just as with Philip Marlow's transformation into his fantasy hero at the end of The Singing Detective, there was an interplay between the two: the writer made the text but so too could the text (re-)make the writer. A veritable 'Pilgrim's Progress', Potter's own life followed the clear curve from pessimism to optimism of his work - moving from despair to

Redemption, precisely through a developing recognition of the work itself as the product and reflection of the power of an active, shaping 'spirit'.

Given such a view of a life in tandem with the work, it can be seen how much both fed off each other. Echoing his father's background as a coal-miner in the Forest of Dean, Potter literally mined himself, returning to the same themes and key events, as if to a particularly rich seam. In interview, he finally summed himself up this way:

At the end of the day... I remain somehow or other against all the odds a Christian. It's what I actually in the end believe in, even though intellectually, I am appalled by the very baldness of such a statement. I know that at root somewhere, somehow that is what I turn and respond to. That is what tortures or torments me. And that whatever travails, mental or physical or social or sexual or whatever that I go through, I end up somehow or another getting my life into order. And in the getting my life into order, my work improves or broadens or widens the more surely I tame myself and put it all onto the page...'¹⁹

The value of Potter's work is thus that he demonstrates to audiences that far from simply being determined by a set of external events and imperatives beyond their control - the social, cultural, sexual, health 'facts' of their background - they have the active power to take control; to get their own 'lives in order', shaping them in any way they choose. Just as with The Singing Detective in which the central protagonist, Philip Marlow, overcame the dislocations in his life caused by the traumas of past events and in so doing literally transformed himself into a new person, Potter's work was concerned with reminding audiences of their own sovereignty and agency; that not only were they 'made' but 'making'.

In one sense, this individualistic emphasis is but another version of the familiar 'American Dream' of (material) self-improvement, sold by

consumer capitalism. In works like Follow the Yellow Brick Road and Pennies from Heaven, Potter's achievement was to show that while such dreams may appear false and debased (from a Leftist standpoint such as his own), they nevertheless derive their hold and their power over large sections of the population, precisely because they speak in terms directly addressed to the individual of the old 'human dream for some concept of perfection, some Zion or Eden or Golden City' - that "somewhere, somehow, I can get better than this."¹⁹ The material dream, as Arthur Parker showed in Pennies, is inseparable from the spiritual yearning.

Potter's emphasis on agency and a sense of the world available to be remade not only unites religion with capitalism but paradoxically his broadly Christian outlook with Marxist perspectives. Potter's work shared much with the latter in terms of its emphasis on the empowerment of audiences. Like Brecht, for example, his drama strove for an active spectator, eschewing empathy for its own sake; encouraging audiences to think not feel. There, however, all similarity ends. While both Brecht and Potter shared a dislike of 'naturalism', the latter's stemmed not from any need to find new more effective forms of conveying a political message. In his view, all 'political drama' ultimately did was "to buck up and cheer up those who support your side" so that its message would "not drop an ounce" with those who are unsympathetic to it.²⁰

Potter's terrain was instead an intimate 'interior drama' - his TV 'non-naturalism' an attempt to get under the skin of all viewers, Right or Left, in an attempt to draw their attention to their own individual agency or sovereignty. Ultimately a religious not a politically didactic writer, his achievement was to redefine conventional notions of Christianity - throwing off the patriarchal structures of authority and

guilt in which they had become embedded. Spirituality was instead redefined in terms of individual agency, almost to the extent where Man was no longer seen as the Creation of God but God the function of Man: an expression of the latter's spiritual dreams of perfection and community with the wider world. In this way, his writing probed the roots of romantic and political idealism. His television work was an attempt to make audiences look afresh with new 'wonder' not only at what is but what can be. A Christian optimist, he can, in the final analysis, quite accurately be labelled a television idealist too:

EPILOGUE

'The Golden City'

Let the hard oak bring forth golden apples,
Let narcissus bloom in the elder...
Ah ! If the last days of my life could only be prolonged,
To see the whole of creation rejoice
In the age that is yet to come.

(Virgil, quoted in Casanova by Dennis Potter, 1971)²¹

Below my window in Ross, the blossom is out in full. It's a plum tree [but] it looks like apple blossom... Looking at it through the window when I'm writing, it is the whitest, frothiest, blossomiest blossom that there ever could be... And if people could see that - there's no way of telling you, you have to experience it... The fact is that if you see the present tense, boy do you see it, and boy can you celebrate it !

(Dennis Potter, interview, March 1994)²²

Originally, this thesis was to have ended with the conclusion that Potter remained television's great idealist but that that idealism was going to be severely stretched in the nineties, in the age of cost-accounting, deregulation and increased competition in British broadcasting. In the final months, however, prior to this work's submission, events took a strange and (given its coincidence with this study's completion),

somewhat unnerving twist, which both puts this conclusion into sharp relief and makes it more poignant. The very public announcement of the writer's terminal cancer and the subsequent events which led up to his death in June 1994, mean that the overall shape of Potter's 'yellow brick road' can now be discerned. While very sad on one level that this should be the case, on another, it represents almost a kind of triumph of everything Potter strove for in his working life: a belated vindication of his 'golden' ideals:

In retrospect, the production and reception of Blackeyes which the final chapter of this study analysed, can now be seen to have had a decisive effect upon the two final works which gained a public airing in Potter's lifetime: Secret Friends and Lipstick on Your Collar. Each in their own way was a reaction against the pain caused by Blackeyes' British reception. Released in September 1992, the feature film, Secret Friends, was a cussed attempt by Potter to make no compromises to the critics. Journalist Simon Hattenstone detected this feeling when he visited Potter on the set, during shooting in 1991: "So they say I can't direct ? Good. Secret Friends will be the first full-length feature I direct. So they can't handle my sexual fantasies peppered with puritanical revulsion ? Well, tough, because that's what I'm about".²³

Reviews of this adaptation of Potter's 1986 novel, Ticket to Ride, were scathing. As with Blackeyes, the writer-director had worked in the editing suite to collapse distinctions between reality and fantasy, as he attempted to portray the psychic disorientation of the film's central character, John Buck. Once more, however, his refusal to give any fixed perspective of external reality from which the various fantasy strands of the narrative could be ordered, had only served to disorientate and

alienate his British audience. Empire magazine, for example, dubbed the film a meaningless "pile of psycho-twaddle", whilst Sight and Sound suggested "it was time... Potter pulled the communication cord on this particular train of thought".²⁴ Significantly, Potter himself agreed. By September 1992, he had disowned Secret Friends. Asked by a journalist if he would be going to the cinema to see it, he replied: "Oh, I might... I might walk up and down for ten minutes. Until I see people walking out. Then I'll join them..."²⁵

Potter was speaking on the set of Lipstick on Your Collar, his final six-part television 'serial with music' which was then currently in production. If Secret Friends represented a sour turning away from television towards an 'art cinema' experimentation, Lipstick was a deliberate attempt by Potter to restore his reputation to the levels he had enjoyed with The Singing Detective, through embracing a simplicity of form.²⁶ Drawing upon his experiences of National Service in the War Office, the drama was essentially a reworking of Lay Down Your Arms of twenty years before (: § 2.1). In contrast to Blackeyes, however, it deliberately opted for a simple linear plot. As the writer himself put it, the serial had "no narrative complications... It [did] not make those sort of demands on you".²⁷ Its only 'non-naturalistic' turn was the use of Potter's by now thoroughly familiar device of characters miming to popular music - in this case, the rock n' roll songs of the fifties which in the drama became symbols of youthful rebellion against the rigid class order of Britain at the time of Suez.

It was this very attempt at familiarity for an audience that could not understand Blackeyes, which ironically proved to be the drama's partial undoing, when it was transmitted on Channel Four between 21 February and

28 March 1993. Whilst it certainly did not generate the critical opprobrium of Blackeyes, there was a sense amongst reviewers that Lipstick did not take its audience anywhere; that it said nothing new. The device of characters miming to popular music, once so radical and innovative, seemed to have become, by 1993, nothing more than a tired Potter trademark.²⁸

Certainly, there was a sense with Lipstick of the writer having reached exhaustion point; of the old ideal of striving for a 'common culture' through television, having finally lost all residue of meaning after Blackeyes. Underlying the apparent superficiality of Lipstick, there was, however, a complexity of theme. The main characters of Mick Hopper and Francis Francis, the two young squaddies thrown together as Russian language clerks in the War Office, can be seen to represent alternate sides of the 'flesh-spirit' dichotomy which so 'tore' at their predecessor: the single central protagonist, Hawk, of Lay Down Your Arms. With his love of poetry and his acceptance into Oxford after National Service, the Welsh 'scholarship' boy, Francis, represents all things of the 'spirit'. Meanwhile, Hopper, the working class Londoner whose sex-fuelled fantasies of becoming a rock n' roll star motivate the many musical interludes in the drama, is clearly possessed of more 'material' aspirations. As the drama progresses, these opposite poles of 'flesh' and 'spirit' nevertheless begin to mingle and blur. The love-lives of the two young soldiers become hopelessly entangled, as each finds himself attracted to the girl with which the other eventually ends up at the close of the serial. In this way, Francis' romantic idealism of the 'spirit' is shown to be inextricably bound up with an 'animal' carnality.²⁹ Similarly, while Hopper's desires may appear to be entirely of the 'flesh', his material aspirations are ultimately shown to spring from the same source as his

spiritual yearnings. As expressed through popular music, his wishes for a better life beyond the War Office represent exactly that dream of 'some concept of perfection, some Zion or Eden or Golden City' which Arthur Parker shared, too, in Pennies from Heaven. In keeping with the progression noted in Potter's writing from the mid-seventies onwards, the battle-lines of flesh and spirit which Hawk found himself torn between in Lay Down Your Arms have blurred irrevocably by the time of Lipstick on Your Collar.

If this is the underlying structure of the drama, as the Arthur Parker comparison makes clear, Potter had said exactly the same thing, using the same miming device, in Pennies from Heaven fifteen years before. Something of this sense of going over old ground, of not knowing how to move his writing on, is tellingly revealed in a comment he made at the time of the drama's transmission: namely, that he had suffered from a block after he had written Episode One of Lipstick. For a while, he did not know what to do with the characters he had created nor how to take the narrative further.³⁰

All of this seems to hint at deeper problems in Potter's writing of the late eighties and early nineties; problems which manifested themselves in the dip his reputation undoubtedly took after Blackeyes. In many ways, the roots of it can be traced back to The Singing Detective. As Chapter Five described, Potter had been very worried about the success of The Singing Detective, fearing he would never get away from the character of Philip Marlow. Without planning it, he felt he had got too close to something, creating a character too near to himself (: § 5.3 d).

Moreover, as Chapter Five argued, in that 1986 work, he had written out in one drama the story of the progression of his writing of the previous twenty years - from the guilt and anxiety expressed in the early plays to the resolution of the flesh-spirit dichotomy evident in the later works. The very tension which had provided the dynamic of the early plays' explorations had thus been resolved by the nineteen eighties. In writing out that journey from anxiety to optimism in The Singing Detective, Potter had both commented upon and drawn a line under his work of the previous twenty years (: § 5.3 c). Thus what was left for the future ? If, as Chapter Six outlined, the writer initially moved to consideration of the impact on women of the male flesh-spirit dichotomy, by the early nineties, there did not seem too many new angles left for this writer to explore. The rich seam he had mined for twenty five years seemed on the point of exhaustion. Potter himself appeared to hint at this in 1993 when, asked whether he would always wish to write until he could not write anymore, he replied: "I think I'm already at that stage, don't you ? I'm about there".³¹

This, in turn, may explain why, in the final year of his life, Potter increasingly moved away from his writer's study in order to voice more stridently his opinions on the state of Britain in the nineties. Under the patronage of Michael Grade at Channel Four, he launched a highly personal attack on the Murdoch Press for the channel's Opinions slot - undoubtedly as an act of revenge for his treatment at the hands of the tabloids in recent years.³² Then, in August 1993, he delivered the annual James MacTaggart Lecture at the Edinburgh International Television Festival. In a speech that was widely reported in the press and news media, Potter intervened in the debate about the future of public service broadcasting, attacking BBC Director-General John Birt and Chairman

Marmaduke Hussey, after seeing the effects of their new 'internal market' at first hand, whilst working with the Corporation on the production of his feature film script, Midnight Movie.³³ Memorably, Potter lambasted Birt as a "croak-voiced dalek... in an Armani suit" and suggested that if public service broadcasting was not safe at the BBC, then the Corporation should be broken up to make way for other, smaller trustees of its heritage.³⁴ Significantly, he even offered to replace Hussey as BBC Chairman and while this was mainly taken as a joke by his audience, it may have hinted at Potter's own desire to seek a new public role for himself, in the face of the apparent decline of his writing.

Events the following year, however, would not only reverse that decline but simultaneously enhance his stature as a public figure. At the same time, they would be inextricably bound up with personal tragedy. As was widely reported at the time, Potter, having successfully nursed his wife through breast cancer in 1992, suddenly found himself stricken with the same disease in early 1994: an inoperable, terminal cancer of the pancreas (with secondary cancers in the liver). Diagnosed on St. Valentine's Day, he was given three months to live. In March, having been approached by Melvyn Bragg, he characteristically decided to bid a very public farewell, through one final interview for his beloved, 'people's medium' of television.

Transmitted by Channel Four on 5 April 1994, that interview had a massive cultural impact. The very dramatic context of an individual staring death in the face - talking with humour and courage about his own illness, as well as his fears for the future of television and society - touched off something in the press and public mind. Undoubtedly, it had to do with growing disaffection about the way society and culture

were going, after fifteen years of unbroken Conservative rule. In his Channel Four interview, Potter said many of the things he had said before but now it was the context, the audience's knowledge that death for this man was only weeks away, which made him become almost the embodiment for many of that wider dream of community - of 'some concept of perfection' in society - which had also seemed to be dying in British life, as a result of the changes of the previous decade. Reaction to Potter's interview was akin to a lament for the passing of that old dream, with the writer himself elevated into a kind of symbol for a society waking up to the direction in which it was travelling and deciding it wanted to turn back.³⁶

The Without Walls interview had other significant aspects too. As compensation for the fact of cancer, Potter talked of how knowledge of death had made him aware of the "nowness" of everything which, he stated, was "absolutely wondrous". The idea of living for the moment - of recapturing the 'wonder' of the present tense that children felt - was something he had often talked and written about. Now, the imminence of death made it a felt reality. Likewise, the prospect of death had put new energy into his old ideal of striving for a 'common culture' through television. By the time of his cancer diagnosis, Potter had almost completed a new, original four-part serial for the BBC called Karaoke. Now, he said, he wanted to complete one final television work in order that he could provide his own posthumous 'memorial'. Even after death, he said, he "wanted to continue to speak".³⁶

If the theatricality of this can partly be ascribed to a certain kind of writer's arrogance (a desire almost to make things happen in reality as if they were from the pages of one of his own scripts), the conception

had deeper roots in Potter's old dream of a 'common culture'. By way of his Channel Four interview, the writer craftily used the tactic of emotional blackmail on the Controller of BBC-1 and Chief Executive of Channel Four, Alan Yentob and Michael Grade respectively. By announcing publicly that his dying wish was for the BBC and Channel 4 jointly to produce and screen his two last TV dramas, Karaoke and his new script, Cold Lazarus, Potter made sure that TV executives would have no choice but to comply with his will, for fear of incurring public wrath of having gone against the wishes of a dying man. Moreover, that wish can be seen as precisely Potter's attempt to create, for one final time, the possibility of a 'common culture' through television. Joint transmission of the two dramas would cut across the fragmentation of the multi-channel television environment of the nineties, producing the kind of public event television used to be able to offer the writer when he first started out as a dramatist in the mid-sixties. His final works, Karaoke and Cold Lazarus, would thus be his 'memorial' because however temporarily, they would bring people together to participate in a television event, so that just for a moment, Potter's old dream of a 'common culture' would live again.

It is in this way that the very public event which the writer made of his death can be seen to represent some kind of triumph of all he strove for in his working life. Though terrible on one level (the level of individual loss and personal tragedy), the events culminating in his death seemed to signal the achievement of what all his life had been a struggle to reach. Akin to the double-edged ambiguous nature of some of his dramas like Joe's Ark and Pennies from Heaven, assessment of the significance of Potter's death finally becomes all a matter of from which perspective one chooses to look. Certainly, in the final weeks after the

transmission of the Without Walls interview, the writer was buoyed up by the wave of public sympathy and affection which came his way, as evidenced by the avalanche of mail he received at his home.³⁷ Fighting against and finally defeating the numbing pain of cancer, he succeeded in completing his final work, Cold Lazarus, against all the odds. Not only that but in the course of repeated trips to London, he busily set about 'tending to his affairs', with a compassion and panache which, according to Kenith Trodd, left others "gawping in the face of his tenacity, the old sustained abrasiveness and now a courteous wariness of death, with rarely a hint of fear".³⁸

As this suggests, the prospect of death also brought about a reconciliation between Potter and his old friend and colleague, Trodd. For sentimental reasons, the latter was appointed producer of Potter's two final works, with a brief to make sure they were realised according to his wishes. Meanwhile, the writer himself helped advise the BBC and Channel Four on how they could jointly finance and produce Karaoke and Cold Lazarus, extracting promises from both that the works would be produced in 1995, for a planned transmission by Spring 1996.

Potter finally died on 7 June 1994, only nine days after cancer had also claimed his wife, Margaret.³⁹ The media coverage accorded to his death was that on a scale normally reserved for the passing of a major national figure: items on all the main TV news broadcasts; a full-length television tribute broadcast on the night of his death; full-page obituaries in the national press; even a tribute from the then Heritage Secretary Peter Brooke M.P.⁴⁰ It was final proof and vindication that Potter as television writer had been successful in his aim of trying to cut across the lines in British society. Through television, his writing

and ideas had reached out to a far greater range of people; communicating with them and touching their lives to a far greater extent, than if he had been a figure predominantly of the theatre or of literature.⁴¹

Echoing the sentiments of Virgil, the ultimate triumph, however, may be yet to come. In interview in 1990, Potter acknowledged the many themes and connections between his works which it has been the task of this thesis to map out and trace. Significantly, though, he added:

There is a sense in which I could abandon all my previous work as inadequate and incomplete versions of the work that one day I will write... Somehow all these threads will come together. One piece of work will finally do what I'm at, maybe. And then I'll kill myself!⁴²

His final drama, Cold Lazarus, may be that work. Kenith Trodd has spoken of it as amongst the best, if not the best, of Potter's writing. According to Trodd, "Potter was his work". Once he had completed that last piece, he had nothing to live for.⁴³ Together with its companion piece, Karaoke, Cold Lazarus is significantly about a writer's relationship to his own material. Moreover, connections can not only be discerned between Karaoke and Cold Lazarus but between both of these and a much earlier Potter work:

Karaoke, the first of Potter's posthumous serials, is a thriller, revolving around a writer who finds that his life begins to mirror his fiction; that the things he writes about in his novel begin to happen in his life. In this way, it questions whether we are all in some sense characters in someone else's book, with our lines written out for us. As Potter made clear in his Without Walls interview, the drama uses the idea of the Karaoke machine as a metaphor for this. Contrasting with his previous dramatic device of characters expressing their freedom of 'spirit' through

miming to popular song, with Karaoke, according to Potter, "You have your little line. You can sing it, and everything is written for you and that is the way life feels to a lot of people. For some, you haven't got much space and even the space you've got, although you use your own voice, the words are written for you".⁴⁴

Cold Lazarus takes this metaphor of social and political entrapment even further. The writer character of Karaoke dies of cancer but through cryogenics, his head is frozen. Four hundred years later, he wakes up to a world where entertainment, in the form of virtual reality, rules. As the writer's brain cells begin to be stimulated, a Murdoch-like media mogul realises the man's memories of the twentieth century are financial dynamite. Even though the subject resists, these memories are soon plugged into the nightly entertainment and mixed up with virtual reality simulations. As Potter suggested in Without Walls, the source of the writer's memories are significant for in making his final farewell to television drama, they will be the playwright's own memories, or as he made clear: "What I choose to make my memories".⁴⁵

In Cold Lazarus, the parallel with Potter's own life and work is thus unmistakable, in terms of this notion of the writer spilling out the contents of his own mind (a mixture of real feelings and pure fantasy) for the benefit of the nightly entertainment. Its title catching at the tensions between life and death which is clearly the terrain of the serial, Cold Lazarus is ultimately exploring the immortality of 'art' versus the physical reality of death. Plugged into the home entertainment network and interacting with its technology, the writer's brain survives even beyond the point of physical death. The writer's

memories, emotions and fantasies 'continue to speak' through an endless play of dramatic simulations.

The very last piece of creative writing which Potter ever produced hints, moreover, that in Cold Lazarus and its sister work, Karaoke, all of his 'previous threads' as a writer may indeed have come together. In May 1994, just a month before his death, The Daily Telegraph commissioned Potter to write one very last work. The result was what the latter described as his "first and last" short story - a piece called "Last Pearls".⁴⁶ In common with his two posthumous dramas, "Last Pearls" is about a writer who is dying of cancer. His body emaciated, his mind numbed by the morphine he has to take to kill the pain, the writer, Jack, is struggling to "right the wrongs he had inflicted on his own talent in the last piece of work he had published, a tawdry narrative called Black Pearls". His plan is slowly, painstakingly, to rewrite the worst excesses of this book, before the cancer completely overwhelms him: turning "black pearls into white pearls". By an act of sheer physical effort and willpower, he succeeds in this aim, just prior to being overwhelmed by the pain-killing opiates. At the story's close, however, it becomes clear that far from altering his previous work, Jack has simply "rewritten Black Pearls word for word". The narrative ends:

Everyone agreed that as an act of memory alone it was a formidable achievement.

He must have loved that book heart and soul, they said.⁴⁷

These were the last words Potter ever wrote as a creative writer. Three days after the short story's publication in The Daily Telegraph, he died. The following week, while paying tribute to him, The Telegraph volunteered the opinion that "Last Pearls" was undoubtedly about the critical

reception of Blackeyes. The 'tawdry narrative' of Black Pearls clearly connected with Potter's own "controversial novel, Blackeyes".⁴⁹ As with much of Potter's work, appearances can be deceptive, however. While some of the external surface 'facts' of the story mirror Blackeyes, the underlying fictional 'truth' seems much closer to Potter's own first novel, Hide and Seek. There is the same use, for example, of an 'Author' character made in the writer's own image and the same image of the rewriting of a piece of work; a process which only leads the 'Author' closer and closer back to 'the beginning' (: § 3.1). There is also the writer character of Jack - his name an echo of the figure of Jack Black in Follow the Yellow Brick Road; the contemporaneous sister work of Hide and Seek which like that novel, seemed both to mark the nadir of despair in Potter's writing and point to a potential pathway out of 'spiritual crisis' (: § 3.2). The final words of the short story ("He must have loved that book heart and soul...") may therefore have very special significance. As Chapters Five and Six argued, both The Singing Detective and Blackeyes employed many of the structures and motifs of Hide and Seek in a way that seemed to suggest this novel occupied a pivotal position in the development of Potter's writing.⁴⁹ Because it marked the turning point of Potter's own personal 'yellow brick road', it thus seems from the evidence that it was Hide and Seek which was the book that was loved heart and soul. Echoing the fictional Jack's rewriting of Black Pearls, however apparently radical a departure from what had come before and however dazzling its surface, there was always an underlying consistency to Potter's writing. Every new work kept returning in some way to sift over and over again themes that this first novel had thrown up, in order that they could be made to yield even more.⁵⁰

In turn, this connects with Potter's final posthumous television dramas. Like "Last Pearls", both of these portray an 'Author' figure made in the writer's own image. Their plot structures also carry clear echoes of Hide and Seek. In Karaoke, a writer's life begins to mirror his work, in the same way as fiction crossed into reality when the Daniel Miller narrative was revealed to be synonymous with the 'Author''s own life in Hide and Seek. Meanwhile, in Cold Lazarus, the process is reversed. It is reality which is made to cross into fiction in the shape of the writer whose memories are used as dramatic entertainment yet who wants to escape, in the same way as the fictional Daniel Miller, endowed with the 'facts' of reality, nevertheless wanted to flee from his 'Controller' in Hide and Seek. Given these connections and the fact that some of Potter's own memories are used in the work, it is hard not to conclude that the writer's final works will be his best. They will be his most complete statements precisely because akin to the narrative trajectory of Hide and Seek, they will be those in which 'the Author' will have made the 'nearest' approach to himself.

Certainly, all the clues to their interpretation will reside in Potter's past work; work to which this study has hopefully acted as a guide. As the thesis has demonstrated, Potter really always needed tension to be a writer. His best work was born out of a tension between flesh and spirit which, once resolved and written out, tended towards a flattening of the work. Karaoke and Cold Lazarus in particular, promise to be a return to the successes of the past, precisely because they were, very sadly, born out of the most extreme tension of all - that between living and dying.

In managing to complete them, Potter thus achieved success on many levels. There was the personal triumph of having completed them at all

in the face of extreme illness. There was also the achievement that his final interview and his own passing managed to cut across cultural hierarchies, prompting many to examine the direction in which television and the country in general were heading.⁵¹ Particularly through his final television 'memorial', he achieved, too, a kind of artistic immortality, producing original work that will continue to 'speak' long after he is gone. In this way, Potter not only reached his 'golden city' at the end, he himself engineered it, ensuring that his words and presence would survive even beyond his death. Perhaps, it is his old friend and sparring partner, Kenith Trodd, who provides the most concise final summary of the remarkable achievements in death of this undoubtedly remarkable writer. Writing in a newspaper obituary, the producer stated that for him, the last weeks of Potter's life were:

... a glorious revitalisation of the cliché about nothing in life becoming one like the leaving of it. In those three and a half months alone, [Potter] brought off more than most of us achieve in our whole life...

Significantly, he concluded:

Dennis' work will go on speaking for itself for a long time but I return to cliché to say that great writer he obviously is,... I now think of him also as rather a Great Man.⁵²

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. Madeleine Pallas, "The Pain that Drives Potter Potty", The Sun, 30 November 1989, p.12. "Television's Mr. Filth" was what the News of the World dubbed Potter. Qtd. in Dennis Potter, "Black Cloud Lifts at Last for Potter", interview by Martina Devlin, Edinburgh Evening News, 10 February 1990, Weekend sec., p.7.

2. In the last year of Potter's life, two book-length publications did appear. Neither, however, really offer the 'substantial critical assessment' which Potter's work seems to demand. The first of these was Potter on Potter, edited by Graham Fuller and published by Faber and Faber in March 1993. As its name suggests, this was a collection of interviews with the writer himself which was commissioned by his own publishers as part of their existing series of book-length interviews with leading 'film-makers' (Scorsese on Scorsese; Levinson on Levinson and so on). It is this commercial fact which seems to let the book down. While Potter's retrospective opinions on his own work are clearly of interest and value, the book's format makes for a fairly haphazard approach. Potter talks about his work in very general terms to journalist Graham Fuller; a format which allows him to set his own agenda, raising some issues but skirting others. The present-day perspective on past works also allows ideas and events to be embellished with hindsight. In the course of the interviews, obscure past works are mentioned which the general reader, who has not tracked every twist and turn of Potter's career, must surely find baffling since the book gives little historical contextualisation. The result is ultimately unsatisfying - an edited collection of statements which, by and large, Potter had previously given to other journalists. Far from providing the fresh perspective one might have hoped, Potter on Potter ultimately functions as just one more primary source. (Note that although the book was published after this thesis was largely written, any particularly important or new information contained in Potter on Potter has been incorporated into this study by way of the endnotes to individual chapters). The second Potter publication appeared almost unnoticed in October 1993. This was Dennis Potter by Peter Stead - a short 'Introduction' to Potter and his work, published by a small Welsh publisher, Seren Books. In contrast to Potter on Potter, this work incorporates no new interview material with the writer, nor indeed any real research at all. It is, rather, a short critical appreciation, written for the general reader by a historian who professes himself an admirer of Potter's work. Stead's very general, descriptive review of the plays reveals the difficulties that writers sometimes find in discussing television drama. He is preoccupied with the subject of class in Potter's work and this tends to lead him away from the plays themselves towards wider social issues (- for example, he hardly touches upon Potter as a religious dramatist: a central plank of this study). The result is ultimately an incomplete overview, lacking in research knowledge and

containing a number of factual inaccuracies and important oversights. In Potter's terms (and here he was referring to past criticism of his work), the book does not "discover anything". (Dennis Potter, Personal Interview, Tape Recording, Eastbourne News, London, 10 May 1990) What the appearance of the two volumes does testify to, however, is a burgeoning interest in Potter's work - one that will undoubtedly continue in the wake of the writer's death. For comparison of the two 1993 Potter books with this study, see Graham Fuller (ed.), Potter on Potter, (London: Faber and Faber, 1993) and Peter Stead, Dennis Potter (Bridgend: Seren Books, 1993).

3. Viewed in this light, Potter on Potter can be seen almost as an attempt by the writer to keep potential researchers at bay by monopolising opinion on his work. In interview in 1990, Potter was certainly worried that sustained critical investigation of his writing might undermine his work. As he put it: "If I'm led by questions or collisions of coincidence and events and apparent similarities being drawn out too explicitly, then my writing hand is going to seize up..." (Potter, Personal Interview) It was almost as if faced with increasing outside interest in his work, the writer as recluse concluded the only way to hide, to shield oneself from the full glare of critical inspection in the modern media age, was to appear to be as open and as available as possible to its blandishments. One hides today by appearing not to hide at all.

4. As Potter appeared to attest in interview with me, "I'm a reclusive character. I don't expose myself. I appear to... And I won't hesitate to use journalism and all those things [which] I believe don't have the same constraints, the same necessities for truth as the plays do. What I say about them and what they are are not necessarily the same thing". (Potter, Personal Interview) Hence this underlines the necessity not just of comparing Potter's retrospective opinions with that of contemporary interviews but also of looking first to the plays and serials for the 'truth' about his work - assessing the veracity of the writer's statements on the basis of how much certain points seem to be confirmed by one's own reading of the work. The writer's statements in interview may be truthful but then again they may not. He may well hint at some of the hidden depths in his work but he certainly will not expose them. As with Potter on Potter, it is almost possible to see that when the writer offers to talk about his work, it may be as much to guard some of his textual 'secrets' as to reveal them. Particularly when evaluating his later statements about his work, one has always to bear this in mind about Potter. Hence the sifting of sources in this study.

5. Rosalind Coward, "Dennis Potter and the Question of the Television Author", Critical Quarterly, Vol.29, No.4, 1987, p.87.

6. Coward, p.82. This article sought to puncture the idea of Potter as TV author, in the wake of the writer's near-canonisation as auteur, following the success of The Singing Detective in 1986 (: § 5.3 d). The piece did so from the self-professed perspective of a Barthesian "semiotically based modernist criticism". In so doing, it seems to come unstuck for the reasons outlined in the main text.

7. John Caughie, "Progressive Television and Documentary Drama", Popular Television and Film, (eds.) Tony Bennett, Susan Boyd-Bowman, Colin Mercer and Janet Woollacott, (London: British Film Institute, 1981), p.335. First published in Screen, Vol.21, No.3, 1980, pp.9-35.

8. Caughie, p.332. This assertion of the dramatist's right to creative freedom explains why it was always fiercely controversial when television managers attempted to exercise censorship control over material. See, for example, Section 2.3 c) on the Brimstone and Treacle furor.

9. For example, when asked in interview if he saw himself as 'co-author' of the work, Piers Haggard, the director of Pennies From Heaven, asserted he felt himself very much to be the 'interpreter'. His task, as he saw it, was not to overlay the writer's material with his own ideas but to try to make the material yield all it could: "to dig out what the writer put there and to make it show itself in the truest sense". This respect for the writer was very much the legacy of Haggard's training in the theatre from whence (as with so many directors of this period), he was recruited to BBC television. (Piers Haggard, Personal Interview, Tape Recording, North London, 13 March 1990) With the rise of all-film drama in the nineteen eighties, the director's subordination to the writer began to change somewhat. See Section 5.3 b) for discussion of how this affected Potter on The Singing Detective.

10. Because of the BBC's investment in studio space, drama producers in the nineteen sixties and seventies were obliged to follow a general rule that only fifteen per cent of a play could be shot on film. The rest had to be recorded in the electronic studio. (This rule could be bent, however, by allowing some productions a higher percentage of location filming at the expense of others which would then be recorded entirely in the studio. Source: Graeme McDonald, Personal Interview, Tape Recording, Anglia Films, Central London, 1 March 1990) Hence even when it was possible to shoot drama wholly on film, the more 'theatrical' qualities of studio drama persisted. This reached its apotheosis in the mid-sixties with a 'live' half-hour single play slot called, significantly, Thirty Minute Theatre (: § 1.2).

11. Caughie, p.335. See Section 1.0 b) for the contribution of 'dissidents' like Troy Kennedy Martin and John McGrath to the development of 'non-naturalistic' drama.

12. Examples of well-known directors who gained their first big breaks working on The Wednesday Play or later Play for Today include Ken Loach, John McKenzie, Stephen Frears and Piers Haggard.

13. Caughie, p.328.

14. For further discussion of this need for popular single plays, see Section 1.0 b). In the mid-sixties, the single TV play was dying and it was only through the intervention of the 'controversial', 'provocative' Wednesday Play that its popularity was revived.

15. As described by Irene Shubik, the function of Sydney Newman's story editor system was to place the writer at the very heart of the process of single play production. Editors would be delegated by producers to go out and scout for new writing talent. In consultation with the producer, they would then have the power to commission original projects for future production. Having pioneered this system with great success on Armchair Theatre (where he brought Alun Owen and Harold Pinter to television), Newman introduced it to BBC TV on becoming Head of Drama there in 1963. See Irene Shubik, "Play for Today": The Evolution of Television Drama (London: Davis-Poynter, 1975), pp.27-8.

16. This is a point worth emphasising. Potter's single play scripts were always self-generated and taken to the BBC, where he knew they would be faithfully realised. (Source: Potter, Personal Interview) Directors never had the power to rewrite his scripts. The only changes the writer ever had to make happened when BBC management worried his material might be too 'controversial'. Such decisions would invariably result in a huge, public row. See for example, discussion of the controversy surrounding script changes to Vote, Vote, Vote for Nigel Barton and Message for Posterity (: § 1.1; 1.2).

17. Dennis Potter, "The Artist", The Dane, Magazine of St. Clement Dane's Grammar School, Vol.35, No.13, July 1953, p.441. Hammersmith Public Library, West London.

18. See, for example, the comments of the spy, Adrian Harris, in Potter's 1971 play, Traitor. He talks of his dingy Moscow apartment as 'home': "... Home being defined not as where you started from but where your journey ends. The journey you take inside your head". (: § 2.1) (Soundtrack, Traitor, wr: Dennis Potter; dir: Alan Bridges; prod: Graeme McDonald, tx. BBC-1 Play for Today 14 October 1971. Videocassette Recording, Repeat Transmission BBC-1 21 July 1987) This idea of the spiritual journey one has to make in life would later function as the foundational metaphor of The Singing Detective (: § 5.3 c).

19. As Potter would express it as an undergraduate in 1959 (in his first published volume), it was one of his "most deeply felt ambitions in life... to become a competent Labour Member of Parliament because honesty and youthful arrogance, as well as [an] intensely political nature... demand it." (Dennis Potter, The Glittering Coffin, London: Victor Gollancz, 1960, p.5)

20. Dennis Potter, "The Values of a Playwright", interview by Robert Cushman, Radio Times, 3 - 9 April 1976, p.62.

21. Philip Purser, "Dennis Potter", British Television Drama (ed.) George W. Brandt, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p.169.

22. Dennis Potter, "Some Sort of Preface...", Waiting for the Boat, On Television, (London: Faber and Faber, 1984), p.33.

23. The grey-blue colour of the Malvern hills, as seen from a distance, thus provided the title for Potter's famous 1979 play, set in the distant past of childhood, Blue Remembered Hills (: § 3.0).

24. Potter, Personal Interview.

25. It is worth mentioning here the material deprivations which Potter suffered in childhood, as a result of coming from mining stock in the isolated coal-fields of the Forest. While this was only ever lightly touched upon by Potter in interviews and in his writing, the poverty he knew as a child (and realised only fully in retrospect) undoubtedly fuelled his early political ambitions and subsequent television work. The most explicitly he ever talked in public about this was in a 1971 Late Night Line-Up interview, broadcast on the same night as his play, Traitor. In it, he recalled growing up in the thirties and forties and how, until he left the Forest, he had never seen a flush toilet or kitchen sink. Instead, there was just a bowl in the kitchen for slops that would be thrown out onto the vegetable patch as fertiliser. As an adolescent of fourteen, he and his thirteen year old sister slept in the same bed,

two steps away from his mother and father. There was no door, just a curtain. In another bedroom lay his grandmother and grandfather - an illiterate old coalminer with a rattling chest, who was dying of silicosis. (Dennis Potter, interview, Late Night Line-Up, tx. BBC-2 14 October 1971. Transcript, BBC Written Archives, Caversham)

26. As Potter recalled in interview, the Germans the locals never saw but the Italians used to be seen marching down to the river, guarded only by a lance-corporal with a rifle: "In other words, the Italians wouldn't bother to escape... The Germans weren't allowed out because they would have escaped". (Potter, Personal Interview) The Italians were thus allowed a relatively free rein. According to a contemporaneous local newspaper report, one of the concessions granted to them was that they were allowed to wander unescorted up to a mile from their billets, when not on farm duty; three miles on Sunday to Roman Catholic Mass. Fraternisation with the locals was out, however. If any P.O.W. was caught associating with a woman, he would be severely punished (: § 1.3; 3.0). (Ross Gazette, 23 September 1945, p.2)

27. Potter, Personal Interview.

28. Potter, "Some Sort of Preface...", p.33.

29. Compounding the child's anxiety, no-one could understand his thick Forester accent. In his student work, The Glittering Coffin, Potter briefly recalled his first lengthy exile from the Forest and how as a ten year old, trapped in the city, he "cried all through a hot, noisy London night, cried with the kind of sick passion of those who love a place almost as much as they love a person". (Potter, The Glittering Coffin, p.41)

30. Potter, Personal Interview.

31. Source: The Dane, Vol.35, No.14, p.478.

32. In interview, Kenith Trodd states that the whole experience was just "further grist to the party mill" for both he and Potter. The writer would later make use of these experiences, of course, in Lipstick on Your Collar (: § Conclusion). It is interesting to note that Trodd's parents were both from the working class, like Potter's and that as a child, he had a similar religious upbringing insofar as his family were members of the Plymouth Brethren. (Kenith Trodd, Personal Interview, Tape Recording, BBC Television Centre, London, 8 November 1989)

33. This was chiefly due to the 1944 Butler Education Act (: § 1.1). In this way, the figure of the working class 'scholarship boy' became a key one of the period, precisely because he seemed to embody the post-war dream of building a new society along more equitable lines, where success would be dependent on merit, rather than social position.

34. Roger Smith, Personal Interview, Tape Recording, Peckham, South London, 16 March 1990.

35. Dennis Potter, qtd. in Simon Hattenstone, "The Shooting Party", The Guardian, 11 October 1991, sec.2, p.34. The list of Potter's extra-curricular achievements at Oxford comes from The Glittering Coffin, p.95.

36. Smith, Personal Interview. In 1957, Prime Minister Harold MacMillan's claim was that "most of our people have never had it so good. Go round

the country, go to the industrial towns, and you will see a state of prosperity such as we have never had in my lifetime - nor indeed ever in the history of this country". (Qtd. in John Hill, Sex, Class and Realism, London: British Film Institute, 1986, p.5)

37. Dennis Potter, "Base Ingratitude", New Statesman, 3 May 1958, p.562.

38. Dennis Potter, radio talk, ('A View of Oxford from the Editor of Isis'), Town and Country, tx. BBC Home Service, 29 May 1958.

39. The attractions of having the student on the programme were apparent. With the Conservative Government under Harold MacMillan, promoting the notion that universal 'affluence' was breaking down all the old class barriers, ideologies of 'classlessness' were very much in the air. If this helps explain the reason for Mayhew's TV series and his chosen title, Does Class Matter ?, it also accounts for why Potter's assertion from personal experience that class did matter, should attract such media interest at the time. Undoubtedly, a contributory factor here was the publication a year earlier of Richard Hoggart's pioneering study of the decline of working class culture, The Uses of Literacy. One of its key chapters was an analysis of the plight of 'scholarship boys' who, like Potter, had been uprooted from their class through education (: § 1.1). As if to underscore the point, when Potter's Does Class Matter ? interview was broadcast on 25 August 1958, it was followed up by a studio discussion between Mayhew and Hoggart himself, in which the latter praised Potter's comments on the tensions of the class divide as "most moving". (Richard Hoggart, Does Class Matter ?, Programme Two: "Class in Private Life", tx. BBC TV 25 August 1958. Transcript, BBC Written Archives, Caversham) See also Richard Hoggart, The Uses of Literacy, (1957; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1959).

40. Dennis Potter, interview, Does Class Matter ?, Programme Two.

41. Dennis Potter, Stand Up, Nigel Barton, Published Script, The Nigel Barton Plays, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), p.70.

42. Potter, Stand Up, Nigel Barton, p.72.

43. Potter, The Glittering Coffin, p.79.

44. Qtd. in Potter, The Glittering Coffin, p.71. Potter later received an apology from the newspaper, after he threatened legal action against it.

45. Dennis Potter. Letter to Christopher Mayhew. 1 September 1958. Access to this correspondence was granted by kind permission of Lord Mayhew.

46. Christopher Mayhew. Letter to Dennis Potter. 14 October 1958.

47. By 1960, Denis Mitchell (1910-90) had established himself as one of the true innovators of the TV documentary form. Having begun in radio, his preoccupation was with capturing 'real' people talking about their lives within the context of 'real' situations. To this end, eschewing what he deemed to be the artificial set-up of the studio-recorded interview, he made heavy use of portable tape-recorders, taking them out on location in order to record people talking within the context and ease of their 'natural' environment. In terms of his television work, Mitchell would often only begin to film the subjects of his documentaries after he had made extensive recordings of their opinions on every topic

conceivably related to the subject of his film. Later, at the editing stage, images would be married to sound in a way that would frequently provide an ironic counterpoint or thematic insight into the individuals or events portrayed in the film. Through a number of documentaries in the late fifties - In Prison and Night in the City (both 1957) and the Prix Italia award winner, Morning in the Streets (1959) - Mitchell perfected this technique. For contemporary discussion of Mitchell, see, for example, Philip Purser, "Think-Tape: A Profile of Denis Mitchell", Contrast, Vol.1, No.2, Winter 1961, pp.108-114.

48. Far from concealing its own artifice or viewpoint, Mitchell's highly 'authored' impressionistic style drew attention to the nature of the filmmaker's own selection and mediation of his 'real-life' material. Almost twenty years later, Potter would write of his old tutor: "When others thought that 'documentary' meant pointing a camera at a commentator pointing his finger at what we were supposed to see, or that simple juxtaposition of opposing events was the natural rhythm of both wit and irony, [Mitchell's] films brought the densities of thought, the nuances of ambiguity and the stretch of tension between sound and picture which made all else seem so ploddingly literal and predictable. He has always been an author, not a bystander. A dramatist and not a snoop". (Dennis Potter, "The Spectre at the Harvest Feast", review of Never and Always [dir: Denis Mitchell], Sunday Times, 19 June 1977, p.22)

49. Denis Mitchell. Letter to the author. 13 July 1990.

50. Dennis Potter, interview, Arena, tx. BBC-2 30 January 1987. Videocassette Recording, Repeat Transmission, BBC-1 29 June 1987.

51. Certainly, it engendered in Potter a life-long fascination with the process of film editing - one that would eventually be indulged when, almost thirty years later, he came to direct for the first time (Blackeyes in 1989). At that time, as he admitted to his editor Clare Douglas during post-production, if he had not been a writer, he would have liked to have been that other kind of manipulator of reality and illusion - a film editor (: § 6.1 c). (Clare Douglas, Personal Interview, Tape Recording, Central London, 28 February 1990)

52. Potter, "The Spectre at the Harvest Feast", p.22.

53. Mitchell. Letter to the author.

54. Hoggart's The Uses of Literacy was certainly a major declared influence on the young Potter. In The Glittering Coffin, he ranked it on a par with Conviction and the work of Raymond Williams. (Potter, The Glittering Coffin, p.8).

55. The title was also a wry nod in the direction of his 'patron', Denis Mitchell, whose own documentary, Between Two Worlds, had been screened two months earlier as part of a trilogy of documentaries on Africa, The Wind of Change (tx. BBC TV 12 April 1960). This had described the plight of a young Masai boy, uprooted from his tribe in Tanganyika through the need to be educated a thousand miles away in Bar-es-Salaam. (Radio Times, 8 April 1960, p.14) Potter's Between Two Rivers was thus partly an attempt to show that such isolation from tribal roots also applied much closer to home.

56. Potter, Personal Interview.

57. Soundtrack, Between Two Rivers, wr and narr: Dennis Potter; ph: A.A. Englander; dir and prod: Anthony de Lotbinière, tx. BBC TV 3 June 1960. National Film Archive Viewing Print.

58. Dennis Potter, "A Playwright Comes of Age", interview by Philip Purser, Sunday Telegraph Magazine, 2 April 1969, p.10.

59. It is perhaps significant to note that it was only after the success of his Nigel Barton Plays in 1965 that Potter told the press he felt able to move back to the Forest of Dean on his own terms. He told Barry Norman that the Barton plays were in a sense to make up for his two previous television appearances when he had discussed class: "I think I've finished with the class thing", he stated. "Now I think I can return on my own terms". Later, Potter moved from rural Norfolk, where he had been living, back to the Forest. He lived there, or rather, significantly, just at the edge of it (in a large Victorian house on the outskirts of the town of Ross-on-Wye), for the rest of his life. (Dennis Potter, "What the Class Barrier Did for Dennis Potter", interview by Barry Norman, Daily Mail, 13 December 1965, p.9.)

60. Potter, Arena.

61. Potter, Arena.

62. Potter, Personal Interview.

63. Potter, Personal Interview.

64. In 1959, Potter had married Margaret Morgan, a local girl from the Forest of Dean whom he had met at a barn dance. Roger Smith was their best man. The devoted couple had two daughters, Jane and Sarah and later a son, Robert. Tragically, Potter's wife died of cancer in 1994, just nine days before her husband.

65. Richard Hoggart, The Uses of Literacy (1957; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1959), p.203.

66. Smith, Personal Interview.

67. See, for example, note 29 overleaf.

68. Potter, The Glittering Coffin, p.95.

69. That Was the Week That Was was launched on 24 November 1962. As the show's executive producer, Alasdair Milne, recalls, TW3 had a deliberate policy of recruiting young journalists as the show's scriptwriters, rather than relying on established comedy writers. Writers with an immersion in the world of current affairs better suited the programme's brief of providing sharp, irreverent comment on the week's news. In this way, over a dozen pairs of writers were recruited from journalistic backgrounds - for example, Keith Waterhouse and Willis Hall, Andrew Roth and Joe Haines and from the Daily Herald, Nathan and Potter. (Alasdair Milne, Personal Interview, Tape Recording, Holland Park, London, 5 March 1990)

70. Examples of Nathan and Potter's contributions to the series have been preserved for posterity in a published collection of TW3 sketches. In one, "Entitled to Know", they lampoon a 1963 Conservative pamphlet of the same name which had challenged Labour to come clean about its

nationalisation programme for industry, should it be elected to power. In their satirical script, Nathan and Potter turn the tables, quoting material from past Tory propaganda in order to show how much of British industry had already been nationalised under successive Conservative Governments from 1951-63. (David Nathan and Dennis Potter, "Entitled to Know", That Was the Week That Was, eds. David Frost and Ned Sherrin, London: W.H. Allen, 1963, pp.44-6) As this shows, Nathan and Potter's contributions were less about humour and more about motivated political comment on the issues of the day, based upon their research as journalists.

71. Dennis Potter, interview, Complete Programme Notes for a Season of British Television Drama 1959-73, Held at the National Film Theatre 11 - 24 October 1976, (ed.) Paul Madden, (London: British Film Institute, 1976), p.34.

72. Dennis Potter, The Changing Forest: Life in the Forest of Dean Today, Britain Alive series, (London: Secker and Warburg, 1962).

73. Dennis Potter, interview, Wogan, tx. BBC-1 25 September 1987. Videocassette Recording.

74. For some indication of how the mind hallucinates under this illness, see Potter's own 1986 serial, The Singing Detective, which portrays the hallucinations of the disease-ridden Philip Marlow (: § 5.3 c). Though it undoubtedly would be far too reductive to tie everything back to physiology, there is a sense in which it is possible to link Potter's distinctive 'non-naturalistic' style with this idea of a mind free-associating as a result of illness (: § 1.0 b).

75. Potter, Personal Interview.

76. See, for example, interviews with Wogan (1987); with Joan Bakewell, "Wrestling with a Vision", The Sunday Times Magazine, 14 November 1976, p.66 and comments quoted in "Singing for Your Fiction Takes the Sting Out of Life", Profile, Sunday Times, 23 November 1986, p.27.

77. In his 1976 interview with Joan Bakewell, the writer suggested that his time at Oxford and then at the BBC as a young tyro, had been something of an aberration, compared to the normal in-turned pattern of his nature: "I'm very much the opposite of the twenty one year old activist at Oxford. You often find very reclusive people who break out almost as a matter of defiance, do so very emphatically and then retreat again. And that was the sense I had of Oxford. As soon as it's over, I can coil in again. In another cultural time, I'm very well equipped to be monastic". (Potter, "Wrestling with a Vision", p.66)

78. Thus writing in 1983, Potter was able to look back at his younger self - the angry young tyro who had written The Glittering Coffin - and comment that this was a work by a young man who had pronounced "upon the condition of his culture and his nation without knowing much of any real significance about himself". Finding his own voice as a writer was what he had later discovered was really important, albeit if it was the most difficult thing to do because it meant "you have to delve as deeply as possible into yourself to find and attend to it". (Potter, "Some Sort of Preface...", p.22)

79. See, for example, Potter's hopes for a 'cure' after writing The Singing Detective (: § 5.3 d).

80. Dennis Potter, "Diamonds in the Dustbin", interview by Tim Lott, New Musical Express, 15 November 1986, pp.30-1.

81. Madden, p.35. Something of this feeling of having been sidelined by the Fleet Street mainstream as a result of illness - leaping from glittering whizz-kid journalist to 'yesterday's man' in one bound - is suggested in Paper Roses, Potter's 1971 television play set in the world of newspapers. In it, the main protagonist, former ace reporter, Clarence Hubbard, finds himself increasingly sidelined by his colleagues due to old age - being given all the jobs the others do not want (: § 2.0 b).

82. Dennis Potter, Introduction, The Nigel Barton Plays, p.8.

83. Potter, Introduction, The Nigel Barton Plays, p.11. Writing in the same Introduction, Potter recalled how, as a TV critic for the Daily Herald, he had always felt television "seemed to be at its best when it was an extension of journalism". (Potter, p.8)

84. Troy Kennedy Martin, "'Nats Go Home': First Statement of a New Drama for Television", Encore, Vol.11, No.2, March-April 1964, pp.21-33.

85. Dennis Potter, "Reaction", Encore, Vol.11, No.3, May-June 1964, p.39. Note that Encore was co-edited by Potter's friend Roger Smith and Clive Goodwin (who later would become Potter's first literary agent). Thus even before his debut as a TV playwright, Potter was already familiar to that group of practitioners who were trying to push TV plays forward and away from 'kitchen sink' naturalism in the early sixties (: § 1.0 b).

86. Smith, Personal Interview.

87. In his 1987 Arena interview, the writer recalled how on voters' doorsteps, he would be asked 'what he was going to do about all the blacks': "I would attempt to engage and get a sharp kick in the ankles [from his political agent] which was fair enough because his job was to get the vote out and mine was to realise that I was in the wrong trade". (Potter, Arena) Potter would later replicate this little scene in his 1965 play, Vote, Vote, Vote for Nigel Barton (: § 1.1). See published script, The Nigel Barton Plays, pp.102-3.

88. Smith, Personal Interview.

CHAPTER ONE

1. The Confidence Course, Camera Script, February 1965, p.2. BBC Television Script Unit.
2. For published histories of The Wednesday Play, see, for example, Irene Shubik, "Play for Today": The Evolution of Television Drama (London: Davis-Poynter, 1975). This gives a producer's account of working on The Wednesday Play and later Play for Today. See also Paul Madden (ed.), Complete Programme Notes for a Season of British Television Drama 1959 - 1973. Held at the National Film Theatre, 11 - 24 October 1976 (London: British Film Institute, 1976) which contains interviews with key Wednesday Play practitioners, including Potter, Ken Loach and David Mercer. For The Wednesday Play in relation to the wider institutional and cultural context, Jeremy Ridgman's essay "Inside the Liberal Heartland: Television and the Popular Imagination in the 1960s" (in Bart Moore-Gilbert and John Seed [eds.], Cultural Revolution? The Challenge of the Arts in the 1960s, London: Routledge, 1992, pp.139-59), provides a useful overview of the BBC television landscape of the sixties of which The Wednesday Play was a notable part. Meanwhile, Michael Tracey's study of Mary Whitehouse (Whitehouse, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1979), together with his biography of the BBC Director-General who presided over the period, Hugh Carleton Greene (A Variety of Lives, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1983) both outline the censorship battles that the new 'permissiveness' of BBC single plays provoked. Finally, for some measure of the cultural impact of The Wednesday Play and of its importance to its champions see, for example, the collected TV criticism of Financial Times critic, T.C. Worsley, in Worsley, Television: The Ephemeral Art (London: Alan Ross, 1970).
3. See Chapter Two for discussion of Angels Are so Few - a 1970 play which Potter wrote for Smith. This deals with an apparent 'angel' who transforms the life of a trapped, repressed housewife (: § 2.2).
4. Dennis Potter, interview by Paul Madden, Complete Programme Notes for a Season of British Television Drama, p.35.
5. Roger Smith, Personal Interview, Tape Recording, Peckham, South London, 16 March 1990.
6. The phrase "Admass society" was coined by J.B. Priestley to describe the rapid spread of an American capitalist culture in post-war Britain. 'Admass' was Priestley's "name for the whole system of an increasing productivity, plus inflation, plus a rising standard of material living, plus high-pressure advertising and salesmanship, plus mass communication, plus cultural democracy and the creation of the mass mind, the mass man..." (Qtd. in Boris Ford [ed.], The New Pelican Guide To English Literature Vol. 8, London: Penguin, 1982, p.57).
7. The Confidence Course, Script, p.60.
8. The Confidence Course, Script, p.61.
9. Published in the same month (May 1956) as John Osborne's archetypal 'angry' outsider, Jimmy Porter, made his first appearance in Look Back in Anger at the Royal Court, Colin Wilson's The Outsider (London: Gollancz, 1956) was a study of such figures in literature. The Servant was directed in 1963 by Joseph Losey and starred Edward Fox and Dirk Bogarde as master and servant respectively. Harold Pinter's screenplay was

adapted from the novel of the same name by Robin Maugham. The published script of David Mercer's For Tea on Sunday can be found in Mercer, Three Television Comedies (London: Calder and Boyars, 1965).

10. The Confidence Course, Script, p.57. Hazlitt was undoubtedly a key influence on the formation of Potter's attitudes. In a 1976 radio broadcast, With Great Pleasure, the writer was asked to select extracts from his favourite poetry and prose. He commented that Hazlitt was the writer he revered "above all others for the trenchant pertinence of his opinions, for his wit and style and honesty and for his brave, uncompromising spirit and insights". He added that when Wordsworth referred to Hazlitt as a "miscreant" and 'not a proper person to be admitted into respectable society', that was, in Potter's opinion, "already half way to providing a picture of a man who warms the heart... who set out to mock and scourge all and any examples of humbug, cant and time-serving which crossed his path". Given these opinions, it is easy to see why Potter chose to reincarnate Hazlitt as his 'miscreant', railing against the 'cant' of Admass in The Confidence Course. It seems that Hazlitt also provided Potter with the model for the kind of 'trenchant' relationship a writer should have with his society. As Potter commented in that same 1976 broadcast, Hazlitt "used himself and used up himself". Compare this with Potter's own comments about himself as a writer, cited in the Conclusion. (Dennis Potter, interview, With Great Pleasure, tx. BBC Radio 4, 5 September 1976. Transcript, BBC Written Archives, Caversham)

11. Compare with the character of Judas in Son of Man (: § 1.4).

12. The Confidence Course, Script, p.8. Compare the 'shadow-with-eyes' with the later demon outsiders of Sam in The Bonegrinder and Martin in Brimstone and Treacle (: § 2.2; 2.3 b). For example, in Potter's screenplay for the 1982 movie version of Brimstone, when Martin the 'devil' first appears outside the Bates' household, the script directions indicate it is his eyes which the camera should pick out, "glittering in the dark". (Brimstone and Treacle, Screenplay, Final Draft, August 23 1981 p.20. BFI Script Library)

13. The Confidence Course, Script, p.56.

14. Looking back on his first work in 1993, Potter provided some additional biographical insights into its composition. The play, he stated, was based on a visit he had made as a Daily Herald journalist to the kind of self-motivation courses run by bodies like the Dale Carnegie Institute (- the Institute later threatened law suits when it saw the play). There, he had seen various volunteers attempting to be injected with faith and confidence, in a way that reminded him of his chapel-going childhood, "except that the chapel was about something". At the same time, he stated, something deeper worried him about it: "This was about self-functioning" at a time when he himself "couldn't self-function. The people running it were saying 'We can give you confidence'". (Dennis Potter, interview, Potter on Potter, ed. by Graham Fuller, London: Faber and Faber, 1993, p.19) Hence in the play, the 'Judas' figure of the outsider, Hazlitt, is the rebel against all easy, 'chapel-like' panaceas. His desire is to undermine and destroy all simple promises of individual contentment, yet there is also a doubt as to whether it is indeed the wider society which is mad and wrong or he himself, trapped in his 'pool of gloom'. This, in turn, echoes David Mercer's work - the 'mad' axeman in For Tea on Sunday but also the figure of Morgan Delt in Mercer's earlier play, A Suitable Case for Treatment (tx. BBC-1 29.10.62). This work portrayed a main protagonist who committed 'mad' acts because he

could not live within the constraints of 'normal' bourgeois society. The question which the play posed was whether it was Delt that was truly mad or society. See Mercer, Three Television Comedies, for the published script.

15. The Confidence Course, Script, p.61.

16. Raymond Williams, "Realism and Non-Naturalism 1", The Official Programme of The Edinburgh International Television Festival 1977, August 1977, p.30. Though Williams published widely on the terms 'realism' and 'naturalism', his most succinct expression of their history and differences was contained in this paper which specifically dealt with style in television drama and the question of how to locate it within a broader history of drama. This is why particular reference is made to this paper throughout. For alternative articulations of Williams' position, however, see, for example, The Long Revolution (1961; London: Penguin, 1965); Drama from Ibsen to Brecht (1968; London: Pelican, 1973); Keywords (1976; London: Fontana, 1983) and his "A Lecture on Realism", Screen, Vol.18. No.1, Spring 1977, pp.61-74, in which he discussed The Wednesday Play, The Big Flame, in relation to the broader history of dramatic 'realism'.

17. Williams, p.32. Williams associates this 'counter-sense' with the rise of Marxism.

18. Troy Kennedy Martin, "'Nats Go Home': First Statement of a New Drama for Television", Encore, Vol.11, No.2, March-April 1964, p.21.

19. Kennedy Martin, p.24.

20. Kennedy Martin, pp.31-2.

21. Kennedy Martin, pp.26-7.

22. "Studio 4", preview, Radio Times, 18 January 1962, p.19. Studio 4, the preview announced, was going to use the resources of "one of the most modern TV studios in the world - TV Centre's Studio 4". The experimental Storyboard play slot ran from July to September 1961 on BBC TV; Studio 4 from January to April 1962 and Teletale from October to December 1963. The six-part Diary of a Young Man followed a year later and was co-written by Troy Kennedy Martin and John McGrath, co-directed by Ken Loach and Peter Duguid and produced by James McTaggart. It told the tale of two young Northerners searching for fun in 'Swinging London' and it did so through a 'visual narrative' which principally consisted of a mixture of still images and filmed scenes, overlaid by voice-over commentary.

23. Smith, Personal Interview. James MacTaggart had been brought down to London from BBC Scotland, after one of his productions (Three Ring Circus, tx. BBC TV 2.2.61) had attracted the attention of the Acting Head of BBC TV Drama, Elwyn Jones, on account of its visual flair. Once in London, MacTaggart launched the Storyboard play slot with the aim, as Smith puts it, of trying to "find out how you used television". In so doing, he attracted around him a coterie of young writers and directors, including Smith, Troy Kennedy Martin and John McGrath. Later in his career, after producing the crucial first season of The Wednesday Play, he returned to his first love of directing. Amongst other productions, MacTaggart directed Potter's 1969 play, Moonlight on the Highway (: S 2.0 a). He died in 1974.

24. Smith, Personal Interview. Formed in 1959 and continuing until 1963, the aim of the Langham Group, as enunciated by its leader Anthony Pélissier, was "to break away from the inheritance of the theatre and the cinema... and evolve something that is exclusive to the medium." (Radio Times, 11 December 1959, p.4) Though tending to be more 'high-brow' in approach, some of the methods the Group used were similar to the later "Nats Go Home" experimenters: for example, use of unrelated images and the divorcing of picture from sound. The Langham Group's first production, an adaptation of Turgenev's Torrents of Spring, was transmitted by BBC TV on 21 May 1959.

25. Kennedy Martin, p.32.

26. Thus Roger Smith, for example, recalls writing a studio play for the later Teletale called Catherine, which consisted almost entirely of voice-over narration married to images. The play was the first television work to be directed by Ken Loach and the techniques it employed had been learned from Smith's experience of adapting novels and short stories for Storyboard and Studio 4. (Smith, Personal Interview) For published reminiscences of these early experiments in 'non-naturalistic' drama, see John McGrath, "TV Drama: The Case Against Naturalism", Sight and Sound, Vol.46, No.2, Spring 1977, pp.100-105.

27. By 1964, the 'Nat boom' which the success of Look Back in Anger had spawned in theatre, cinema and television, was showing serious signs of fatigue. As the TV producer, Philip Mackie, wrote in reply to Kennedy Martin's 'manifesto': "Naturalist drama is dead. It died of a surfeit: too many too often... the third raters learned the trick of writing it and the third raters got produced too." (Philip Mackie, "Reaction", Encore, Vol.11, No.3, May-June 1964, p.42). With the style lapsing into cliché and exhaustion, this explains the timing of Kennedy Martin's assault and also why he should be so virulently against television drama's continuing links with the theatre that was putting the single TV play, with its preponderance of 'kitchen sink' dramas, in serious danger of extinction, due to falling ratings.

28. As an illustration of this, it is worth noting that when Sydney Newman appointed James MacTaggart to take charge of single plays at the BBC in April 1964, he took the unusual step of writing an open letter to him. In it, he made clear that the very existence of the single play was under threat: "It's already dead in the United States, thanks to an uncertain cost-per-thousand... Here the ITA companies' dropping Television Playhouse has reduced their single play risks by a third..." (Sydney Newman, "An Open Letter", The Listener, April 16 1964, p.623) Newman's open letter thus shows how much anxiety there was at the time that the single play was dying, due to audience boredom with 'kitchen sink' naturalism. It also explains the timing of Kennedy Martin's 'manifesto' for a new drama, published that same month. MacTaggart and his fellow experimenters were delegated the responsibility of saving the BBC single play. It became their task to reinvigorate it by coming up with new stylistic approaches and bringing in fresh writers - a process that led to the birth of The Wednesday Play and the eventual 'discovery' of Potter.

29. Troy Kennedy Martin, "Reaction", Encore, Vol.11, No.3, May-June 1964, pp.47-8. Compare Kennedy Martin's idea of 'showing the studio' with the ending of Potter's 1972 television play, Follow the Yellow Brick Road (: § 3.2). This was directed by Alan Bridges who had previously worked on Studio 4, which often used the technique of revealing the studio.

30. Kennedy Martin, "Reaction", p.48.

31. Raymond Williams, "A Lecture on Realism" Screen Vol.18, No.1, Spring 1977, p.72. Williams argues that The Wednesday Play work of Ken Loach and his producer Tony Garnett should be described less as naturalism than realism, insofar as an attempt was frequently made to introduce "a consciousness, classically defined as realism in contrast with naturalism, of the movements of history which underlie the apparent reality that is occurring". In other words, while seeking to 'document' the struggles of the working class, Loach and Garnett were clearly trying to demonstrate to the mass television audience that en masse they had the power to change not only the situations and injustices portrayed in the drama but by extension their own circumstances as well. It is this dynamic emphasis, insisting on the possibility of change, which seemed to make their work not descriptive naturalism but 'documentary realism'. Whether Loach and Garnett succeeded in their 'revolutionary' aims was the subject of much academic debate on the Left, during the seventies and early eighties. See, for example, 'the Days of Hope debate' between Colin MacCabe and Colin McArthur and John Caughie's article, "Progressive Television and Documentary Drama", usefully anthologized in Tony Bennett, Susan Boyd-Bowman, Colin Mercer and Janet Woollacott, Popular Television and Film, (London: British Film Institute, 1981), pp.302-26; 327-52.

32. This distinction between naturalism as 'descriptive' and realism as 'narrative' was first formulated by Georg Lukács in his discussion of the difference between realism and naturalism in the nineteenth century novel as being that between 'narrate' and 'describe'. See Georg Lukács, "Narrate or Describe?", Writer and Critic, (London: Merlin Press, 1970).

33. Troy Kennedy Martin, "Up the Junction and After", Contrast Vol.4, Nos.5-6, Winter 1965 - Spring 1966, p.137.

34. In contrast to the engagement with 'reality' of Loach and Garnett, Potter's work, for example, has been referred to as "the approval and celebration of the mere appearance of style and stylisation". (Caughie, "Progressive Television", p.339)

35. Williams, p.30.

36. Potter claimed "All my plays are about the same thing... They are about what goes on inside people's heads". Dennis Potter, qtd. in "Singing for Your Fiction Takes the Sting Out of Life", Profile, Sunday Times, 23 November 1986, p.27.

37. Raymond Williams, Drama From Ibsen to Brecht, (1968; London: Pelican, 1973), p.393. Williams goes on to make a further distinction between 'psychological expressionism' and what he calls the 'social expressionism' of Brecht.

38. Potter's 'non-naturalistic' plays also shared a concern to be 'anti-theatre'. For example, in Where The Buffalo Roam, a fantasy gunfight is depicted in a highly filmic way through the crosscutting of images from the main protagonist's imagination, with shots of the desolate reality of the Welsh town where he lives (: § 1.1). Thus the key Wednesday Play practitioners felt themselves to be struggling on the same side, against habituated TV naturalism. They worked together - for example, as in 1968, when Tony Garnett, Kenith Trodd, David Mercer and James MacTaggart left the BBC to form their own independent company, Kestrel Productions (: § 2.0 a).

39. Smith, Personal Interview.

40. The Confidence Course, p.12. As indicated by his decision to include an extract from The Big Sleep amongst his choice of poetry and prose for the 1976 radio broadcast, With Great Pleasure, Potter was always an admirer of the hard-boiled, cynical style of Raymond Chandler. This, of course, would receive its most definitive expression in the side-of-the-mouth voice-overs he would later give to his own version of Philip Marlowe in The Singing Detective (: § 5.3).

41. In the mid sixties, television programmes were still largely regarded as ephemeral commodities, unworthy of being archived for posterity. It was only later, as the cost of videotape began to fall, that the economic, as well as cultural, advantages of keeping a comprehensive television archive began to seem apparent. For discussion of the BBC's changing attitude to archiving and of the National Film Archive's efforts to restore a 'lost' television heritage, see, for example, Paul Madden (ed.), Keeping Television Alive: The Television Work of the National Film Archive, (London: British Film Institute, 1981). Also, for discussion of recent efforts to track down 'lost' television drama, see Robin Buss, "How Did We Let Dr. Who Go Missing?", The Independent, 28 February 1990, p.17. As indicated in the text, the script of The Confidence Course does exist and was used for this study. It was held at the BBC Television Script Unit, West Acton, London (- though due to Corporation cost-cutting, this invaluable archive resource centre has now unfortunately been closed).

42. Smith, Personal Interview.

43. For discussion of Alice, see Section 3.0.

44. Barry Norman, "What The Class Barrier Did For Dennis Potter", Daily Mail, 13 December 1965, p.9.

45. Vote, Vote, Vote won an SFTA award in 1966. That same year, the Screenwriter's Guild judged it Best Play of the Year and in an unprecedented move, gave the Runners-Up Award to Stand Up. Source: Kenith Trodd, Preview, "Emergency Ward 9", Radio Times, 7 April 1966, p.20.

46. As implemented by the 1945 Labour Government, the 1944 Butler Education Act had abolished tuition fees at state-maintained schools, raised the school-leaving age to fifteen and established a tri-partite system of secondary schools (grammar, modern and secondary modern). In this way, it was hoped the brightest working class children would progress to grammar school and later university via 'scholarships' won as a result of passing the 11-plus examination. One of the unforeseen social consequences of this, however, was the creation of a new class of 'scholarship boy' who, like Potter and his dramatic alter ego, Nigel Barton, felt separated from their origins. As Richard Hoggart outlined in The Uses of Literacy (his seminal study of the decline of working class culture), 'scholarship boys' were the "uprooted and anxious", neither belonging at home nor in their new university environment. (Richard Hoggart, The Uses of Literacy, 1957; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1959, p.292) If the publication of Hoggart's book in 1957 had helped put the plight of the 'scholarship' boy on the cultural map, by 1965 and the transmission of Potter's play, this figure had already been explored in film and theatre (- in both the stage and cinema versions of Billy Liar, for example, the main protagonist, Billy, is shown to be a former 'scholarship boy', isolated from his family through a grammar school education which

has taught him to dream of escape). The plight of the 'uprooted and anxious' had also been dramatised on television, long before Stand Up. For example, in 1960, the BBC had transmitted a TV serial written by Elaine Morgan which dealt with a miner's daughter who won a scholarship to Oxford (A Matter of Degree, tx. BBC TV 16.5.60 - 20.6.60). All of this was over and above Potter's own attempts to publicise the issue in his previous television appearances, Does Class Matter ? and Between Two Rivers (: § 0.1). Hence in Stand Up, Potter was going over an old story that had been in the headlines several year before - in contrast to his previous television efforts, returning to examine it this time from a blackly comic, authorial distance.

47. Dennis Potter, Vote, Vote, Vote for Nigel Barton, Published Script, The Nigel Barton Plays, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), p.107. This fear of Wilson's Government 'selling out' is explicitly referred to at one point by Nigel's wife, Ann, when she condemns "Labour Colonial Secretaries hobnobbing with corrupt old sheikhs. Labour Defence Ministers paying for Polaris on the never-never. Harold being buddy-buddy with Lyndon [Johnson]..." (Potter, Vote, Vote, Vote for Nigel Barton, p.90)

48. Norman, p.9; "passion and narrative power" qtd. in Trodd, Preview, "Emergency Ward 9", p.20: "Rarely have the critics greeted the work of a newcomer with such unanimous enthusiasm - welcoming 'a writer of relentless wit, passion and narrative power'".

49. The Generations was the collective title for three David Mercer plays, transmitted by BBC TV between 1961-3: Where The Difference Begins, A Climate of Fear and Birth of a Private Man. In these, Mercer sought to explore themes of class, politics and generational conflict as they affected different generations of the same family (: § 4.0). Lena, Oh My Lena (wr: Alun Owen; dir: William T. Kotcheff; prod: Sydney Newman) was an ITV Armchair Theatre production, first transmitted on 25 September 1960. Like Stand Up, it dealt with the problems of a 'scholarship boy', separated from his working class background through education. Tom (played by Peter McEnery) takes on a summer job in a warehouse in a vain attempt to return to his class roots but runs into conflict with the other workers. See Alun Owen, Three TV Plays (London: Jonathan Cape, 1961) for the published script.

50. Dennis Potter, Stand Up, Nigel Barton, Published Script, The Nigel Barton Plays, p.33.

51. Potter, Stand Up Nigel Barton, p.112.

52. Potter, Stand Up Nigel Barton, p.70.

53. Potter, Stand Up Nigel Barton, p.66.

54. Potter, Stand Up Nigel Barton, pp.72-3. "Yes. Class does matter to me...": see Introduction for comparison of Nigel's fictional interview with Potter's real interview as a student on the 1958 TV series, Does Class Matter ? (: § 0.1).

55. Potter, Stand Up Nigel Barton, p.73.

56. Potter, Stand Up Nigel Barton, p.75.

57. Potter, Stand Up Nigel Barton, p.64.

58. Potter, Vote, Vote, Vote for Nigel Barton, p.120.
59. Potter, Vote, Vote, Vote for Nigel Barton, p.123.
60. Potter, Vote, Vote, Vote for Nigel Barton, p.125.
61. Aneurin Bevan (1897-1960), of course, was the famous politician of the Labour Left who, as Minister of Health in Atlee's Government, was widely credited as instrumental in the formation of the National Health Service in 1948. According to Roger Smith, Bevan was a key influence in the formation of the young Potter's political and moral outlook: "Bevan's sense of rhetoric, of wit and also being Welsh - Potter had an enormous amount of respect for him". (Smith, Personal Interview)
62. The newsreel footage is taken from a huge rally that was held in Trafalgar Square in November 1956 to protest at the Conservative Government's actions in Suez. It was there that Aneurin Bevan gave his famous address in which he accused Sir Anthony Eden of being "too stupid to be a prime minister". In Vote, Vote, Vote, Nigel tells his political agent, "You should have heard him at that Suez demonstration... He was bloody marvellous..." (Potter, Vote, Vote, Vote for Nigel Barton, p.88) Thus Suez and Bevan's stand against Suez are shown to be the forces that politically galvanised Barton. The impact of Suez upon a younger generation would be returned to by Potter in Lay Down Your Arms and Lipstick on Your Collar (: § 2.1; Conclusion).
63. Potter, Stand Up, Nigel Barton, p.47.
64. Potter, Stand Up, Nigel Barton, p.57.
65. Gareth Davies: in contrast with the experienced director of The Confidence Course, Davies was a young Welsh director making his debut on The Wednesday Play and as such part of its active policy to encourage fresh talent onto the screen. Subsequently, he would become the most frequent director of Potter's sixties TV plays, with no fewer than nine to his credit, including not only The Nigel Bartons and Where the Buffalo Roam but also Alice and Son of Man.
66. Soundtrack, Where the Buffalo Roam, wr: Dennis Potter; dir: Gareth Davies; prod: Lionel Harris, tx. BBC-1 The Wednesday Play 2 November 1966. National Film Archive Viewing Print.
67. "The Wednesday Play: Where the Buffalo Roam", Radio Times 27 October 1966, p.38: "Abandoning Westminster for the Grand Canyon, Dennis Potter (The Nigel Barton Plays) has written a Western for tonight's Wednesday Play".
68. Philip Purser, review of Message for Posterity, The Sunday Telegraph, 7 May 1967, p.21.
69. Soundtrack, Where the Buffalo Roam.
70. Potter, Vote, Vote, Vote for Nigel Barton, p.83.
71. Potter, Vote, Vote, Vote for Nigel Barton, p.125.
72. "Temporarily broken" is how Potter's script directions describe it. (Potter, Vote, Vote, Vote for Nigel Barton, p.125)

73. Dennis Potter, Introduction, The Nigel Barton Plays (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), p.8.
74. Smith, Personal Interview.
75. Because the BBC found its videotape facilities overstretched as a result of the advent of BBC-2 in 1964, The Wednesday Play team were offered facilities to record plays in the studio on 35mm film. Prints of early Potter plays such as The Nigel Bartons and Where the Buffalo Roam were thus on 35mm film stock. See Paul Madden's interview with Ken Loach in Complete Programme Notes for discussion of the use of film in the studio and of how this gave many directors a taste for film - a taste which, in the case of Loach, led him eventually towards location shooting on 16mm film. (Madden, pp.49-50)
76. Potter, Introduction, The Nigel Barton Plays, p.17.
77. Smith, Personal Interview. Though Smith now admits that tired of institutional life, he was keen to leave the BBC in any case. The Vote, Vote, Vote controversy provided him with an excuse.
78. Sydney Newman, Personal Interview, Tape Recording, North London, 28 February 1990. As Barry Norman recorded in his Daily Mail profile of Potter in December 1965, Newman was not the only one amongst BBC management who was uneasy about the play: "Mr Paul Fox, who looks after political affairs for the Corporation, said: 'It's too accurate. It would induce cynicism about politics.' Later counsels, however, prevailed and now - as a sop, Mr Potter thinks, to himself - both Nigel Barton plays are coming on in successive weeks". (Norman, p.9) Sydney Newman may have felt 'we would get into trouble if we alienated the Labour Party' because the Wilson Government had been elected the previous October with only the slimmest of majorities. There may even have been some tacit BBC support for Labour in its 'honeymoon' period, after thirteen years out of office. This may cast light on why, after previewing Vote, Vote, Vote, one BBC executive asked Potter if he was "'some kind of fascist"' ? (Potter, Introduction, The Nigel Barton Plays, p.18)
79. Potter, Introduction, The Nigel Barton Plays, p.18.
80. Potter, Complete Programme Notes, p.35. Potter told Paul Madden in 1976: "The original ending had the candidate saying, 'If you object, write to your M.P. and the Best of British !'... [The BBC] were really objecting to the general tone of the piece, the lack of conventional respect for politics. They had to focus upon something in the play to which they could point at, and say 'We object to that' so they objected to the ending which summed it all up..." Speaking on the BBC Late Show tribute to Potter, broadcast on the night of the writer's death, the actor who played Nigel Barton, Keith Barron, asserted that Barton's closing gesture in the original ending was to have been another 'two-fingered salute'. (Keith Barron, interview, Dennis Potter: A Life in Television, tx. BBC-2 7 June 1994. Videocassette Recording.)
81. Potter, Introduction, The Nigel Barton Plays, p.13.
82. Potter, Vote, Vote, Vote for Nigel Barton, p.113.
83. Potter, Introduction, The Nigel Barton Plays, p.11.
84. Potter, Introduction, The Nigel Barton Plays, pp.13-14.

85. For further discussion of Potter's work in relation to Brecht, see Sections 5.3 b; 6.1 c and Conclusion.

86. Confirmation of this comes from Potter's 1976 interview with Paul Madden: "I suspect Stand Up, Nigel Barton is a better play than Vote, Vote, Vote for Nigel Barton because I used television techniques with more ease. Up to Vote, Vote, Vote, I was obtrusively thinking, 'How do I use television, how do I go from that scene to that scene, using television in the best way?' After that, it became second nature. I've never since had to think about the grammar of television". (Potter, Complete Programme Notes, p.36) Potter found his natural 'television grammar', once he linked scenes associatively as memories taking place inside the head of his central protagonist.

87. Potter, Stand Up, Nigel Barton, p.31. For further discussion of the use of this scene as a structuring device, see Section 3.3.

88. Dennis Potter, Personal Interview, Tape Recording, Eastbourne Mews, London, 10 May 1990. The adults as children device would later be famously used by Potter in Blue Remembered Hills (: § 3.0). In his 1976 interview with Paul Madden, he explained the origins of the use of the device in Stand Up: "I saw an advert for bread or something when I was sitting down to write, which used adults as children. Something about that ad made me think about the way I thought about my childhood and that trick of using adults as kids helped me not to romanticise childhood - little boys see other little boys as big as men, and it's terrifying." (Potter, Complete Programme Notes, p.36)

89. Potter, Complete Programme Notes, p.37.

90. Dennis Potter, "Cue Teleciné - Put On The Kettle", New Society, 22 September 1966, pp.456-57. Potter later reworked substantial portions of this article in his Introduction to The Nigel Barton Plays.

91. Potter, "Cue Teleciné", p.457. It is significant to note that here, Potter formulates the idea of television 'flow' eight years before Raymond Williams in Television: Technology and Cultural Form (London: Fontana, 1974; repr., London: Routledge, 1990).

92. Potter, "Cue Teleciné", p.457.

93. Potter, "Cue Teleciné", p.457.

94. Potter, "Cue Teleciné", p.457.

95. Potter, "Cue Teleciné", p.457.

96. With television hours to fill on the new channel, Sydney Newman had set aside a play slot that would act as a nursery slope for new writers and directors. "It had the crummiest budget", he recalls - £2000 a show. It also inherited the penchant for live studio drama that Newman had brought with him to the BBC from his time as producer of ITV's Armchair Theatre. (Newman, Personal Interview) A former New York actor, Harry Moore, was appointed the first producer of the play slot (though later his job was taken over by Graeme McDonald) while Kenith Trodd was drafted over from The Wednesday Play to become story editor. Besides established writers like his friend Potter, Trodd commissioned amongst others, Jim Allen's first single play, The Hard Word (tx. 15.6.66;

Dir: Ridley Scott) as well as Simon Gray's. The former story editor, however, remembers his time on Thirty Minute Theatre as "ridiculous" in terms of the notion of live TV drama: "It became a fetish, a fetishing past", he states. "You could only do certain things live if they were simple and therefore that kept the budget down - it was turned into a whole artistic rationale. I mean, it was nonsense... That urge to prove that television could be 'the theatre'". He clearly remembers, for example, having to console nervous actors before they went on camera and indeed he claims that during the actual transmission of Emergency Ward 9, one of the lead actors 'dried' in the middle of a long speech. (Kenith Trodd, Personal Interview, Tape Recording, BBC Television Centre, London, 8 November 1989) Meanwhile, Graeme McDonald recalls one memorable half hour broadcast: "The set fell down once... There wasn't very much we could do". (Graeme McDonald, Personal Interview, Tape Recording, Anglia Films, Central London, 1 March 1990).

97. Emergency Ward 9, BBC Camera Script, April 1966, p.2. BBC Television Script Unit. Note the striking similarities between the setting of this 'lost' little play and that of the much more famous The Singing Detective (: § 5.3 a).

98. Emergency Ward 9, Script, p.32.

99. Emergency Ward 9, Script, p.35.

100. Emergency Ward 9, Script, p.37.

101. Emergency Ward 9, Script, p.7.

102. Emergency - Ward Ten was Britain's first twice-weekly 'soap': a hospital drama, produced by ATV, that ran from 1957 to 1967. The reference to Britannia Hospital is in relation to the 1982 film of the same name, directed by Lindsay Anderson. This also played satirically with the idea of hospital as a microcosm of the 'state of the nation'.

103. Emergency Ward 9, Script, p.37.

104. Message for Posterity, BBC Camera Script, April 1967, p.55. BBC Television Script Unit.

105. James Green, "Talking TV", London Evening News, 7 September 1966, p.7.

106. Churchill's wife ordered the painting to be destroyed in 1955. It is also worth noting that Sutherland was a friend of Aneurin Bevan and his wife Jennie Lee (- it was the latter who put Sutherland's name forward to the Parliamentary Committee which had been given responsibility for commissioning the Churchill portrait). Given Potter's interest in Bevan, this may partly explain his fascination for the story. For an account of the real-life episode, see, for example, Roger Berthoud's biography, Graham Sutherland, (London: Faber and Faber, 1982).

107. Significantly, however, the play had not been intended as a Wednesday Play at all but a drama for the BBC-2 play slot, Theatre 625. Its original recording, however, had been postponed because of what the London Evening News euphemistically deemed "administrative reasons". (Green, p.7.) Instead, it was eventually decided to produce the play under the more suitable umbrella of the 'controversial' Wednesday Play and some dialogue changes were made to try and dissociate the Browning

character from the (very obvious) implication that it was Churchill. This was done by having Browning refer to Churchill at one point within the play itself. The play was finally recorded between 13 and 15 April 1967 for transmission a fortnight later. In interview, Potter remembered the production as "awful" and "badly done" and this, coupled with its anti-Establishment theme, may cast light on the reasons why a recording of Message for Posterity has not in fact been preserved for posterity. (Potter, Personal Interview)

108. Message for Posterity, Script, p.22.

109. Message for Posterity, Script, p.78.

110. Message for Posterity, Script, p.18. Hence here, art is indicated as transcending politics. Player achieves dominance in art over a member of the class that had dominated him in life.

111. Message for Posterity, Script, p.91.

112. Message for Posterity, Script, p.102.

113. Not that this play was particularly well received either: Maurice Wiggin in The Sunday Times described Potter's 'fire' as a writer "fizzling out in petulant squibs" with Shaggy Dog. (Wiggin, review, The Sunday Times, 24 November 1968, p.32)

114. London Weekend Television was then a new ITV Company that had won its franchise from the Independent Television Authority on the strength of its promise to bring 'quality' television and the cream of British talent to ITV weekend broadcasting (§ 2.0 a). As part of its agreed commitment, LWT's new Head of Plays, Arts and Music Programmes, Humphrey Burton, had come up with the idea for a series of five TV plays which each week would be performed by the same actors, along the lines of a repertory company in the theatre. Company of Five was the result: an 'all-star rep company' for TV, featuring John Neville, Gwen Watford, Ray Smith, Cyril Luckham and Ann Bell. Potter was one of five writers commissioned to write a play for this slot.

115. Shaggy Dog, LWT Rehearsal Script, April-May 1968. p.29. BFI Script Library.

116. Shaggy Dog, Script, p.31.

117. The Inheritors is set in pre-history and postulates that the emergence of homo sapiens was at the expense of the genocide of a gentler, more imaginative primate, Neanderthal Man. Hence the similarity to Potter's 'Rarys'. See William Golding, The Inheritors, (London: Faber and Faber, 1955).

118. In his column for the pre-Murdoch Sun, Potter wrote of Shaggy Dog in May 1968: "An anguished sort of comedy which was in large part written with my ball-pen strapped on to my right hand. That play... is not a masterpiece... I suspect that the stress will spill out on the page, insufficiently controlled." At the same time he asserted: "The real irony, the genuine comedy is that as a dramatist I am afflicted with the ambitions of a ravening wolf. So six years of sometimes intense physical pain, through plaster casts and plastic occlusive dressings and injections and hospital beds and mouthfuls of steroids, I have literally been sustained by one overriding, overwhelming and no doubt ludicrous

idea: the conviction that one day I will write a masterpiece." Later in this autobiographical column he went on to mention "And now the BBC have agreed that I should write a Life of Christ as a TV play." (Dennis Potter, "I Really Must Tell You I'm So Very Happy", The Sun, 13 May 1968, p.3) From this, it is possible to see how the shift from mere topical to 'grand' themes was almost a self-conscious attempt by Potter to lay down roots as a major writer and to do so in his chosen medium, television.

119. According to Potter in interview: "If you want to get thumped in the Forest of Dean which is what people from, say, Gloucester do, they go over the bridge and they say when they're drunk 'Who Killed The Bear ?' And of course the whole pub breaks up into fighting... So that story, every Forest of Dean child knows that story..." (Potter, Personal Interview)

120. Soundtrack, A Beast with Two Backs, wr: Dennis Potter; dir: Lionel Harris; prod: Graeme McDonald, tx. BBC-1 Wednesday Play, 20 November 1968. Videocassette Recording, Repeat Transmission BBC-1 4 August 1987.

121. Soundtrack, A Beast with Two Backs.

122. Soundtrack, A Beast with Two Backs.

123. Soundtrack, A Beast with Two Backs.

124. Soundtrack, A Beast with Two Backs.

125. Philip Purser, review of A Beast with Two Backs, Sunday Telegraph, 24 November 1968, p.23.

126. For example, when the Lord of The Flies 'speaks' to Simon: "'Fancy thinking the Beast was something you could hunt and kill !' said the head... 'You knew, didn't you ? I'm part of you ?... I'm the reason why it's no go ? Why things are what they are ?'" (William Golding, Lord of The Flies, 1954; London: Faber and Faber, 1985, p.158). Golding's first novel portrays the descent of a group of boys into savagery, after they become marooned on a desert island. The Lord of The Flies of the title (in fact, the head of a dead pig on a stick) becomes a metaphor for the 'beast within' the boys.

127. Henry Raynor, review of A Beast with Two Backs, The Times, 21 November 1968, p.12.

128. Stanley Reynolds, 'Beastiness', review of A Beast with Two Backs, The Guardian, 21 November 1968, p.7.

129. Immigration had grown through the sixties as a political issue. It had reached a critical point by 1968, with Enoch Powell's famous speech in which he prophesied 'Rivers of Blood' as a consequence of the large numbers of 'coloured' immigrants which had come to settle in Britain in the wake of the British Nationality Act of 1948, granting them UK citizenship.

130. Potter, Personal Interview.

131. William Shakespeare, Othello Act 1, Sc.1 ls.117-9, The Complete Works of William Shakespeare, (eds.) Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), p.822.

132. Dennis Potter, Hide and Seek, (London: André Deutsch / Quartet Books, 1973; reprint, London: Faber and Faber, 1990) p.113. (Page reference is to the reprint edition)
133. Potter, Personal Interview.
134. Soundtrack, A Beast with Two Backs.
135. Soundtrack, A Beast with Two Backs.
136. See, for example, the later Blue Remembered Hills in which an Italian in the Forest is similarly shown to be a 'bogeyman' - an illusory scapegoat for events inside the burning barn where, earlier, the 'victim', Donald, had been playing 'Happy Families' (: § 3.0).
137. "Who Killed The Bear ?", The Ross Gazette, 17 May 1945, p.2.
138. Soundtrack, Son of Man, wr: Dennis Potter; dir: Gareth Davies; prod: Graeme McDonald, tx. BBC-1 Wednesday Play, 16 April 1969. Videocassette Recording, Repeat Transmission, BBC-1 28 July 1987.
139. Soundtrack, Son of Man.
140. As the play's star, Colin Blakeley, put it in an interview with The Sunday Times: "'And it's not even a miracle. When a woman grows hysterical at one of the sermons, I didn't just take her in my arms and cure her. I asked if I could fight and wrestle with her to calm her.' (The 'Warrendale' Technique) 'And when she'd calmed down and the crowd shouted as though it was a miracle, you know it isn't. There is nothing in her face. Christ had given her nothing in exchange. It was no laying on of hands. It was a wrestling match.'" (Colin Blakeley, "The TV Christ", interview by Kenneth Pearson, The Sunday Times, 6 April 1969, p.23)
141. Dennis Potter, Son of Man: A Play, Theatre Script, (London: Samuel French, 1970), p.35. In common with Vote, Vote, Vote for Nigel Barton (staged at the Bristol Old Vic, 1968), Son of Man was subsequently produced for the stage. Its first performance was at the Phoenix Theatre, Leicester on 22 October 1969, with Frank Finlay (who would later play Potter's Casanova on TV) in the central role of Christ (: § 4.0). Potter rewrote the play for staging and this script was later published in the form indicated above. See Section 5.2 for further discussion of stage versions of Potter plays.
142. In fact, Potter said as much in a contemporary interview with the Radio Times: "In my last Wednesday Play, A Beast with Two Backs, I was expressing what I felt to be the beast in Man. Usually I see the beast. This play shows how we might behave to each other. In the past, I took the easy way out, coated everything with a black brush. Now I realise that there is light as well as shade." (Dennis Potter, "Son of Man", interview by Russell Twisk, Radio Times, 10 April 1969, p.33)
143. Soundtrack, Son of Man.
144. Potter, Son of Man, Theatre Script, p.51.
145. Soundtrack, Son of Man.
146. Potter, Radio Times p.33.

147. Michael Williams, "Son of Man", Radio Times, 29 May 1969 p.31. Because of reaction to its first showing, Son of Man received an exceptionally early repeat on June 4 1969.

148. Potter, Son of Man, Theatre Script, p.51.

149. Philip Purser, review of Son of Man, The Sunday Telegraph, 20 April 1969, p.30.

150. Dennis Potter, "A Playwright Comes Of Age", interview by Philip Purser, Sunday Telegraph Magazine, 2 April 1969, p.37.

151. There were two BBC TV slots - a discussion on the arts review programme, Late Night Line-Up, transmitted on BBC-2 on the same evening the play was first broadcast (16 April 1969). A few days later, there was also a special religious discussion between Potter and various critics and clerics, scheduled during the traditional Sunday early evening 'God slot'. This programme, Son of Man Reviewed, was transmitted on BBC-1, 20 April 1969.

152. Brian Dean, "Storm Over TV Christ", Daily Mail, 17 April 1969, p.1.; Ken Irwin, "Tough Guy Christ Shocks Viewers", Daily Mirror, 17 April 1969, p.2.; "A Quiet Reception for New Son of Man", The Guardian, 18 April 1969, p.1.

153. McDonald, Personal Interview.

154. Qtd. in "A Quiet Reception", p.1. The comments were from members of the Church of England and The Jesuits respectively.

155. Julian Critchley, "Considerable Achievement", review of Son of Man, The Times, 17 April 1969, p.14; James Thomas, "Jesus the Agitator", review of Son of Man, Daily Express, 17 April 1969, p.4; Robert Ottaway, "This Gospel of Our Times", review of Son of Man, Daily Sketch, 17 April 1969, p.20.

156. These insults of 'madman' and 'looney' seem to echo the theories of Scottish psychiatrist, R.D. Laing, whose famous formulation was that the 'mad were the only sane ones' in society. As advanced in such studies as The Divided Self and Sanity, Madness and the Family, Laing's ideas on madness and schizophrenia gained currency in the sixties and influenced many of the 'counter-culture' generation of writers and artists. Laing's chief theory was that what was deemed as madness by society was often a perfectly sane reaction to a particular situation. In order to understand a particular patient's alleged disorder, he asserted, it was necessary to examine the whole social context in which that disorder occurred. For example in the case of schizophrenia, he argued that family background often required as much investigation as the patient's mind. In this shift of the problem away from the individual and onto the wider society, Laing's ideas seemed to mesh perfectly with the attack of the sixties 'counter-culture' on dominant 'bourgeois' values. Now, the madness lay not so much with the individual but society as a whole. As a result, to be one of society's drop-outs almost became an act of mental hygiene. In terms of television drama, Laing's theories chiefly influenced David Mercer, two of whose plays for the BBC, A Suitable Case For Treatment (tx 21.10.62) and In Two Minds (tx. 1.3.67) explored this idea that what is commonly dubbed as madness may simply be a refusal to conform to external social pressures. Significantly, however, it was Potter, writing in The New Statesman in 1967, who first revealed the extent to which

Mercer had drawn on Laing's theories. Writing of In Two Minds, he stated: "it completely supported the arguments and theories of R.D. Laing". He then went on to cite material from the first volume of Laing's Sanity and Madness in the Family (1965). Hence not only Mercer but Potter was familiar with what the latter called the "major but controversial" theories of Laing. (Dennis Potter, "Sting in the Brain", review of In Two Minds, New Statesman 10 March 1967 p.338) If less obviously an easily identifiable influence to trace than in Mercer's work, it is possible to see Potter's use of 'mad' outsider heroes who expose the madness of the status quo they challenge, as providing an echo of Laing's ideas. If earlier plays carried tracemarks, it seems to be Son of Man, however, with its drop-out Christ branded a "looney" for his opposition to the 'madness' of the Roman Occupation and 'torn' by social doubt, which seems most directly to parallel the ideas of Laing. For further exposition of the psychiatrist's ideas, see, for example, Laing, The Divided Self: An Existential Study of Sanity and Madness, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965) and R.D. Laing and A. Esterson, Families of Schizophrenics, Vol.1 of Sanity, Madness and the Family, (London: Tavistock Publications, 1965).

157. Soundtrack, Son of Man.

158. Potter, "A Playwright Comes of Age", p.37.

159. Potter, "A Playwright Comes of Age", p.37.

160. See Maurice Wiggin, "Potter's Progress", review of Son of Man, The Sunday Times 20 April 1969, p.23: Judas "emerged not as a mercenary traitor but as a sympathetic liberal figure, anxious to mediate and ultimately rejected by both sides".

161. Potter, Son of Man, Theatre Script, p.34.

162. Nancy Banks-Smith, "Violent Christ According to Potter's Gospel", review of Son of Man, The Sun, 17 April 1969, p.14.

163. Ian Hamilton, "Speeches in Palestine", review of Son of Man, The Listener, 24 April 1969, p.17.

164. Dennis Potter, qtd. in "The Son of Man - But Will You Agree ?", preview, Daily Mirror, 16 April 1969, p.20; ""Son of Man Reviewed", The Sun, 21 April 1969, p.12.

165. Dennis Potter, qtd. in Richard Tydeman, "Son of Man: Improbable Attempt at the Impossible", Church of England Newspaper, 25 April 1969, p.13.

166. Potter, "A Playwright Comes of Age", p.37.

167. Potter, Stand Up, Nigel Barton, Script, p.61.

168. On 31 March 1969 (the day Hugh Carleton Greene formally resigned as BBC Director-General), Stanley Reynolds of The Guardian wrote: "When Sir Hugh Carleton Greene leaves the BBC today... what ? ... The opinion is that something awful is going to happen, that the BBC will be aiming lower. Programmes will not be daring nor artistic, nor intellectual and brother, they're going to be a lot cheaper... The middlebrows we are told, will be on the march when Sir Hugh goes..." (Stanley Reynolds, "Middlebrows on the March", The Guardian March 31 1969, p.14.)

CHAPTER TWO

1. Kenith Trodd, "In at the Birth and Death of Kestrel Productions", interview by Ann Purser, The Stage and Television Today, 25 June 1970, p.15.
2. Humphrey Burton, interview, The Media Show, tx. Channel 4, 3 February 1991. This programme traced the history of the early years of LWT and sought to draw parallels with the 1991 ITV franchise auction. For Burton, the fledgling LWT seemed to be "the Trojan horse" that was going to breach "the walls of ITV" and bring "the cultural world [he] represented to the masses". There was also, of course, more money to be made in commercial television than at the BBC, as Jimmy Hill admitted in the same programme: "At the same time, the money that was at stake was also at the back of people's minds... [You knew that] if things worked out, you were going to get rich". Burton became Head of Arts; Hill Head of Sport; Frank Muir Head of Light Entertainment and Michael Peacock Managing Director of the new company.
3. Kenith Trodd, Personal Interview, Tape Recording, BBC Television Centre, London, 8 November 1989.
4. Trodd, "In at the Birth and Death", p.15.
5. - Though Garnett and Trodd's ambitions went much further than this. In line with the general left-wing stance of both men as well as their taste for working on film, Kestrel was conceived as a collective that would produce feature films too. Trodd was to be principally responsible for the TV output and Garnett for the movie wing. The idea was to nurture and facilitate a flow of talent from one side of the operation to the other. Amongst the feature films which gained a cinema release during Kestrel's two year association with LWT were Kes (Dir: Ken Loach, 1969) and The Body (Dir: Roy Battersby, 1970). (Source: Kenith Trodd, Personal Interview, 1989)
6. Plays - Jim Allen: The Talking Head, tx. 30 August 1969; Roger Smith: An Hour of Love, tx. 1 March 1969; Colin Welland: Bangelstein's Boys, tx. 19th January 1969. (Bangelstein's Boys was Welland's debut as a television playwright).
7. For example, Martin Jackson labelled Kestrel this "now legendary band of rebel drop-outs from the BBC's Wednesday Play". (Jackson, "Biting the Social Cherry", Daily Express, 23 August 1969, p.3)
8. T.C. Worsley, "Special Cases", Financial Times, 16 April 1969, p.14.
9. The play was called The Franchise Trail (wr: Nemone Lethbridge; tx. 24 August 1968). It split the LWT Board of Management at its preview because it implied that commercial TV was a 'licence to print money'. For contemporary reports of the affair, see, for example, Ken Irwin, "A Play about ITV 'Plots' Is Dropped", Daily Mirror, 9 August 1968, p.2 and Clare Herbert, "Nemone... on the Send-Up That Was Sent Off Twice", interview with Nemone Lethbridge, Daily Sketch, 18 August 1968, p.6.
10. Mindful of accusations of bias against the film's politics, Burton arranged for the banned film to be screened to an audience of critics, producers and academics, drawn from all sides of the political spectrum. Once this privileged few had seen it, the cameras were turned on them for a live studio debate, conducted ostensibly on behalf of the mass viewing

public who had not been given such a chance. The resulting fierce row over censorship was thus aired to millions of viewers at home. Excerpts from this debate were retransmitted on Channel 4's The Media Show, 3 February 1991.

11. Kenith Trodd, interview, The Media Show, tx. 3 February 1991.

12. Trodd, "In at the Birth and Death", p.15. Twenty years later, Trodd has grown less sure. Realising with hindsight that Kestrel was Britain's first truly 'independent' drama production company, he now thinks Garnett and he should have stayed with LWT and not sold their shares. The ITV company wanted them to stay but such was the pair's idealism at the time, they decided to quit. Trodd states: "It was stupid... It was a mistake, to be pompous about it, to the television upmarket community and it was a mistake to ourselves but it was probably inevitable..." (Trodd, Personal Interview)

13. Soundtrack, Moonlight on the Highway, wr: Dennis Potter; dir: James MacTaggart; prod: Kenith Trodd; tx. ITV Saturday Night Theatre, 12 April 1969. National Film Archive Viewing Print.

Al Bowlly was perhaps the most famous British dance band crooner of the thirties: his name forever associated with the 'legendary' Lew Stone Band. See, for example, Kenith Trodd, Lew Stone: A Career in Music (London: Joyce Stone, 1971). Trodd is an acknowledged expert on the popular music of the thirties and forties and in 1968, he began recording interviews with Lew Stone for a planned biography of the musician. Stone, however, died in February 1969 before this research could be completed and so Trodd turned his book into a detailed discography and review of Stone's career, using old newspaper clippings. Given this context, it is not difficult to see how Potter's central plot idea of a young man, obsessed with the popular culture of another era, was easily arrived at.

14. Soundtrack, Moonlight.

15. Soundtrack, Moonlight.

16. Soundtrack, Moonlight.

17. Soundtrack, Moonlight.

18. Also like A Beast is the figure of an 'airy' ghostly father. Peters' father was killed by a V-2 rocket in 1945, thus linking him with Bowlly as well.

19. Paper Roses was the only Potter play produced by Trodd during his two year spell working for the Drama Department at Granada: the ITV company to which he departed in 1970 after the break-up of Kestrel. Unlike Moonlight which was predominantly recorded in the studio on videotape, Paper Roses was filmed on location at the offices of the Manchester Guardian in Deansgate, just prior to their demolition in October 1970 (Source: Barry Davis, Personal Interview, Tape Recording, BBC Scotland, Glasgow, 1 May 1990)

20. Paper Roses, Rehearsal Script, p.13. BFI Script Library.

21. Paper Roses, Script, p.19.

22. Paper Roses, Script, p.97.

23. Paper Roses, Script, p.99.
24. Paper Roses, Script, p.103.
25. William Shakespeare, King Lear, Act 1, Sc.4, l.131, The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (eds.) Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988) p.932.
26. For example, in King Lear, Edgar points up the hero's greatness when he comments of Lear that "We that are young / Shall never see so much nor live so long" (Act 5, Sc.3, ls.293-4, The Complete Works, p.974) Similarly, Fortinbras in Hamlet: "Let four captains / Bear Hamlet like a soldier to the stage. / For he was likely, had he been put on, / To have proved most royal..." (Act 5, Sc.2, ls.350-2, The Complete Works, p.688)
27. Trodd, Personal Interview.
28. "Lay Down Your Arms" charted on 24 August 1956 and eventually went to No.1, staying in the charts that summer for fourteen weeks (Source: Tim Rice, Jo Rice, Paul Gambaccini and Mike Read, Guinness Book of British Hit Singles, London: GRRR Books Ltd., 1984, p.197) Its chorus, "Lay Down Your Arms / And Come Over To Mine", with its ambiguous playing upon images of love and war, draws attention to the nature of Hawk's own personal conflicts in the play.
29. Dennis Potter, Personal Interview, Tape Recording, Eastbourne Mews, London, 10 May 1990. Kenith Trodd likens it all to a "squalid" exercise in which tracing the movements of British agents could provide evidence of double-agentry: "... If you matched certain codes or nicknames up, there was an ominous prospect for the owner of that code..." (Trodd, Personal Interview).
30. Soundtrack, Lay Down Your Arms, wr: Dennis Potter; dir: Christopher Morahan; prod: Kenith Trodd; tx. ITV Saturday Night Theatre, 23 May 1970. National Film Archive Viewing Print.
31. Soundtrack, Lay Down Your Arms.
32. Soundtrack, Lay Down Your Arms.
33. Soundtrack, Lay Down Your Arms.
34. On first transmission, the play was widely praised by the TV critics of the British press. James Thomas of the Daily Express hailed it as "stunning" whilst Christopher Dunkley of The Times thought it "a superbly persuasive portrait made vividly real by one of the best performances Mr. [John] Le Mesurier has ever given". (James Thomas, "The Stunning Story of a Spy Who Was Loaded", review of Traitor, Daily Express, 15 October 1971 p.10; Christopher Dunkley, review, The Times, 15 October 1971, p.12) Le Mesurier subsequently went on to win a British Academy Award for his performance in Traitor.
35. Many of these details echo the biographical facts of Kim Philby: Harris' involvement in the murder of a Russian defector in Helsinki closely parallels Philby's alleged involvement in a similar murder in Istanbul. Philby's father was also an archaeologist like Harris', with a reputation for being something of a romantic and eccentric. Before going to public school in England, Philby toured with his father around India and the Middle East. Most revealing is a comparison with the name Potter

gives his fictional traitor. The real Philby was christened Harold Adrian Christopher (: 'Kim' being a nickname given to him as a child in India). For the name 'Adrian Harris', Potter appears to have taken Philby's first two Christian names and reversed them. Akin to Potter's analysis of Harris in Traitor, the historian Hugh Trevor-Roper has suggested in a television documentary that Philby's betrayal of England was "a kind of romanticism, a kind of desire for adventure, keeping up with his father who was an eccentric". (Hugh Trevor-Roper, interview, Cutting Edge: Comrade Philby, tx. Channel 4, 14 May 1990).

36. Soundtrack, Traitor, wr: Dennis Potter; dir: Alan Bridges; prod: Graeme MacDonald; tx. BBC-1 Play for Today 14 October 1971. Videocassette Recording, Repeat Transmission BBC-1 21 July 1987.

In an interview for BBC-2's Late Night Line-Up, transmitted on the same evening as Traitor, Potter stated: "You know... I suggested enough reasons why there are psychological motivations pushing such a man this way. But also allowing him to say - 'I did what I did because of what I believed'. And we must always accept this about a man..." (Dennis Potter, Interview, Late Night Line-Up, tx. BBC-2 14 October 1971. Transcript BBC Written Archives, Caversham).

37. Dennis Potter, Interview, Late Night Line-Up, tx. BBC-2 14 October 1971. Transcript BBC Written Archives, Caversham.

38. Soundtrack, Traitor.

39. Soundtrack, Traitor.

40. On Late Night Line-Up, Potter was keen to dispel suggestions that the fictional Harris bore any special relationship to Kim Philby: "Not really - not directly. I mean I don't know anything more about Kim Philby than newspaper headlines... I wouldn't wish it to be located and pinned down upon a real person whose motives I wouldn't understand necessarily... I wouldn't presume to do it with a real person living now with all his emotions still intact."

41. Soundtrack, Traitor.

42. Dennis Potter, interview by Graham Fuller, American Film, March 1989, p.33.

43. Following its transmission, a somewhat chastened Potter summarised the critical reaction in his weekly column for the pre-Murdoch Sun:

Sour. Malicious. Full of Hatred. Bilioous. Venomous. Crude. Spiteful... That's me apparently... One of the happy scribes went so far as to claim that I hate everyone and everything except coalminers !... Oh God - I have just read Philip Purser in yesterday's Sunday Telegraph: 'I wonder if a case could not be brought against Dennis Potter and Rediffusion under the Race Relations Act - for discrimination against the Human Race... On any level it was unbelievably vulgar and spiteful'...

The author went on to use his newspaper column of that week as a platform for a kind of apology: "Reluctantly, I have to acknowledge complete and utter failure", he wrote. "I was deeply ashamed of the play and therefore ashamed of myself".

(Dennis Potter, "Writer Exposed", The Sun, 20 May 1968, p.13)

44. Soundtrack, The Bonegrinder, wr: Dennis Potter; dir: Joan Kemp-Welch; exec prod: Peter Willes; tx. ITV Playhouse 13 May 1968. National Film Archive Viewing Print.

45. Soundtrack, The Bonegrinder.

46. As a comic allegory of the decline of England, the play continues the theme of the relative merits and demerits of an Imperial past versus post-war consumer capitalism, which Potter explored in Emergency Ward 9 and tangentially, Message for Posterity (: § 1.2). It is for this reason the play was widely construed by the critics as misanthropic since it seems Potter does not have a good word to say about any of the archetypes he works up to illustrate his ideas. 'Uncle Sam' is portrayed as loud and vulgar, an invading 'foreigner' against whom 'King George' must defend himself. As the title of the play suggests, the latter has to be a veritable Jack the Giant Killer against Sam. Meanwhile, English life, in the shape of George and Gladys, is shown to be riddled with hypocrisy and repression hidden beneath a veneer of polite respectability; a veneer which the play shows to be impotent in the face of national decline and the encroachment of a harsher set of values in a radically altered post-war world.

47. Dennis Potter, interview by Stanley Reynolds, The Guardian, 16 February 1973, p.11.

48. In that sense, Sam becomes the outsider who is 'really inside George's head'. The play hints at this when, prior to Sam's invasion of their home, George reveals the extent of his guilt and paranoia to Gladys: "Didn't hear me get out of bed last night, did you?... Didn't see me pull aside the net curtains? Oh, you sleep very well, my pigeon. Very, very well... Man stands outside as quiet as a mouse... The man at the corner. Who stands under a tree. An American... He's watching me. He's after me." (Soundtrack, The Bonegrinder).

49. The Wednesday Play mutated into Play for Today in October 1970, when it gained a new Thursday time-slot. As Shaun Sutton, the new Head of BBC TV Drama, made clear at the time, the change was in order to try to win new audiences for the single play. (See, for example, his written replies to viewers' letters of concern over the change of time-slot in "Yes There is a Future for the Television Play", Radio Times, 8 October 1970, p.64). Many of the Wednesday Play's old champions, however, worried that this was an end of an era; an attempt by BBC management to mute the troublesome voices of single play drama. For example, Stanley Reynolds of The Guardian believed "the Establishment" were "always against" The Wednesday Play and that this was why it was killed off. (Reynolds, "Censored Drama", The Guardian, 27 February 1969, p.11) The BBC thus had to go some way to reassure doubters of its continuing commitment to boldness and experimentation within the single play. One of the ways it did this was to promote the new play slot through a four page feature spread in the Radio Times, containing interviews with some of the most prominent writers recruited for the new season, including John Osborne (wr: The Right Prospectus tx. 21.10.70); Clive Exton, and Potter himself. (See "Men with Something to Say", Radio Times, 8 October 1970, pp.64-8).

Angels is also historically significant because it was the first of Potter's BBC plays to be recorded in colour but the last to be directed by Gareth Davies - the man who had brought eight of Potter's previous thirteen plays to the screen, including The Nigel Barton Plays and Son of Man. According to Potter, the break with Davies came after the latter turned down Moonlight on the Highway. One further clue may lie in

Potter's comment that Angels was "appallingly directed... You could see actors searching for their eyelines.." This may also help explain why, two years later, Potter chose to rework a substantial part of Angels within a new work: Only Make Believe, directed by Robert Knights. (Potter, Personal Interview) (: § 3.2).

50. Angels Are So Few, Camera Script, p.32. BBC Television Script Unit.

51. Dennis Potter, "Son of Man", interview by Russell Twisk, Radio Times, April 10 1969, p.33.

52. Dennis Potter, qtd. in Richard Tydeman, "Son of Man: Improbable Attempt at the Impossible", Church of England newspaper, April 25 1969, p.13.

53. Angels, Script, p.43.

54. In Potter's first novel, Hide and Seek, this same image of a child in peril of 'falling' recurs (: § 3.1). The innocent 'rary' in Shaggy Dog, which jumps from a cliff before it is pushed, also echoes this (: § 1.2).

55. Angels, Script, p.47.

56. Angels, Script, p.70.

57. Angels, Script, p.73.

58. Angels, Script, p.69.

59. Angels, Script, p.87.

60. The play is listed as a 'Fable for Television' in Gordon Burn, "Television Is the Only Medium that Counts", interview with Dennis Potter, Radio Times, 8 October 1970, p.66.

61. Dennis Potter, "Television Is the Only Medium...", interview, p.67. Angels was in fact written for Potter's friend, Roger Smith - the 'angel' who had visited 'Opportunity and Redemption' upon the writer by commissioning him to write his very first play, The Confidence Course (: § 1.0 a). The idea was that Smith (who had acted with Potter at Oxford) would play the part of Biddle. Due to his not having an Equity Card, however, that eventually could not happen and so the part was taken by Tom Bell. Interestingly, Kenith Trodd sees the figure of Biddle as "a metaphor for the 'everything by starts but nothing won' quality" of Smith who had "a great ability not to stick to anything very much, who was always in and out of people's lives and... in and out of political movements..." (Trodd, Personal Interview) The figure of Smith thus became a convenient focus for the central idea explored in the play of life ripping one's 'wings' off; of passionate belief being painfully undermined by experience of the 'real world'.

62. Schmoedipus, Camera Script, pp.50-1. BBC Television Script Unit.

63. Schmoedipus, Script, p.62.

64. Schmoedipus, Script, p.23.

65. Schmoedipus, Script, p.88.

66. Schmoedipus, Script, p.84.
67. Schmoedipus, Script, pp.94-5.
68. Schmoedipus, Script, p.99.
69. Dennis Potter, Introduction to Joe's Ark, Waiting for the Boat, On Television, (London: Faber and Faber, 1984), p.89. In 1984, Faber and Faber published three of Potter's old television scripts - Blue Remembered Hills, Joe's Ark and Cream in My Coffee - in a single volume, with a general preface (dated June 1983) and specific introduction to each one by the author.
70. Potter, "Some Sort of Preface...", Waiting for the Boat, p.20. One review for The Daily Telegraph, for example, labelled Joe's Ark "an honest attempt to articulate the unspeakable human reaction to death". Quoted in listing for Joe's Ark (repeat transmission 7 July 1987), Radio Times, 4 - 10 July 1987, p.50.
71. Dennis Potter, Introduction, Brimstone and Treacle (London: Eyre Methuen, 1978), p.3.
72. Potter, Joe's Ark, Waiting for the Boat, p.110.
73. Potter, Joe's Ark, p.99.
74. Potter, Joe's Ark, p.125.
75. Potter, Joe's Ark, p.129.
76. Potter, Joe's Ark, p.130.
77. For example, Lucy, earlier in the play, told the student John: "His Christianity survived the death of my mother and the defection of my brother, but not this, I think". (Potter, Joe's Ark, p.104)
78. See later discussion of Pennies From Heaven for development of this image. It is most simply summed up in the animated opening titles for the movie version of Pennies in which the camera pans over a cloud-covered sky to reveal the sun still shining behind (: § 4.1 c; 4.1 d).
79. The dénouement of Joe's Ark is balanced on a knife-edge between conflicting possibilities. Akin to the later Pennies, the play suggests the discovery of significance is all a question of from which perspective one chooses to look (: § 4.1 c). As Potter has put it, "A preacher would say, 'Yes, there is significance'. An atheist would say, 'No, that is simply a human lie; it has no meaning at all. There's just oblivion and you have to accept it - that's the way things are'. I could have written the play from either angle. In my opinion, though, it would have been less interesting written from either angle - somewhere in the tension between possibilities is where drama lives, without one saying, 'Oh, it meant this and it meant that'. It can mean 'this' and 'that' at the same time". (Graham Fuller, [ed.], Potter on Potter, London: Faber and Faber, 1993, p.49)
80. Potter, "Some Sort of Preface...", Waiting for the Boat, p.20. As an illustration of the conflicting readings which the play purposively sustains, it is worth comparing this optimistic slant with comments Potter made on the play several years earlier (in 1978), in which he

stated that when Lucy dies, "her father capitulates again to the old hope... not as a triumph of faith, nor as a sudden widening of his moral and intellectual capacities, but simply as a banal regression to 'comfort' that lies too shallow for thought". (Introduction, Brimstone, p.3)

81. Potter, Introduction, Brimstone, p.3.

82. Potter, Introduction, Brimstone, p.2.

83. Published in 1907, Father and Son is a classic statement of the rebellion of twentieth century sons against Victorian fathers. Its author, Edmund Gosse was a literary critic who became associated with the modernist movement. In his memoir, he charts his growing estrangement from the religious fundamentalism of his father; a rebellion which, ultimately, can be read as that of the twentieth century against the nineteenth; of a new secular relativism overthrowing the authoritarianism of Victorian values. Hence one can see the memoir's many points of interest to Potter: childhood; the nature of autobiography; the legacy of literary modernism; the relationship between a son and a father. Above all, there is the question of how to redefine spirituality in a modern age, in terms of an overthrowing of religious literalism in favour of a new emphasis on the centrality of literature and metaphor. See Gosse, Father and Son, (London: J.M. Dent, 1907).

84. For Gosse senior, the key to the problem lies in Adam's navel. As he tells one of his fellow naturalists, "Adam had a navel though he came from no womb" because God intended him to serve as a model for the human race. Life is a reproductive cycle. Genesis, however, was a breaking into that circle in which God made it appear that all living things had a history: "This means that where Adam stood he would see all around him the stigmata, so to speak, of a pre-existent existence. On the trunk of a tree. From his own stomach. From the fossils on the rocks that make them seem so very, very old even to Adam himself..." (Phillip Gosse, Soundtrack, Where Adam Stood; wr: Dennis Potter; dir: Brian Gibson; prod: Kenith Trodd, tx. BBC-2 21 April 1976. Videocassette Recording, Repeat Transmission, 30 June 1987).

85. Soundtrack, Where Adam Stood.

86. Soundtrack, Where Adam Stood.

87. Soundtrack, Where Adam Stood. It is important to note how, in line with his own interests, Potter has completely transformed this incident from one mentioned in passing by Edmund Gosse in Father and Son. In the book, Gosse recalls how, as a child, he was momentarily abducted by a mad woman called Mary Flaw - a member of his father's religious sect who seized him one Sunday in Church. A few minutes later, the boy was found sitting on the doorstep of the village butcher, unharmed. (Father and Son, p.83)

88. Soundtrack, Where Adam Stood.

89. Soundtrack, Where Adam Stood.

90. Potter, Personal Interview.

91. The Oxford English Dictionary defines 'Brimstone and Treacle' as an "old fashioned prescription consisting of sulphur and treacle; a medical compound composed of many ingredients and an antidote to venomous bites,

poisons generally and malignant disease..." The metaphor thus extends not only to the 'religious' content of the work which Potter sugars for popular TV consumption but also to Martin the demon's unorthodox 'cure' for Pattie in the play. The idea of a cure for malignant disease also clearly relates to Potter's 'upward movement' in his struggle against his own disease and the attendant 'spiritual' questions which this raised.

92. Soundtrack, Brimstone and Treacle, wr: Dennis Potter; dir: Barry Davis; prod: Kenith Trodd, BBC TV Play for Today tx. BBC-1 25 August 1987. Videocassette Recording.

93. Soundtrack, Brimstone.

94. Potter, Introduction, Brimstone (1978), p.4.

95. Soundtrack, Brimstone (tx. 1987).

96. Potter, Personal Interview.

97. Though only implicit in the TV play, when Potter wrote the screenplay for the feature film version of Brimstone (released in 1982), he brought out this aspect much more explicitly in one of the relatively few rewrites of the original (: § 5.2). In the film, Bates is at one point seen lying awake in bed remembering the fateful events that led to his sexual discovery and his daughter's subsequent accident. The circumstances are different from the TV version - Pattie bursts into Bates' office where she catches him in flagrante delicto with his middle-aged secretary (who is wearing a school-girl outfit). Cross-cut with these memories are images of Bates 'imagining' his daughter making love to Martin in the next room. (Brimstone and Treacle, Screenplay, Final Draft (August Revised), 9 October 1981, p.46. BFI Script Library)

98. Potter, Personal Interview.

99. Potter, Personal Interview.

100. Soundtrack, Double Dare, wr: Dennis Potter; dir: John McKenzie; prod: Kenith Trodd; tx. BBC-1 Play for Today 6 April 1976. National Film Archive Viewing Print.

101. Soundtrack, Double Dare. The advert which the play parodies is the famous Cadbury's "Milk Flake" campaign, dating from the 1970s, in which a woman would invariably be seen in a seductive pose, biting into a "Milk Flake". The motif was returned to in Blackeyes where the eponymous heroine is also seen advertising a 'Fraggie Bar' (: § 6.1 d). In Double Dare, Potter was also homing in on the increasing explicitness of the sexual depiction of women, asking how far this 'daring' on the part of male directors and writers would or should go. As he commented at the time of the play's transmission, "The way things are going, in a few years time actresses will be required to copulate on the stage". (Dennis Potter, "What the Devil Are They Playing At ?", interview by James Murray, Daily Express, 29 March 1976, p.6)

102. Soundtrack, Double Dare. As this shows, the 'proto-feminist' concerns around the sexual exploitation and commodification of women which Potter would later articulate in Blackeyes, were already visible at the time of Double Dare. This helps explain the referencing of Double Dare in Blackeyes (: § 6.1 d).

103. Soundtrack, Double Dare.

104. Dennis Potter, qtd. in Peter Fiddick, "Writ Sought Against the BBC", The Guardian, 24 March 1976, p.2: "The director of each play has read the other two and the three directors have discussed them together... They are not a formal trilogy but they all occupy the same territory".

Significantly, Potter was keen to play down any special relationship between them when I interviewed him in 1990, claiming "they were as a trilogy allegedly" but that he had given "more specific reasons than actually existed" because "it was another argument against banning one of the three..." He asserted such a connection as the main protagonists of Brimstone and Double Dare sharing the same Christian name of 'Martin' was simply because he was "lazy" about names: "... Just that the landlord of 'The Globe' Inn at Berry Hill, his surname was Martin and it's as simple as that, you know..." (Potter, Personal Interview).

Brimstone's director, Barry Davis, contradicts the randomness of this position. Davis asserts: "He's a great structuralist is Dennis. He doesn't think in one-act plays. All my conversations with him were about... plays leaning on each other". The idea was that Brimstone and Double Dare would each turn on sexual assault - in one, it would act as a means of release and liberation; in the other, precisely the opposite. (Davis, Personal Interview)

Hence given the connections which both Davis and my own reading of the works seem to confirm, the plays do appear to occupy a similar territory. Potter's denials of this are thus significant. They illustrate the point outlined in the Introduction of how much opinions given by an author in interview about his own work must always be carefully scrutinised against other available evidence (: S 0.0 a). Particularly with Potter, evasions may be going on in terms of a desire that the critic never be allowed to find out too much about the work. Indeed Potter's extreme reluctance to confirm any links between them paradoxically serves to underline the importance of the plays to the progression of his writing as a whole. As he put it: "When under attack at the time of Brimstone, I make sure that the connections of Brimstone to the other work are seen in order to defend Brimstone - flushed out by being attacked... I will then start showing my hand a little bit more but normally I would prefer not to show it..." (Potter, Personal Interview).

105. Davis, Personal Interview.

106. Potter, Introduction, Brimstone (1978), p.1: "... I was not called in to the shabby dream-palace in undisturbed Shepherd's Bush for any discussion or any further elucidation of the reasons for such a drastic (and wasteful) exercise of executive power. It would have been interesting to find out whether there was any rationale about the relationship between what is regularly transmitted and the audience response to it: 'ratings' tell us next to nothing".

107. Alasdair Milne, Personal Interview, Tape Recording, Holland Park, London, 5 March 1990.

108. Kenith Trodd, qtd. in Barry Powell, "Rape Row Threat to £ 300 000 TV Plays", News of the World, 28 March 1976, p.8. Trodd stated that "everyone from Ian Trethowan [managing director of BBC TV] down" had seen the script. One explanation for this lack of action comes from Alasdair Milne's comment in interview, that such was Potter's reputation by this time, management "trusted him anyway". (Milne, Personal Interview)

109. Milne, Personal Interview. The article was by Robert Cushman: "Dennis Potter: The Values of a Playwright", Radio Times, 3 - 9 April 1976, pp.61-5.
110. Milne, Personal Interview.
111. Alasdair Milne, qtd. in Dennis Potter, "A Note from Mr. Milne", New Statesman, 23 April 1976, p.648. Potter used his TV column for the New Statesman that week to quote the letter in full and to give his own riposte to the banning of Brimstone.
112. Davis, Personal Interview.
113. For example, see Peter Fiddick, review / report on the banned Brimstone and Treacle, The Guardian, 22 March 1976, p.5; Sean-Day Lewis, "Will the Devil Get His Due ?", review of Brimstone and Treacle, The Daily Telegraph, 5 April 1976, p.12.
114. "Potter Will Try to Stop Showing of His Plays", The Stage and Television Today, 25 March 1976, p.17. In this article, Potter was quoted as saying "Both I and Kenith Trodd have asked for our names to be taken off the credits of Double Dare and have consulted solicitors to see if it is possible to get an injunction against the BBC before this week, restraining them from showing either of the other two plays".
115. Milne, Personal Interview: "I asked what Double Dare was like and they said it's pretty sexy but it's very interesting. So I said, what else have you got and they said nothing - this is the way things go on sometimes, you know. What else have you got ready ? Nothing. OK, well get something else for next week and bring Double Dare up to this week. That's just pragmatic kind of transmission patterns..."
116. Dennis Potter, qtd. in "Potter Will Try to Stop...", p.17.
117. Potter, "A Note from Mr. Milne", p.548.
118. John Caughie, "Progressive Television and Documentary Drama", Popular Television and Film (eds.) Tony Bennett, Susan Boyd-Bowman, Colin Mercer and Janet Woollacott (London: British Film Institute in association with Open University Press, 1981), p.328. Caughie's article was first published in Screen, Vol.21, No.3, 1980, pp.9-35.
119. Caughie, p.333.
120. Milne, Personal Interview.
121. Trodd, Personal Interview.
122. Indeed as the London listings magazine, Time Out, asked at the time, with Brimstone, it is really a case of "What rape scene ?" ("Television: Selections - Cowgill Beefs", Time Out, 26 March - 1 April 1976, p.17) The two instances of sexual assault are both implied in the TV play, never depicted: the director always moving into a tight close-up of Martin's face. In addition, both the director and producer had wished the play's original transmission to be preceded by a strong advance warning, foreshadowing the nature of its content to the audience. (Fiddick, The Guardian, 22 March 1976, p.5). Meanwhile, if all that were not enough, Potter, within the play itself, even provides his own warning by having his demon directly address viewers, prior to the first rape of Pattie:

If you are a nervous type out there,
Switch over or off for some calmer air,
But you'd have to be smug or very frail,
To believe that no man has a horn or tail.

(Soundtrack, Brimstone, [tx. 1987])

123. Caughie, p.329.

124. Caughie, p.332.

125. Caughie, p.330.

126. Davis, Personal Interview.

127. There are two ironic postscripts to the whole affair. In the years immediately following the ban, Potter and Trodd did everything in their power to bring Brimstone to as wide an audience as possible by reworking the TV script into a number of different versions for different media. Potter rewrote the play for the theatre and the resulting stage version was premiered at the Sheffield Crucible Theatre in October 1977. A run in the London West End followed in 1978 and in that same year, Potter's theatre script was published. A year earlier, a tape of Brimstone had been screened at the Edinburgh Television Festival and so incensed were delegates at the ban, they sent a telegram to Alasdair Milne in protest. Four years later, in 1981, Potter reworked the material into a feature film script. Released the following year, this was produced by Trodd and starred the rock star Sting as Martin Taylor (: § 5.2). Finally, in 1987, the BBC 'unbanned' Brimstone and transmitted it as part of a summer retrospective season of Potter work. Undoubtedly, this decision had much to do with the fact that earlier that same year, Alasdair Milne had departed from the Corporation under a cloud, having effectively been dismissed as BBC Director-General by the Corporation's Board of Governors. With its original 'censor' gone, it was thus at last politically expedient for the Corporation to broadcast the play. If the devil finally had the last laugh, Milne himself provides the second ironic postscript to the whole affair. He states that once all the heat over the original Brimstone banning had died down, he met Potter for a drink six months later. According to Milne: "I said 'I was sorry about Brimstone but as I've said to you, that was my view of it'. [Potter] said, 'Well, I think you're mad'. But we had a drink together..." (Milne, Personal Interview) The mutually self-sustaining relationship between the 'creative' and 'official' had thus been harmonised once more. Necessary for the long-term future of both sides, Brimstone and Treacle had faded into just one of the acceptable risks the artist runs in dealing with the broadcasting institution.

128. Trodd, Personal Interview.

129. Trodd, Personal Interview.

130. Though Trodd recalls, Potter, for one, telling him 'just to keep his head down' (Personal Interview).

131. Trodd, Personal Interview.

132. Ian Trethowan, qtd. in Mike Hollingsworth and Richard Norton-Taylor, Blacklist, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), p.116.

133. Hollingsworth and Norton-Taylor, p.98. The authors also quote the then Head of BBC TV Drama, Shaun Sutton, to the effect that this was "part of the same network of corridors on which George Orwell modelled the Ministry of Truth in Nineteen Eighty-Four." (Blacklist, p.99)
134. Milne, Personal Interview.
135. Milne, Personal Interview.
136. Potter, "A Note from Mr. Milne", p.549.
137. Qtd. in "Banned by the BBC - Then the Show Wins a Top Award for Their Rivals", Daily Mail, 27 March 1976, p.6.
138. Trodd, Personal Interview.
139. Dennis Potter, qtd. in "Banned by the BBC", p.6.
140. Dennis Potter, "The Values of a Playwright", interview by Robert Cushman, p.62.
141. Dennis Potter, "God Does Not Let Us See Him Because There's a Grin on His Face as He Looks Down on Our Antics", interview by James Murray, Daily Express, 22 May 1976, p.14.
142. Dennis Potter, qtd. in Day-Lewis, "Will the Devil Get His Due ?", p.12.
143. All six 'tales' were produced by Irene Shubik. The idea behind the series was to give six established television playwrights a Hardy short story each to adapt for the medium. Other writers asked to contribute were David Mercer and Douglas Livingstone. See "The Kind of Stories That Countrymen Tell", preview of Wessex Tales, Radio Times, 1 November 1973, pp.79-85.
144. Dennis Potter, interview, "The Kind of Stories...", p.83.
145. Potter, "The Kind of Stories...", p.83.
146. Betty Willingale. Letter to the author. 4 July 1990. After the original producer, Martin Lisemore, was killed in a car crash, the new Head of BBC TV Serials, Graeme McDonald, offered this job to Jonathan Powell. Mayor was also notable for being the first BBC Drama to be shot on location using new light-weight outside broadcast equipment. Instead of having to use film for location work, as had previously been the case, the director, David Giles, was free for the first time to record on videotape outside the TV studio.
147. Potter exploited the connection in 1991 when he cast the leading actor of Mayor, Alan Bates, in Secret Friends: the film version of his novel, Ticket to Ride. This concerns a man who begins to confuse his wife with a prostitute (: § Conclusion).
148. Dennis Potter, "Wrestling with a Vision", interview with Joan Bakewell, The Sunday Times Magazine, 14 November 1976, p.70.
149. Angus Wilson, interview by D.A.N. Jones, Radio Times, 27 February 1975, p.3.

150. Potter, "The Kind of Stories...", p.83. Though twenty years later, Potter would claim that what is more interesting about adaptations is "if that other ground that someone has occupied happens here and there to nudge something in the top right-hand or left-hand corner of yourself. Then it's more likely a so-called adaptation will work". (Fuller, [ed.], Potter on Potter, p.68) This is certainly the case with Late Call (: § 3.0).
151. Milne, Personal Interview.
152. Milne, Personal Interview.
153. Dennis Potter, qtd. in "PFH Will Now Produce Six Potter Plays with LWT", The Stage and Television Today, 24 May 1979, p.18. See Chapter Five for extended discussion of Potter's 'defection' to LWT (: § 5.0).
154. Milne, Personal Interview.
155. Dennis Potter, interview, Anno Domini, tx. BBC-1 13 February 1977. Transcript, BBC Written Archives, Caversham.
156. Potter, Introduction, Brimstone (1978), p.4.
157. Potter, Anno Domini.
158. Potter, Brimstone (1978), p.4.
159. Dennis Potter, radio talk, And with No Language but a Cry, tx. BBC Radio 4, 27 December 1976. Transcript, BBC Written Archives, Caversham. In the same broadcast, Potter declared: "... Although I yearn for God... I find the word 'God' and the words 'Jesus Christ' in my mouth a genuine embarrassment. My tongue feels only a sliver away from cant and sanctimoniousness".
160. Potter, Anno Domini.
161. Potter, And with No Language.
162. Dennis Potter, interview, Tonight, tx. BBC-1 7 November 1977. Transcript, BBC Written Archives, Caversham.
163. Potter, Anno Domini.

CHAPTER THREE

1. Dennis Potter, radio talk, A Christmas Forest, tx. BBC Radio 4, 26 December 1977.
2. Angus Wilson, Late Call, (London: Secker and Warburg, 1964), p.12.
3. Soundtrack, Episode Three, Late Call, ad: Dennis Potter (from the novel by Angus Wilson); dir: Philip Dudley; prod: Ken Riddington; tx. BBC-2 15 March 1975. Videocassette Recording, National Film Archive.
4. See Chapter Six for discussion of the influence of Nabokov on Potter. At one point in a flashback scene in the original scripts for Blackeyes, Jessica is described as a child, asleep in her uncle Kingsley's car: "her dress reeved up like a little Lolita". (Blackeyes, Episode Four, Television Scripts, Septembe 1988, p.34. Courtesy, Rick McCallum)
5. Soundtrack, Alice, wr: Dennis Potter; dir: Gareth Davies; prod: James MacTaggart; tx. BBC-1 The Wednesday Play 13 October 1965. National Film Archive Viewing Print.
6. This is based on historical fact. The 'golden afternoon' was 4 July 1862 and it became the influence for the Alice books. In Alice in Wonderland, Carroll / Dodgson appends some prefatory verses to the text which make this clear:

All in the golden afternoon
Full leisurely we glide,
For both our oars, with little skill,
By little arms are plied.

(Lewis Carroll, Alice in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass, 1865; London: J.M. Dent, 1965, p.81)

7. Soundtrack, Alice.
8. Soundtrack, Alice.
9. The phrase 'dream-child' comes from Dodgson / Carroll's prefatory poem in Alice in Wonderland. He uses it to describe his fictional version of Alice Liddell, as the children in the rowing boat that 'golden afternoon' listen to the story of her adventures:

Anon, to sudden silence won,
In fancy they pursue,
The dream-child moving through a land,
Of wonders wild and new,
In friendly chat with bird or beast -
And half-believe it true.

(Carroll, Alice in Wonderland, p.81)

The elderly Alice Hargreaves' "Recollections of Carrollian Days" were published in Columbia University's The Cornhill Review, July, 1932.

10. Dreamchild, Original Screenplay, 26 April 1983, p.35. Courtesy, Gavin Millar.

11. In Moonlight on the Highway, Ian Holm was cast as the victim of child abuse (: § 2.0 a). In Dreamchild, he becomes the potential abuser.
12. Dreamchild, Screenplay, pp.93-4. The story-book characters of Alice in Wonderland were portrayed in the film not by real actors but life-size puppets, provided by Jim Henson's Creatures Workshop.
13. Dreamchild, Screenplay, p.137.
14. A.E. Housman, "Into my heart an air that kills", qtd. in Dennis Potter, Blue Remembered Hills, Waiting for the Boat, On Television, (London: Faber and Faber, 1984), p.85. Housman's untitled two verse poem comes from his collection, A Shropshire Lad (London: Harrap, 1940).
15. Blue Remembered Hills has been repeated no fewer than three times on British television. First transmitted BBC-1 Play for Today 30 January 1979, it was repeated a year later on 30 May 1980 in BBC-2's Playhouse slot. In 1986, it received the honour of being one of the archive programmes shown to celebrate BBC TV's fiftieth anniversary (tx. BBC-2 3 November 1986). In 1991, it was rescreened as part of Film Four Today: a Channel 4 retrospective of BBC single filmed drama (tx. Channel 4 19 May 1991).
16. Potter, Introduction, Blue Remembered Hills, p.39.
17. Dennis Potter, "Innocence and Experience", interview by Lesley Thornton, Radio Times, 27 January - 2 February 1979, p.7.
18. Potter, Blue Remembered Hills, p.41.
19. Potter, Blue Remembered Hills, p.51.
20. Potter, Blue Remembered Hills, p.51.
21. Potter, Blue Remembered Hills, p.57.
22. Potter, Blue Remembered Hills, p.69.
23. Potter, Blue Remembered Hills, p.45.
24. Potter, Blue Remembered Hills, p.47.
25. Potter, Blue Remembered Hills, p.46.
26. Potter, Blue Remembered Hills, p.84.
27. Potter, Blue Remembered Hills, p.70.
28. Potter, Radio Times, p.7.
29. Hence Donald's exile from 'Eden' is not a simple 'Fall' from grace and innocence. Instead it arises through a complex interaction of forces: a combination of his own actions and reactions to external events beyond his control. As Potter suggested at the time of the play, "just the kind of combination, in short, that makes us feel most vulnerable". (Potter, "Innocence and Experience", p.8) Note that in Only Make Believe, this image of being 'burnt' through one's own actions is also used (: § 3.2).

30. Dennis Potter, Personal Interview, Tape Recording, Eastbourne Mews, London, 10 May 1990. For Potter, Blue Remembered Hills itself becomes that act of 'remembering'. Having thrown off notions of an irredeemable 'Fall' from 'Eden', childhood can be freely returned to and re-experienced through the power of memory and imagination.
31. Dennis Potter, radio talk, The Other Side of the Dark, tx. BBC Radio 4, 23 February 1978. Transcript, BBC Written Archives, Caversham. This talk formed one of a series of six, collectively titled All in the Waiting, in which a different contributor would each week reflect on the meaning of Lent.
32. Potter, The Other Side of the Dark.
33. Potter, Personal Interview.
34. Dennis Potter, Introduction, Brimstone and Treacle (London: Eyre Methuen, 1978), p.2.
35. Dennis Potter, Hide and Seek (London: André Deutsch / Quartet Books, 1973; reprint, London: Faber and Faber, 1990), p.3. (Page references are to the reprint edition).
36. Potter, Hide and Seek, p.38.
37. Potter, Hide and Seek, p.28.
38. Potter, Hide and Seek, p.16.
39. Potter, Hide and Seek, p.29.
40. Potter, Hide and Seek, p.33.
41. Potter, Hide and Seek, p.37.
42. Potter, Hide and Seek, p.38.
43. Potter, Hide and Seek, pp.56-7.
44. Potter, Hide and Seek, p.80.
45. Potter, Hide and Seek, p.82. In The Singing Detective, Potter reproduces this passage in order to indicate the extreme sexual disgust of his central character, Philip Marlow (: § 5.3 c). See Section 6.1 e for further discussion of the significance of the beautiful black-haired girl in "The Lollipop".
46. Potter, Hide and Seek, p.83.
47. Potter, Hide and Seek, p.86.
48. Potter, Hide and Seek, p.87.
49. At the same time, the third person narrative of Part Four also renders the thoughts of the beautiful black-haired girl. From this, the reader learns that the woman, Sandra, is indeed a prostitute and although the 'Author' does not know it, she too comes from the Forest of Dean. She dismisses the 'Author' as a potential client but cannot dismiss his stare. Recognising a flicker of a kindred spirit, she thinks back to her

childhood in the Forest where she was sexually abused by her stepfather. It was then that she first learned never to give something for nothing. Her silence about the abuse was bought for the price of a weekly ten-shilling note from stepfather. Eventually, when she was old enough she ran away to London (in a scenario that carries clear echoes of Eileen's entry into city prostitution in Pennies From Heaven : § 4.1 c). Note, therefore, that both prostitute and client in Hide and Seek are victims, linked by sexual abuse (Potter, Hide and Seek, pp.104-6).

50. Potter, Hide and Seek, p.110.

51. Potter, Hide and Seek, p.115.

52. Potter, Hide and Seek, p.120.

53. Potter, Hide and Seek, p.120.

54. Potter, Hide and Seek, p.136.

55. Potter, Hide and Seek, p.141.

56. Potter, Hide and Seek, p.145.

57. Potter, Hide and Seek, p.152.

58. Potter, Hide and Seek, p.159.

59. Potter, Hide and Seek, p.163.

60. Potter, Hide and Seek, p.164.

61. Potter, Hide and Seek, p.165.

62. Potter, Hide and Seek, p.166.

63. Potter, The Other Side of the Dark.

64. Dennis Potter, And with No Language but a Cry, tx. BBC Radio 4, 27 December 1976. Transcript, BBC Written Archives, Caversham.

65. Thus the concept of a loving God is not for Potter a function of any particular belief system but will always arise out of "the cry within each soul, the cry that calls for a light in the darkness". Man creates 'God': He becomes an amalgam of all the 'finer' attributes of the human spirit. Potter calls this the "glimmer of light or thread of grace" which points the way to an alternative to grief and despair: "The only possible alternative and one that gathers up all those other luminous concepts such as justice, pity, mercy and especially love which are also forms of knowing or ways of seeing that fit so awkwardly into the dominant modes of perception". (Potter, And with No Language but a Cry)

66. Potter, Personal Interview.

67. Potter, Personal Interview.

68. Potter, Personal Interview.

69. Potter, Personal Interview.

70. Potter, Personal Interview.

71. Potter, Personal Interview.

72. Potter, Personal Interview.

73. Potter, Personal Interview.

74. Potter, Personal Interview.

75. Double Dare also carries clear tracemarks (: § 2.3 b). Like Hide and Seek, it is in part an enquiry into the creative process itself, with a writer, producer and actress assembling in a hotel to discuss their craft: television drama. Martin is another blocked 'Author', seeking 'healing release' (both sexually and creatively) from a figure he fantasises into a prostitute. The play also manipulates autobiographical conventions like Hide and Seek. Not only is Martin a TV playwright but his producer friend Ben is a conscious echo of 'Ken' (Kenith Trodd - the play's real producer). Dialogue emphasises the connection - for example, when Martin tells Helen, "I've known Ben since Oxford so I can just about talk on the phone with him". Even an examination of the name Potter gives his central protagonist yields more clues (the initial letters of 'Martin Ellis' spell 'me'). (Quoted dialogue from Soundtrack, Double Dare, wr: Dennis Potter; dir: John McKenzie; prod: Kenith Trodd, tx. BBC-1 Play for Today 6 April 1976. National Film Archive Viewing Print.)

76. Dennis Potter, Follow the Yellow Brick Road, The Television Dramatist (ed.) Robert Muller (London: Elek, 1973), p.329. In 1973, Potter's script of Follow the Yellow Brick Road was published in an anthology of television plays, edited and with an introduction by the TV writer Robert Muller. The writer of each play also appended a short introduction to their published script.

The televised production of Follow the Yellow Brick Road formed part of a series of eight plays by different writers, collectively titled The Sextet. These were transmitted during the early summer of 1972 on BBC-2. As described by the Radio Times, The Sextet was an attempt to create "a TV repertory company" (Irma Kurtz, "We'd Die for Each Other - Until the Next Job", preview of The Sextet, Radio Times, 8 June 1972, p.6). Resembling the LWT Company of Five slot, under which Shaggy Dog had been transmitted in 1968, the idea was that the same group of actors would perform a different play each week (: § 1.2 n). Members of the BBC Sextet company were Denholm Elliott, Richard Vernon, Dennis Waterman, Billie Whitelaw, Michele Dotrice and Ruth Dunning.

77. Potter, Follow the Yellow Brick Road, p.331.

78. Potter, Follow the Yellow Brick Road, pp.332-3.

79. Potter, "Some Sort of Preface...", Waiting for the Boat, p.19. Potter continues in the same preface: "Follow the Yellow Brick Road reads now, to me, like the memory of a thumb being pressed too hard down upon a tender ganglion of protesting nerves... What is certain is that if I had continued in the Jack Black vein, I would long ago have ceased to write anything worthwhile at all". (Potter, Waiting for the Boat, pp.19-20)

80. Potter, Follow the Yellow Brick Road, p.324.

81. The "angels into whores" retort also appears to be a reference to Angels Are So Few. Transmitted two years earlier, this play had incensed

Mary Whitehouse and her fellow 'Clean-Up TV' campaigners on account of a scene in which Cynthia, prior to her seduction of Biddle, is shown watching a TV documentary about an orgy (: § 2.2). The audience are also given a chance to see clips from this orgy. In Follow the Yellow Brick Road, the religious notion of a character disgusted by the 'play he is in' also provides Potter with an opportunity to parody the attitudes of the 'Clean-Up TV' campaigners and their fierce condemnations of single play writers and directors who dared to reflect the values of the 'permissive society' on TV. His deliberate irony is to allow these views to be aired uncritically in his play through his own central character. This both satirises the campaigners and renders them sympathetic. Fodder for psychiatrists they may be but Potter implies their attacks on TV 'filth' reveal a sincere and deep-seated wish for a more perfect world. Their mistake is to blame the medium which reflects the ways of the world as the source of all its woes. For some measure of Whitehouse's ire over Angels Are So Few, see, for example, the Channel 4 documentary, Signals: Sex on Television (tx. 2 November 1988) which included clips and a brief discussion of the controversy surrounding the orgy scene in Angels Are So Few.

82. Potter, Follow the Yellow Brick Road, p.322.

83. Potter, Follow the Yellow Brick Road, p.368.

84. Further proof, beyond the title of his 1972 play, that Potter was both a fan of and deeply influenced by the narrative structures of The Wizard of Oz comes from Potter on Potter where he mentions how gruelling the pre-production of the 1939 film version must have been: "For example, there's a scene before Dorothy's return home that's completely lost. I have the original soundtrack and there are a couple of references to a non-existent scene... It's like stumbling upon an old bomb in a field. You know, 'Oh God, there's a body of a previous writer'". (Graham Fuller, [ed.], Potter on Potter, London: Faber and Faber, 1993, p.116) The idealist vision, embodied in a journey to a Promised Land or 'Golden City', clearly chimed with Potter's religious sensibility (: § Conclusion).

85. Potter, Introduction, Brimstone and Treacle, p.3.

86. Potter, Follow the Yellow Brick Road, pp.370-1.

87. Potter, Follow the Yellow Brick Road, pp.376-7.

88. Potter, Follow the Yellow Brick Road, p.379.

89. Potter, Follow the Yellow Brick Road, p.382.

90. Dennis Potter, Introduction, Follow the Yellow Brick Road, The Television Dramatist, p.303.

91. Indeed lengthy extracts from Angels are counter-pointed with scenes in Hudson's flat; the intention being (as with Hide and Seek) to explore the links between a writer's life and his work. Angels' theme of the stripping of illusion undoubtedly suited the self-referential quality of Only Make Believe. Nevertheless, as the play's producer, Graeme McDonald recalls, the repetition of scenes from Angels was an aspect of the work which made him personally uncomfortable: was this simply short-changing the audience with old material from several years before? (Graeme McDonald, Personal Interview, Tape Recording, Anglia Films, London, 1 March 1990) Aside from the thematic logic, there were, however, clear

production reasons for the decision. Potter, as we have seen, thought the original production of Angels was 'appallingly directed' and this may have contributed to his decision to include many scenes from Angels in Only Make Believe. Certainly, all the scenes from the 1970 work were re-shot for the later play with a different cast and director (: § 2.2 n.49).

92. Soundtrack, Only Make Believe, wr: Dennis Potter; dir: Robert Knights; prod: Graeme McDonald, tx. BBC-1 Play for Today 12 February 1973. Videocassette Recording, National Film Archive.

By means of his central idea of a BBC Play for Today writer writing his own Angels Are So Few, Potter is also clearly manipulating autobiographical conventions. Though perhaps not a fact well-known to the bulk of his viewing audience, the writer himself had unsuccessfully experimented with dictating his plays around the time of Angels Are So Few. Intriguingly, this fact was recorded in the very Radio Times article that promoted the original transmission of Angels in 1970: "Dennis Potter wasn't able to shake hands when we met because his fingers were still swollen from the latest attack of arthritis. These attacks stretch back over eight years and when they return he can scarcely hold a pen. He had secretarial help for a time. It didn't work because he can't dictate: 'I must see the words coming out on the page, otherwise it doesn't seem real'". Dennis Potter, "Television Is the Only Medium that Counts", interview by Gordon Burn, Radio Times, 8 October 1970, p.66)

Clearly, Hudson's damaged hand acts as a mirror of Potter's in real life. Other autobiographical connections are emphasised in the casting. Keith Barron, the actor who played Nigel Barton in the celebrated 1965 plays, is cast in the central role of Christopher Hudson. The effect of this continuity is to give the impression of an authorial alter ego: 'Barton', the aspiring student politician, has grown up to become a successful TV playwright, like Potter himself. The Barton connection is also important thematically. Both Stand Up and Vote, Vote, Vote were about the stripping of illusion, as Nigel's idealism came under pressure from class and political division in post-war Britain. Echoing the theme of Angels, the concern of the self-reflexive Only Make Believe is also the stripping of illusion - though not just in terms of revealing the manufacture of the drama to the audience. It also seems to be a stripping away of the illusion on the part of the playwright that television could offer direct, easy access to a common culture (: see main text).

93. Soundtrack, Only Make Believe.

94. Soundtrack, Only Make Believe.

95. Soundtrack, Only Make Believe.

96. Bruno Bettelheim, The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales (London: Thames and Hudson, 1976), pp.3-5.

97. Potter, Personal Interview.

98. Bettelheim, p.9.

99. Bettelheim traces the origins of the "Sleeping Beauty" story back to the "Sun Moon and Talia", a tale contained in The Pentamerone (1636) - the first published collection of European folk tales, dating from the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries. This older story told of Talia, the daughter of a king, who one day fell to the ground, lifeless, after a splinter of hemp got under her fingernail. Leaving his inert daughter seated on a velvet chair in a room in his palace, her father, the king,

locked the door and departed forever, determined to obliterate the memory of his sorrow. Some time after, another king wandered into the palace and found Talia asleep. As Bettelheim puts it, this king, falling in love with her beauty, "cohabited with her, then he left and forgot the whole affair" (p.228). Nine months later, the still sleeping Talia gave birth to two children. One of the babies drew out the splinter and Talia was raised from her deep sleep. Hence the 'kiss' in the Brothers Grimm tale is but a sanitised version of the rape of a lifeless human 'vegetable' - just as with Potter's Brimstone and Treacle. For further discussion of the origins of "Sleeping Beauty", see Bettelheim, pp.225-36. See also "Sun Moon and Talia", The Pentamerone comp. Gianbattista Baide, (London: John Lane at the Bodley Head, 1932); "Briar Rose", Selected Tales, comp. Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, trans. David Luke, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982).

100. As told by the Brothers Grimm, the "Rumpelstiltskin" tale deals with the daughter of a poor miller who is locked overnight in a castle, having been ordered by the king to spin straw into gold. Unable to do so, she turns in despair to a demon helper, 'a funny little man', who offers his services for a price. First, it is jewellery he demands from her. Later, it is her future first child he demands in return. After she apparently spins straw into gold, the king marries the girl. When, however, their first child is born, the little demon returns to claim his side of the bargain. Only if the queen can name him, he states, will she be able to keep her baby. Searching high and low throughout the kingdom, one of her messengers spots the little man in a forest clearing. Dancing around on one foot, he is shouting: 'Tee hee ha ha isn't a shame / That none of them can guess Rumpelstiltskin's name'. When the queen hears this, she is able to name the little goblin and so destroy his hold on her forever. (Grimm, Selected Tales, pp.53-5)

101. Potter, Hide and Seek, p.29.

102. Meanwhile, in the contemporaneous Only Make Believe, Hudson balks at the idea of naming his 'gibbering hobgoblins' to a psychiatrist. See Section 6.1 d for further discussion of "Rumpelstiltskin" and other fairy tale references in Blackeyes.

103. William Shakespeare, Hamlet, Act 3, Sc.1, 1.58, The Complete Works of William Shakespeare, (eds.) Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), p.668. Hamlet's questioning of whether 'to take up arms' is, of course, a contemplation of his own suicide. This connects with the suicidal nature of Willy's rampage in Where The Buffalo Roam. Across a number of Potter plays, there are explicit Hamlet references. For example, in the published script of Stand Up, Nigel Barton, Nigel's mother discusses with his father a joke she heard Georgie Pringle tell at the local working man's club: "On about them two old women talking through the lavatory wall. 'My boy's got a part in the school play', she says. 'He's playing Hamlet.' 'Ooooooh !' says t'other, 'that's a hard bit!'" (Dennis Potter, The Nigel Barton Plays, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967, pp.46-7) These lines (omitted from the final TV production) jokingly gesture at the 'hard' role Pringle's alter ego, Barton, has created for himself (: § 1.1). In a similar vein, the tormented Jack Black is described by his agent, Colin, in Follow the Yellow Brick Road as a "pocket Hamlet". (Potter, Follow the Yellow Brick Road, p.335) Finally, in Double Dare, when Martin's 'pimp' producer, Ben, leaves the writer and the actress together in the hotel lounge, he makes his excuses by saying he is going off to see a theatre production of Hamlet. (Soundtrack, Double Dare)

104. This is illustrated by a flashback scene in which Harris' mother expresses her worries to her husband about their "strange" and "withdrawn" child. While Harris senior is unconcerned, she urges a more 'normal' relationship between father and son: "He's fascinated by you... He drew a picture of what he thought Camelot looked like... He hears you talking about King Arthur and - well, you should talk to him more. He's very receptive, really..." (Soundtrack, Traitor, wr: Dennis Potter; dir: Alan Bridges; prod: Graeme McDonald, tx. BBC-1 Play for Today 14 October 1971. Videocassette Recording, Repeat Transmission BBC-1 21 July 1987)

105. Besides those mentioned in the text, one can see the use of character trios in plays such as Vote, Vote, Vote for Nigel Barton (where Barton is 'torn' between the ideological 'purity' of his wife versus the cynicism of his political agent); A Beast with Two Backs (Rufus 'torn' from the Forest by the sight of a 'dead' mother and 'airy' father), as well as the 'outsider' cycle of plays which all involve a young man disrupting the lives of an older suburban husband and wife. In this way, the inner tensions and conflicts of central protagonists are embodied externally through appropriate representative figures within the drama.

106. Laurence Olivier, voice introduction, Hamlet, dir: Laurence Olivier, UK 1948.

107. Potter, Personal Interview.

108. This is echoed by the writer in Potter on Potter: "When fiction ceases to be fiction it's when the author is driving towards a little slot or pocket where it can only go. When that happens, in my opinion, it's not fiction. It ceases to be metaphorical, it ceases to have resonances - it becomes an argument, which is a very legitimate form of literature belonging to prose and the essay and the polemic. It does not belong to drama... The only thing that has inherited both the older, parable form of religion and the possibilities of discourse not being cast in argument form is drama. Not even the novel can do it..." (Fuller [ed.], pp.49-50)

109. The idea of this private, 'secret self' living within was most fully explored by Potter in his second novel, Ticket to Ride, which was written in 1985, between drafts of The Singing Detective and published a year later. It also formed the basis of a screenplay, the tellingly named Secret Friends, which Potter himself directed as a feature film in 1991 (: § Conclusion). In both novel and film, the main character, a painter called John Buck, is portrayed as a man racked by warring aspects of his own personality: his 'surface' public persona versus a rebellious 'imaginary friend' whom he invented as a child in secret protest against the moral piety of his preacher father. Long dormant, this 'secret friend' emerges at a moment of crisis in the adult Buck's life and begins to take him over. The problem which the novel (and the subsequent film) poses is the problem of how to resolve and reconcile this 'torn' personality. While Potter developed the 'problem' in Ticket to Ride, he explored the resolution of it most decisively in relation to the 'two Marlows' in the contemporaneous The Singing Detective (: § 5.3 c).

110. Potter, Radio Times, 27 January - 2 February 1979, p.7.

111. Raymond Williams, "Realism and Non-Naturalism 1", The Official Programme of The Edinburgh International Television Festival 1977, August 1977, p.30.

112. "Agitational contemporaneity" was a phrase coined by Sydney Newman to sum up the spirit behind The Wednesday Play - the drive of many of its key practitioners not only to reflect 'contemporary' society but to try to 'agitate' for change. See, Irene Shubik, "Play for Today": The Evolution of Television Drama, (London: Davis-Poynter, 1975), pp.59-80, for discussion of how this aim was translated (and moderated) in practice.
113. Williams, p.30.
114. Dennis Potter, "Realism and Non-Naturalism 2", The Official Programme of The Edinburgh International Television Festival 1977, August 1977, p.35.
115. Potter, "Realism and Non-Naturalism 2", p.36.
116. Potter, "Realism and Non-Naturalism 2", p.36.
117. Potter, "Realism and Non-Naturalism 2", p.36.
118. Potter, "Realism and Non-Naturalism 2", p.36.
119. Potter, Personal Interview.
120. Williams, p.30.
121. Dennis Potter, interview, Tonight, tx. BBC-1 7 November 1977. Transcript, BBC Written Archives, Caversham.
122. Potter, Introduction, Follow the Yellow Brick Road, p.305.
123. Soundtrack, Only Make Believe.

CHAPTER FOUR

1. Dennis Potter, "Potter's Path", interview by Philip Oakes, The Sunday Times, 7 November 1971, p.24. Casanova consisted of six fifty minute plays.

2. Dennis Potter, Introduction, Follow the Yellow Brick Road, The Television Dramatist, (ed.) Robert Muller, (London: Elek, 1973), p.305.

3. The Generations trilogy was a series of three linked single plays, written by David Mercer and transmitted by BBC TV during the early sixties: Where the Difference Begins (tx. 15.12.61); A Climate of Fear (tx. 22.2.62) and The Birth of a Private Man (tx. 8.3.63). Significantly, these were marked by both continuity of character and theme, as Mercer explored the future of socialism through representative figures from different generations of the same family. His scripts were subsequently published together under The Generations collective title. See Mercer, The Generations (London: John Calder, 1964).

John Hopkins' quartet of plays, Talking to a Stranger, was first transmitted between 2 and 23 October 1966, in BBC-2's single play slot, Theatre 625. While employing the narrative continuity of the weekly serial, Talking to a Stranger was marked by the same willingness to engage in 'modernist' experimentation with television form, as Potter was also pioneering in his single play work at this time. The breakdown of a suburban family was examined from the differing perspectives of each of the family members; the drama often taking the audience inside the characters' heads to portray the same events from differing points of view. Hopkins' work in the early to mid sixties as one of the chief writers on Z-Cars may have helped fuel his desire to extend the 'authored' themes of the single play over a number of weekly instalments. For the published scripts of the play quartet, see John Hopkins, Talking to a Stranger (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967).

4. By 'unauthored', it is meant that series and serial production did not normally encourage the expression of a single authorial point of view, as with the single play. This clearly had much to do with the differing histories, ideologies and expectations surrounding the growth of these different forms in British television. In contrast to the individually 'authored' play, series and serials were traditionally regarded as anonymous industrial product. As George Brandt has put it, they were "machine-made". (Brandt, Introduction, British Television Drama, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981, p.22)

5. Source: Mark Shivas, Personal Interview, Tape Recording, BBC Television Centre, London, 19 March 1990.

6. "Henry and His Wives - Seven Reasons for a Triumph", Radio Times, 7 January 1971, p.58. The Radio Times reported that The Six Wives of Henry VIII chalked up international sales in Australia, Canada, Sweden, Ireland and France. The plays were jointly produced by Shivas and Ronald Travers. There were also two directors: John Glenister and Naomi Capon. The international success of Henry VIII came in the wake of the BBC's adaptation of Galsworthy's The Forsyte Saga (1968) which also proved highly lucrative for the Corporation in terms of foreign programme sales. More historical dramas, depicting the private lives of royalty and / or the ruling classes, soon followed: for example, Elizabeth R for the BBC (1971) and for ITV, the wholly fictional Upstairs Downstairs (1970-5).

7. Shivas, Personal Interview.

8. "The Greatest Lover", Front cover, Radio Times, 11 November 1971, p.1
9. Yvonne Thomas, "Frank Finlay About to Lose His Anonymity to Casanova"Radio Times, 11 November 1971, p.17; Potter, "Potter's Path", p.24.
10. Potter, "Potter's Path", p.24. The six volumes of Casanova's memoirs were first published in Britain, in full, unexpurgated form, towards the end of the sixties. If this publishing event provided Potter with the inspiration for his drama, as the writer made clear many years later, he never really read the memoirs: "Like most people I thought of the popular image of Casanova. I had a weekly slot as a book critic on The Times, briefly, and one thing that came in was a new translation of his memoirs. I thought, 'Oh, that's interesting. That's something one might write about'. But of course as soon as I said that I had to stop reading them, and I never reviewed them because, as a writer, I didn't want to know too much... The credits say it was 'based on' them but that's crap. I had a list of his dates, when he was in prison, when he escaped, how he ended, and the details of some of the women, but that was about it. Most memoirs are self-serving and adorned with lies and I thought his were probably the same." (Graham Fuller, (ed.), Potter on Potter, London: Faber and Faber, 1993, pp. 69-70) As this shows, far from being an 'historically accurate' adaptation, Casanova is just as much a personal, authorial work, as any of Potter's single plays. For comparison with the memoirs, see Giacomo Casanova, The History of My Life, six vols., trans. Willard Trask, (London: Longmans, 1967, 1968, 1969).
11. Kenith Trodd, "In at the Birth and Death of Kestrel Productions", interview by Ann Purser, The Stage and Television Today, 25 June 1970, p.15. Trodd's reference to "three girls in a flat" seems to be to Carla Lane's popular comedy series, The Liver Birds, which ran from 1969 to 1978 on BBC-1. It was not only Trodd who sensed that the trend for costume drama was reactionary. This was picked up by a number of academic writers through the seventies and early eighties. Colin McArthur, for example, suggested that the rise of period drama was part of a nostalgia for a return to an era of fixed social relations - what better way for television to promote this desire, he asked, than through humanising the British monarchy by portraying the love-lives of kings? At the same time, as Carl Gardner and John Wyver observed, the overseas earning power of British historical drama generated its own demand. Costume drama celebrated exactly the values of 'confidence and stability' which attracted overseas (particularly American) buyers and co-producers. See Colin McArthur, Television and History, (London: British Film Institute, 1978); Carl Gardner and John Wyver, "The Single Play: From Reithian Reverence to Cost-Accounting and Censorship", Edinburgh International Television Festival Magazine, 1980 pp.47-52; reprinted with an afterword, Screen, Vol. 24, nos. 4-5, July - October 1983, pp.114-29. See, too, Paul Kerr's elucidation of the primary features of 'The Classic Serial' in Kerr, "Classic Serials - To Be Continued", Screen, Vol. 23. No. 1, May - June 1982, pp.6-19.
12. Potter, "Potter's Path", p.24. If the following anecdote from this 1971 interview is to be believed, the playwright had already turned down an offer to work on at least one Henry VIII clone. Thus Philip Oakes records that "braced by the success of TV's Tudor spectacular The Six Wives of Henry VIII, a hopeful young producer came up with what he saw as the BBC's next royal flush. 'What I envisage', he told the playwright Dennis Potter, 'is a series on the Georges. How would you like to write one?' 'Fine', said Potter, a commoner down to his toes. 'I'll take George Formby'. Invitation withdrawn..."

13. Casanova, Episode One, Camera Script, p.7. BBC Television Script Unit.
14. Casanova, Episode One, Script, p.14.
15. Casanova, Episode One, Script, p.17.
16. This notion of the 'swinging bachelor', sexually liberated and 'doing his own thing', was a characteristic one of the period - present, for example, in Michael Caine's portrayal of Alfie in the 1966 film version of Bill Naughton's stage play; in television's Jason King and in comedic terms, Leslie Phillip's screen persona of the likeable rogue with an eye for the ladies. His apotheosis was James Bond: the charismatic bed-hopping secret agent portrayed by Sean Connery in the feature films. Potter was clearly drawing upon these associations in his construction of Casanova. As he suggested at the time, the hero as libertine was "the last possible hero. Traditional heroes are too derisory for words: but the libertine as hero persists". ("Potter's Path", p.24.) His Casanova becomes the direct ancestor of Bond and Alfie - amoral, resourceful, self-centred but above all a symbol for the 'permissive' society. For discussion of Alfie and his relationship to 'Swinging London', see Robert Murphy, Sixties British Cinema (London: British Film Institute, 1992), pp.139-60. For Bond, see, for example, Tony Bennett and Janet Woollacott, Bond and Beyond (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1987).
17. Potter, "Potter's Path", p.24. This seems to be a reference to Mary Whitehouse. See main text for her reaction to Casanova.
18. Mark Shivas, "Henry and His Wives...", interview, Radio Times, 7 January 1971, p.58. The producer claimed that "different facets of Henry's character were polished each week and almost for the first time, we were able to understand this extraordinarily complex man..."
19. Casanova Episode Five, Script, pp.80-1.
20. Casanova Episode One, Script, p.36.
21. Casanova Episode One, Script, p.70.
22. Casanova Episode One, Script, p.58.
23. Casanova Episode One, Script, p.86.
24. Casanova Episode One, Script, p.90.
25. Casanova Episode One, Script, p.104.
26. Casanova Episode Two, Script, p.65.
27. Thus the atheism of the 'unbeliever' is challenged and thrown into doubt by the uneasy coincidence of events. Here, Casanova can be seen orientating itself towards the underlying 'spiritual questions' which Potter would later admit he had been exploring in much of his work from the early to mid seventies (: § 2.4).
28. His final muttered words reveal the depths of his despair and his feeling of always being in prison: "Escape ! Escape from - myself ?" He picks up a chair and hurls it against the wall of his room, where it smashes into pieces. (Casanova, Episode Five, Script, p.95)

29. Virgil, qtd. in Casanova, Episode Six, Script, p.2.
30. Casanova, Episode Six, Script, p.53.
31. Casanova, Episode Six, Script, p.22.
32. Dennis Potter, interview, Scan, tx. BBC Radio 4, 25 November 1971. Transcript, BBC Written Archives, Caversham.
33. Casanova, Episode Six, Script, p.63.
34. Casanova, Episode Six, Script, p.73. "I am trying to escape" echoes Daniel Miller's sentiments against a 'filthy' world and 'Author' in the contemporaneous Hide and Seek (: § 3.1).
35. Casanova, Episode Six, Script, p.80.
36. Casanova, Episode Six, Script, p.92.
37. Casanova, Episode Six, Script, pp.109-10.
38. See Potter's interview for Anno Domini, quoted in Chapter Two (§ 2.4).
39. Other links with The Singing Detective are the use of flashbacks and the juxtaposition of competing narrative strands by means of which the audience are invited to piece together, as in a detective story, clues to the central protagonist's life.
40. Potter, Scan.
41. Dennis Potter, Personal Interview, Tape Recording, Eastbourne Mews, London, 10 May 1990. In fact, Potter received some good reviews for the work. Nancy Banks-Smith declared in The Guardian after Episode One that she liked Casanova's "night-day, waking-dreaming swing" between freedom and imprisonment, while Barry Norman in The Times expressed his satisfaction that Potter's Casanova was "obviously not going to resemble the jolly laughing seducer of myth and legend..." (Nancy Banks-Smith, review, The Guardian, 17 November 1971, p.10; Barry Norman, review, The Times, 17 November 1971, p.14.) Others, however, were less kind. It was the fact that Potter's Casanova did not correspond with the actual historical figure which annoyed many. Thus Clive James in The Listener stated "the first episode made such an interstellar vacancy of what history had previously agreed to be an exceptionally interesting mind... Casanova himself was rather at a loss for words which is Dennis Potter's fault because he is supposed to be writing them..." And Stuart Hood a few weeks later: "What was missing was any sense of Casanova celebrated by Luigi Darzini as a man of great gifts, led by the constraints of Italian society and the pettiness of contemporary Italian politics to squander his talents in mere philandering and ridiculous escapades..." (Clive James, review of Episode One, The Listener, 25 November 1971, p.741; Stuart Hood, review of Episode Six, The Listener, 30 December 1971, p.916) The drama was therefore judged on its historical accuracy (the journalistic 'facts') rather than being seen as a personal, religious work (with fictional 'truths') that said more about Dennis Potter than it did about the real Casanova's life and times. At the same time, the BBC's promotion of Casanova as a 'classic serial' in the Henry VIII mould also contributed to its downfall in reviewer's eyes. Phillip Whitehead called the drama "Potter's first television failure", stating playwrights of Potter's stature deserved to be heard without the "constrictions of

competitive planning which have made the BBC market Casanova as an expensive secret weapon in the ratings battle..." For Whitehead, Potter was a 'serious' playwright and 'serious work' belonged with the single play. It was thus Casanova's attempt to colonise the terrain of the popular serial which, in his eyes, made it fail. (Phillip Whitehead, review of Episode Three, The Listener, 9 December 1971, pp.819-20)

42. Qtd. in "TV Play 'Lewd' Complaint", The Times, 2 December, 1971, p.5. Mary Whitehouse's view was that the BBC was "now well-launched into the Oh Calcutta! - Playboy scene" with Casanova.

43. This is a state of affairs which Potter would later become adept at milking as a means of securing a large popular audience for his work - for example, with Blackeyes (: § 6.1 e).

44. Christopher Dunkley, "Tuesdays Will Seem Dull for a While", review of Episode Six, Casanova, The Times, 22 December, 1971, p.10. By a lack of narrative 'signposting', it is meant that the viewer has little guidance between the different narrative strands: Casanova's time in prison and his life as a libertine are constantly juxtaposed, each functioning as a metaphor for the other. The drama does not privilege one narrative strand over the other nor explicitly foreground which is 'flashback' and which present-day 'reality'. If Potter's intention was to produce an active spectator, piecing together the events of Casanova's life and working out the thematic connection between the prison scenes and other events in the drama, it was not surprising that as the complex associations accumulated over six episodes, viewers, accustomed to the traditional 'beginning', 'middle' and 'end' of the classic serial, would become frustrated and confused at being given little sense of the actual chronology of events. As noted in the text, it is only in Episode Six that Potter reveals his 'method' - only with the discovery of Casanova in old age that an overarching chronology is given to the events of the preceding five episodes.

45. Shivas, Personal Interview. The re-edited Casanova was screened over two episodes on 9 and 10 September 1974, on BBC-2.

46. If this made Casanova a far less complex and challenging drama, the result was a more favourable critical reaction. In Philip Purser's view, it "gave Potter's narrative style, jumping to and fro in time, more elbow room and resulted in stronger continuity". (Halliwell's Television Companion, [eds.] Leslie Halliwell, with Philip Purser, 3rd ed., London: Grafton Books, 1986, p.128)

47. This failure to appreciate that the weekly separation of each episode might create extra difficulties for the audience in following an already complex narrative has been touched upon by Kenith Trodd. He suggests in interview that there is sometimes a sense with Potter of him "enjoying the maze" but forgetting the viewer. (Kenith Trodd, Personal Interview, Tape Recording, BBC Television Centre, London, 8 November 1989) Not for the last time in his career, Potter's facility with complex narratives in Casanova had elicited incomprehension and even hostility in his audience. For further discussion of this, see Chapter Six on the reception of Blackeyes (: § 6.1 e).

48. Kenith Trodd, Personal Interview, Tape Recording, BBC Television Centre, London, 8 November 1989. Trodd's view seems confirmed by Alasdair Milne's comment, quoted in Chapter Two, that there was an

'anxiety' on the part of BBC management to see what Potter work came next after the banning of Brimstone (: § 2.3 d).

49. Potter, Personal Interview. Note Potter later used the the crooner as seducer figure in Cream in my Coffee (: § 5.0)

50. Kenith Trodd, sleeve notes, Pennies from Heaven. 48 Recordings Featured in the BBC TV Serial. BBC Records, REF 768, 1990. The song was "The Clouds Will Soon Roll By", sung by Elsie Carlisle.

51. Potter, Personal Interview.

52. Pennies from Heaven, Episode One, Camera Script, p.10.

53. Pennies from Heaven, Episode Six, Script, p.115.

54. Pennies from Heaven, Episode Six, Script, p.116.

55. For analysis of the generic features of the film musical, see, for example, Rick Altman, The American Film Musical (1987; British Film Institute: 1989) and Jane Feuer, "The Self-Reflective Musical and the Myth of Entertainment", Quarterly Review of Film Studies, August 1977, pp.313-26.

56. Pennies from Heaven, Episode Six, Script, p.112.

57. Potter, Personal Interview.

58. Margaret Potter, "Man on the Moon", interview by Anne Batt, Daily Mail, 5 April 1977, p.16. The 'new play' Mrs. Potter was referring to appears, from the evidence, to be the second episode of Pennies.

59. Piers Haggard, Personal Interview, Tape Recording, North London, 13 March 1990. Unusually for Potter, the director of Pennies was approached in the Winter of 1976 before the drama was even written and while Potter was still pondering what to do next.

60. Potter, Personal Interview. Chicago Joe and the Showgirl (Dir: Bernard Rose) was released in 1990, though the script by David Yallop had been nearly twenty years in gestation. For the published novelization of the script, together with an epilogue giving details of the real 'Chicago Joe' case, see M. Gaynor, Chicago Joe and the Showgirl, (London: New English Library, 1990).

61. Potter, Personal Interview.

62. Details of the Hulsten and Jones case are taken from Gaynor, pp.138-54.

63. Potter, of course, was a boy in Hammersmith in 1945 (: § 0.1). Hulsten and Jones' rampage as a result of the power of popular culture, recalls Willy Turner's in Where the Buffalo Roam (: § 1.1).

64. Pennies from Heaven, Episode Four, Script, p.95.

65. Pennies from Heaven, Episode Five, Script, p.24.

66. Pennies from Heaven, Episode Six, Script, p.50.

67. Pennies from Heaven, Episode Four, Script, p.95.

68. Pennies from Heaven, Episode Six, Script, p.42.

69. Pennies from Heaven, Episode Six, Script, p.90.

70. Haggard, Personal Interview.

71. The Chester Mystery Plays were first transmitted by BBC-1 on Easter Day, 18 April 1976. They won strong praise from viewers. Letters to the Radio Times hailed the BBC's production as "miraculous", in terms of the "clear and gem-like quality of colour [which] the CSO technique so magically produced". ("Letters", Radio Times, 8 - 14 May 1976, p.60) As Piers Haggard described it in the Radio Times, shooting actors against painted backgrounds, using colour separation overlay, meant you could make "magic" in the studio, recapturing "the fantasy fairy-tale quality of the plays" with "the graphic clarity and speed of a cartoon". (Piers Haggard, "The Word Made Flesh", interview by Julian Mitchell, Radio Times, 17 - 23 April 1976, p.5) Such conceptions of lending television drama a 'fantasy, fairy-tale quality' undoubtedly fed into Pennies.

72. Pennies from Heaven, Episode One, Script, p.2.

73. At the same time, graphic sequences are used to illustrate several of the songs. At one point in Episode One, when Arthur begins to mime "Roll Along Prairie Moon", he is slowly transformed into a painted "cowboy below the moon on a romantically drawn song-sheet". (Script directions, Pennies from Heaven, Episode One, Script, p.97.)

74. The director himself suggests, "I suppose Dennis thought... maybe I was in a sense able to respond to something on a grand scale because [Pennies] is on a grand scale". Haggard saw the scripts as "... a Christian piece of writing... deeply related to Christian imagery and ideals - the sense of guilt, the morality, the vision of Paradise. Arthur is a sort of child of God..." (Haggard, Personal Interview)

75. As an example of collaboration, Haggard cites the scene in Episode Six when Arthur and Eileen flee to the countryside and hide out in an old barn. In Potter's original script, it is stipulated that while Eileen leaves the barn to search for food, Arthur should mime to the Lew Stone number, "Pick Yourself Up", dancing around the barn with a rake, until he collapses, exhausted, onto some hay (Pennies from Heaven, Episode Six, Script, p.25). Instead of this, Davies came up with the idea of Arthur dancing with a 'Straw Man' - a figure which forms itself in the protagonist's imagination from the hay he sees lying around in the barn. The result (shot on film by Haggard) was one of the most memorable and technically accomplished sequences of the production.

76. Trodd, Personal Interview. Potter's wish was belatedly fulfilled, when Roy Hudd was cast in the role of Harold Atterbow, the mad organist, in Lipstick on Your Collar (: § Conclusion). Another virtue of casting comedians in dramatic roles is that their training in front of live audiences means they know how to time lines for maximum effect.

77. Haggard, Personal Interview. Michael Elphick went on to play the part of Peter in Blue Remembered Hills (: § 3.0). The consideration of Hywel Bennett for the role of Arthur clearly links in with Pennies' and Where the Buffalo Roam's shared theme of living out one's fantasies through popular culture (: § 1.1).

78. On the Move was first transmitted in October 1975 and won much praise from Potter who, as TV critic, labelled it "just the most successful and elegant and inspiring series now running on TV". (Qtd. in Barry Took, "Voice-Over", Radio Times, 7 - 13 October 1989, p.95) As manifested in his plays, Where the Buffalo Roam and his 1980 work, Rain on the Roof, Potter clearly had a strong interest in adult literacy: on the possibilities of the backward child escaping from a constricting social environment and learning to become articulate (: § 1.1; 5.0). Hoskins' 'little man' figure in On the Move, who was trying to do just that, clearly made him suitable for the part of inarticulate Arthur who is also trapped by his environment yet yearns for something better. Hoskins' name was also familiar to Potter and Trodd from Schmoedipus in which he had had a small role as Tom Carter's boss (: § 2.2). A year earlier, he had also appeared in another Trodd production: Her Majesty's Pleasure (wr: James O'Connor; dir: Barry Davis, tx BBC-1 Play for Today 25 October 1973).

79. Haggard, Personal Interview.

80. In fact, there were two unknowns cast in the central roles of Pennies. Cheryl Campbell landed the part of Eileen, after Haggard spotted her photograph in the actor's directory, Spotlight and thought she had the perfect facial features to embody the figure of demure Eileen. (Haggard, Personal Interview).

81. Haggard, Personal Interview.

82. Choreography and Hoskins seem to have been particularly uneasy bed-fellows, as the actor has himself admitted: "Tudor [Davies] is the closest thing to a genius I have ever met... He convinced me that I looked like Fred Astaire... But when I saw [Pennies] I was so ashamed. I looked like a little hippopotamus shaking its hooves". (Qtd. in Karen Moline, Bob Hoskins: An Unlikely Hero, London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1988, pp. 93-4)

83. Though "aesthetically a dog's dinner", according to Haggard, this combination of recording on tape and shooting on film stemmed from the BBC's investment in studio space in the late fifties and early sixties. It would later be superseded in the eighties by a move to all-film production: a move which Haggard laments since he believes the method of shooting television drama today means most of it is underrehearsed (Haggard, Personal Interview).

84. At the same time, the technique provided a precise visual echo of the diffuse lighting and soft-focus cinematography characteristic of thirties cinema.

85. Haggard, Personal Interview. In the "Blue Moon" number, the idealised vision of home-life dreamed of by Arthur's wife, Joan, is indicated by her miming to the song, whilst bathed in a wistful blue light.

86. Haggard, Personal Interview.

87. Haggard, Personal Interview. An indication of how disastrous it could have been is provided by comparison with the 1990 American television series, created by Steven Bochco, called Cop Rock. This imitated Pennies' device of characters in the drama bursting into song but largely failed because it did not separate the music from the drama in the way that Pennies did through lighting changes and character action. The result was a rather incongruous blurring of gritty police drama with rock

musical insertions, in contrast to Pennies' clear separation of the music and drama as belonging to alternative realms: the gloomy 'naturalism' of the Depression versus the 'non-naturalistic' spiritual world of the songs.

88. This is confirmed by Pennies' film cameraman, Ken Westbury, who recalls that Cheryl Campbell, for one, was "more than a little concerned" as to the effect this 'drama with music' would have on her subsequent career (Ken Westbury, Personal Interview, Tape Recording, Whitton, Twickenham, London, 15 March, 1990).

89. Peter Buckman, review of Episode Six, Pennies from Heaven, The Listener, 20 April 1978, p.519.

90. Michael Radcliffe, review of Episode One, Pennies from Heaven, The Times, 8 March 1978, p.9.

91. James Murray, "Brave New World for Dennis", preview of Pennies from Heaven, Daily Express, 10 February 1978, p.12.

92. The Radio Times promoted the drama with a five page feature spread, including introductions to the serial by both Potter and Trodd, as well as interviews with surviving band leaders of the period. See Sid Colin, "Strike Up the Band", Radio Times, 4 - 10 March 1978, pp.72-77.

93. Haggard, Personal Interview. Pennies was repeated on BBC-2 for three consecutive weeks, beginning 1 December 1978. Two episodes were shown per evening.

94. The drama also won the British Press Guild Award for the Most Original Contribution to TV (Source: Moline, p.79)

95. Haggard, Personal Interview.

96. Amongst Pennies' metropolitan champions were John Wyver, then TV critic of Time Out and Joan Bakewell in her column for the Radio Times. Wyver's previews for the serial in Time Out were all in terms of superlatives: "To better the achievements of the production team in Pennies would have been to approach perfection... Just watch and wonder", he wrote. (John Wyver, preview of Episode One, Pennies from Heaven, Time Out, 3 - 9 March 1978, p.19) Meanwhile, Bakewell called Pennies "a totally original hybrid form that crosses Gene Kelly with Bertolt Brecht and yet is uniquely suited to television". (Joan Bakewell, review of Pennies from Heaven, Radio Times, 8 - 14 April 1978, p.74) Pennies' withdrawal after only two transmissions, on account of the production of a subsequent movie version, only helped the drama's legend to grow (: S 4.1 d).

97. Letters to the Radio Times following the serial's transmission make interesting, if diverse, reading. The drama won great praise as, for example, "the freshest and liveliest" programme ever seen on television. It also won condemnation from some quarters for leaving "a nasty taste" in the mouth as a result of its darker elements and for pandering to "the lowest levels of bad taste". ("Letters", Radio Times, 29 April - 5 May 1978, p.65)

98. Source: Moline, p.79.

99. Source: Trodd, Personal Interview. Trodd attested that Potter was worried that the drama "would not stand up today", whereas the producer

was sure that it would. The drama was repeated between 7 February and 14 March 1990 on BBC-2 and was generally well-received. James Rampton of The Independent on Sunday, for example, stated that Pennies was a reminder that "despite Blackeyes, Dennis Potter can write imaginative, semi-musical sexual fantasies". (James Rampton, The Independent on Sunday, 4 February 1990, review sec., p.62) Meanwhile, letters to the Radio Times were highly positive, with viewers stating they "loved every repeated moment" of the drama. ("Letters", Radio Times, 24 - 30 March 1990, p.75) Undoubtedly, Pennies' repeat transmission, so soon after Blackeyes, served as a pick-me-up for Potter's dipping artistic reputation.

100. Pennies from Heaven, Episode One, Script, p.7.

101. Pennies from Heaven, Episode Three, Script, p.12.

102. Pennies from Heaven, Episode One, Script, p.14.

103. Pennies from Heaven, Episode One, Script, p.10.

104. Ian Colley and Gill Davies, "Pennies from Heaven: Music, Image, Text", Screen Education, No.35, Summer 1980, p.65. Colley and Davies' is one of the few academic articles to attempt to engage with Potter's work, though from the vantage point of the present, it seems unsatisfactory. The problem is that the authors assess Pennies in terms of their own appointed criteria of 'political progressiveness' - as with the quote cited in the text, condemning the drama when it fails to deal with the thirties, on historical grounds, as a decade of class warfare. What they apparently fail to see is Pennies status as a religious work; one which is not really interested in the political 'facts' of the thirties at all. It is 'non-naturalistic'; not an example of 'naturalism' or even 'progressive realism'. Colley and Davies' mistake is to judge Pennies by criteria (its depiction of external political conflict) in relation to which it clearly cannot fit. There is almost a sense with this kind of prescriptive criticism that the only drama that is worthy of consideration is the drama of Brecht.

105. 1977 was not simply the Queen's Silver Jubilee but a time widely believed by many in the country to be one of political and economic turmoil. Echoing Arthur's fellow salesmen in Pennies, there was a general feeling of the 'country going to the dogs' - of inflation roaring out of control; of enterprise stifled by excessive bureaucracy and nationalisation; of the trades unions being too strong (thus making Britain the 'sick man of Europe' on account of the number of working days lost through strikes). Such a view was enthusiastically promulgated by popular newspapers like The Sun and the Daily Mail against the Labour administration of James Callaghan, while the Right regrouped under its new Conservative leader, Margaret Thatcher. In Pennies, Potter is therefore echoing and parodying a popular feeling of the time through his grumpy salesmen; figures whom, it is implied, are blind to the spiritual optimism which Arthur feels through the songs. For general overviews of the social and cultural history of the period, see Arthur Marwick's British Society Since 1945 (London: Allen Lane, 1982) and his Culture in Britain Since 1945 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991).

106. Pennies from Heaven, Episode Two, Script, p.78. Arthur's colleagues want to emigrate to the USA where "salesmanship" is not "a four letter word".

107. Potter even includes his own Tory politician on the make - one Major Archibald Paxville (played by Ronald Fraser) - who tries to exploit popular anxiety and disenchantment. In Episode Five, he is seen addressing a political meeting, where he uses the occasion of the jubilee to stoke up nationalist resentment against socialism: "The people... have shown their contempt for the sour and alien creeds which would set one class against another", he cries. He urges that the country must "build now... on the mood of this glorious Jubilee..." Potter parodies these 'little Englander' attitudes by having the politician suddenly burst out into a mimed rendition of "On the Other Side of the Hill". (Pennies from Heaven, Episode Five, Script, pp.43-4)

108. Pennies from Heaven, Episode Six, Script, p.105.

109. Pennies from Heaven, Episode Two, Script, p.96.

110. Pennies from Heaven, Episode Five, Script, p.39.

111. Pennies from Heaven, Episode Two, Script, p.48.

112. Pennies from Heaven, Episode Five, Script, p.29.

113. The metaphor is made explicit in Episode Five when this is literally what he becomes, as he lives off her immoral earnings while she sleeps with an M.P. in order to pay for their aspirations to a better lifestyle. The M.P. is in fact the same Conservative the drama had earlier portrayed stirring up resentment against socialism (See Note 107). If the politician's liaisons with prostitutes underline his hypocrisy, at the same time they also emphasise Arthur's complicity in the exploitation of Eileen. The M.P.'s name is Archibald Paxville - 'A.P.': Arthur Parker's initials.

114. Pennies from Heaven, Episode Three, Script, p.72.

115. As with Brimstone and Treacle, sexual assault (Arthur's forced seduction of Eileen) thus becomes a transformative act. It coarsens Eileen but it also makes her stronger - a particular evil brings an ultimate good (: § 2.3 b).

116. Pennies from Heaven, Episode Four, Script, p.102.

117. Pennies from Heaven, Episode Three, Script, pp.48-9.

118. - Just as the trial of Karl Hulten was at the Old Bailey (: § 4.1 a).

119. Pennies from Heaven, Episode Six, Script, p.116.

120. The only exception to this is in Episode Two when Arthur's wincing memories of striking his wife, Joan, are rendered by means of a brief flashback to the event. This is significant. It means that it is only at the point when Arthur feels a brief spasm of guilt over his behaviour towards Joan that Potter employs the kind of flashback techniques which he used to represent the inner torments of his 'torn' protagonists in his single play work. For the rest of the drama, there are no flashbacks. This shows that Arthur is a much simpler character than other Potter protagonists. For most of the time, he is refreshingly guilt-free. It is thus the complexity or otherwise of the main character which determines the complexity of Potter's drama and his choice of 'non-naturalistic' devices. As with the contemporaneous Blue Remembered Hills, Pennies is a

much simpler drama in formal terms, compared to other Potter works, precisely because the characters it depicts are so simple and 'child-like'.

121. Pennies from Heaven, Episode Two, Script, p.90.

122. Pennies from Heaven, Episode Two, Script, pp.90-1.

123. Pennies from Heaven, Episode Two, Script, p.91.

124. Dennis Potter, Introduction, Brimstone and Treacle, (London: Eyre Methuen, 1978), p.3.

125. Compare all this with Casanova seven years before. Then, the angst of a 'torn' central protagonist was represented by means of a complex flashback structure. In Pennies, Potter opts for simplicity. The simplicity of his main protagonist's yearnings and desires is represented through a simple chronological plot, the linearity of which is only disrupted by the musical numbers' moments of bright escape.

126. Trodd, Sleeve Notes, Pennies from Heaven LP.

127. Dennis Potter, "Realism and Non-Naturalism 2", The Official Programme of The Edinburgh International Television Festival 1977, August 1977, p.36.

128. Dennis Potter, The Singing Detective, (London: Faber and Faber, 1986), p.220. This is what Potter has his main protagonist, Philip Marlow, tell Nurse Mills in his 1986 drama (: § 5.3 c). In his introduction to the published script of Cream in My Coffee, Potter himself recalls bath nights "on the Sunday evenings of long ago" when, as a child, he would listen to dance orchestras playing on the radio. (Dennis Potter, Waiting for the Boat, On Television, London: Faber and Faber, 1984, p.135) See also Hide and Seek, in which Daniel Miller remembers the songs of Al Bowlly coming from the radio downstairs, just as he was drifting off to sleep (: § 3.1). Hence, 'the songs' are indelibly lodged in the memory as one of the first things heard in childhood. In that sense, they provide access to that lost childhood of 'long ago'.

129. Dennis Potter, "When the Penny Dropped", interview by Ray Connolly, London Evening Standard, 21 March 1978, p.8.

130. Far from being a location choice of the director, Piers Haggard, Potter specifies in his original script that it should be Hammersmith Bridge. In interview, he explained the reason for the recurrence of the motif of Hammersmith Bridge in his work. When, in 1945, he came to London as a child of ten and stayed in Hammersmith for nine months, he and his sister used to walk along Hammersmith Bridge (: § 0.1). Half way along, there was a little plaque which indicated that a Captain had jumped off the bridge (like the Accordion Man in Pennies) and drowned. Potter states that that image used to haunt him as a ten year old because the bridge trembled in high wind. For the writer, it became an "emblematic symbol of childhood terror". (Potter, Personal Interview). See Chapters Five and Six for discussion of the use of 'Hammersmith Bridge' in The Singing Detective and Blackeyes (: § 5.3 c; 6.1 c)

131. The fact that the Accordion Man is a 'torn' protagonist, racked by inner torment, is indicated by a key scene from Episode One. After Arthur has passed him once more on the road and sped by him, the

Accordion Man suddenly has a violent epileptic fit. As Potter's script directions describe it, he "collapses, his heels drum on the tarmac road. His head thrashes in the long grass... Move into close shot of the suffering hiker... heels drumming, body thrashing". (Script Directions, Pennies from Heaven, Episode One, Script, p.114) The pain of rejection and marginalisation by society has induced a violent seizure. The torments of the mind have erupted onto his body: that is, the extreme psychic disjunction he feels between his beloved hymns and the reality of his existence.

132. Though only implicit here, Potter would explore this transformation more explicitly in The Singing Detective (: § 5.3 c).

133. Pennies from Heaven, Episode One, Script, p.74.

134. Pennies from Heaven, Episode Two, Script, p.90.

135. Dennis Potter, "Paradise, Perhaps", interview by John Wyver, Time Out, 3 - 9 March 1978, p.13.

136. Dennis Potter, "Flavour of Decay", interview by John Cunningham, The Guardian, 6 December 1983, p.11.

137. Dennis Potter, "Potter to the Rescue", interview by P.J. Kavanagh, The Sunday Telegraph Magazine, 4 June 1982, p.44.

138. Clare Downs, "Producers Profile: A.I.P. Chairman Kenith Trodd", A.I.P. & Co., No.27, July - August 1980, p.19.

139. Dennis Potter, "Potter Rights", letter to the editor, Broadcast, 6 October, 1980, p.9. If, for viewers of the original drama, the relocation of Arthur to Chicago has a clear symbolic significance (Arthur finally reaches his 'holy city'), Potter's first screenplay version is nevertheless a faithful translation of the plays. The main protagonist may have 'escaped' to a US setting but this is only in order to be depicted struggling in the Great American Depression. Running to one hundred and seventy pages, the original screenplay features most of the principal scenes from the TV serial as well as a new indigenous sub-plot, in which Arthur and Eileen become involved with Chicago gangsters (amongst them, John Dillinger). All of this was later cut from the final screenplay draft. For comparison, see the original and final drafts of the Pennies screenplay which are both held in the British Film Institute Script Library.

140. Potter, "Potter Rights", p.9.

141. Potter, "Potter to the Rescue", p.44. As Potter explained in this interview, the trick of working for Hollywood was to "make them think they could use you" and then, when having won a position of trust, to pitch one's own ideas. Originally, Potter had been hired by Ross to write the screenplay for the follow-up to his hit 1977 ballet film, The Turning Point. Set both in London and New York, this new film was to have revolved around a 'torn' heroine: a ballet dancer caught between her career and motherhood. (Source: "Potter's Next Stop - Dollars from Heaven", London Evening Standard, 1 March, 1979, p.6) Though Potter did write the screenplay, the film, titled Unexpected Valleys never got made. By this time, however, Ross, a former dancer and choreographer, had established himself as one of the premier directors in Hollywood; his last two films, The Turning Point and The Goodbye Girl (1978), having

both been popular successes and Academy Award winners. Together with his producer wife, the late Nora Kaye (a former ballerina), he was thus in a position to pick and choose and to take risks with more personal 'artistic' projects like Nijinsky and then, the Pennies movie. Ross subsequently in the eighties went on to direct such hit movies as Footloose (1984) and Steel Magnolias (1989), as well as the tellingly named My Blue Heaven (1990), which saw him reunited with Pennies star, Steve Martin.

142. This information on the pre-production of the Pennies movie comes from a personal interview with Rick McCallum (Tape Recording, BBC Television Centre, London, 9 March 1990). In 1980, McCallum was a twenty seven year old ex-Columbia business school graduate, then resident in Hollywood, who was hired by Ross to act as the movie's executive producer.

143. Al Pacino turned down the role because he apparently could not "square the ethnic origins" of the main character. (Downs, "Producer's Profile...", p.19)

144. McCallum, Personal Interview.

145. As Paul Taylor put it in a review of the movie, it was "hard to take Martin seriously as an immature bastard". (Taylor, review of MGM Pennies from Heaven, BFI Monthly Film Bulletin, Vol.49, No.582, July 1982, p.129)

146. Gross figures for The Jerk, as cited in The South Bank Show: Steve Martin, tx. ITV 22 April 1990.

147. Source: Potter, "Potter Rights", p.9.

148. Piers Haggard, in interview, remembers feeling "pretty cheated" at the suppression of the TV Pennies, as did most of the cast and crew: "It's like eight months of my life down the pan", Bob Hoskins complained (qtd. in Moline, p.80). It was only in 1990 that the BBC were again able to show the original Pennies again, when its overseas enterprise arm, Lionheart, bought the rights back from media mogul Ted Turner (the new owner of MGM).

149. Clive Hodgson, review of MGM Pennies from Heaven, Films and Filming, April 1982, p.25.

150. In this way, there were no major rewrites of the script, just much that was truncated. For example, lengthy scenes depicting Arthur's trial were reduced to several lines of dialogue between salesman and judge. Likewise, the presence of Joan (almost as ubiquitous as that of Arthur and Eileen in the original TV version) was whittled down to a few domestic scenes with her husband, plus a police interview near the close of the film in connection with the blind girl murder. In other words, what got omitted from the final draft of the screenplay were all the elements of comedy and irony that had marked the TV version: the playful satire on the legal system in the trial scenes; the petit-bourgeois pretensions and anxieties of Joan and so on.

151. The production design (by Ken Adam) combines with the direction to turn the Depression scenes into a series of darkly lit tableaux. As many reviewers pointed out at the time of the film's release, the movie painstakingly reconstructs the Great Depression on stylised sets, using precise visual quotations from the paintings of Edward Hopper and the

photography of Walker Evans. See, for example, Pauline Kael, "Dreamers", review of MGM Pennies from Heaven, first published The New Yorker, 14 December 1981. Reprinted Taking It All In, (London / New York: Marion Boyars, 1982), p.273. (All page references are to the reprint)

152. Another example of this is the treatment of the scene in which Arthur encounters the blind girl. The meeting takes place not in a field (as in the TV version) but on some waste ground in a derelict quarter of Chicago. Much of the sexual tension of the scene is gone too - the audience does not hear Arthur whisper his sexual lust for her, simply his shout of 'Be careful !'. By setting the scene against a desolate Depression landscape, the film thus makes both the salesman and the blind girl come to seem suffering victims, trapped in an environment from which neither can escape. In the feature film version, when Arthur tells her to take care, it is as one casualty of the Depression warning another.

153. Potter, "Potter to the Rescue", p.44.

154. Dennis Potter, "Dollars from Hollywood", interview by Robert Brown, BFI Monthly Film Bulletin, Vol.49, No.582, July 1982, p.129.

155. Pennies from Heaven, Screenplay, MGM Final Draft, 18 August 1980 (with revised pages, 1981), p.119. BFI Script Library.

156. Potter, "Dollars from Hollywood", p.129.

157. Potter, "Dollars from Hollywood", p.129.

158. Rick McCallum, interview, The Late Show, tx. BBC-2 12 April 1990. Focusing on the preview process of new feature films, this programme included a brief examination of Pennies' disastrous preview.

159. "A bowdlerised comic strip version of the original, in which cheap music has once again been rendered impotent", was how Clive Hodgson described the film. (Hodgson, p.24)

160. Kael, p.277.

161. Indeed several years later, the studio was bought out by the Turner Entertainment Company.

162. Dennis Potter, "Potter's Art", interview by Steve Grant, Time Out, 8 - 15 October 1986, p.25.

163. Potter, "Potter Rights", p.9.

164. Potter, "Dollars from Hollywood", p.129.

165. Dennis Potter, "Return of the Prodigal Potter", interview by Sue Summers, The Sunday Times, 15 September 1985, p.17.

166. Sean Day-Lewis, "Potter Switches Screens", The Daily Telegraph, 20 October 1980, p.10.

CHAPTER FIVE

1. For example, Potter and Trodd's progress was closely followed by the Association of Independent Producers (see Clare Downs, "Producers Profile: A.I.P. Chairman Kenith Trodd", A.I.P. & Co. No.27, July - August 1980, pp.17-20). The formation of an 'open' fourth TV channel having been recommended by The Annan Committee three years earlier, this became law, under the first Conservative Government of Margaret Thatcher in November 1980, when a new Broadcasting Bill bringing Channel 4 into existence received its Royal Assent. The Channel was launched exactly two years later, in November 1982, with a remit to act as 'publisher' for the work of independent TV producers.

2. Dennis Potter, "For 17 Years I've Been Fantasizing About How to Improve TV", interview by Richard Grant, London Evening News, 21 May 1979, p.10.

3. Dennis Potter, qtd. in "PFH Will Now Produce Six Potter Plays with LWT", The Stage and Television Today, 24 May 1979, p.18. Powell's A Dance to the Music of Time clearly connected with some of Potter's own interests as a writer: the relationship between a writer's fiction and his autobiography; the interplay between past and present; the shape of history and of character's lives within history.

4. Potter, "For 17 Years...", p.10.

5. Downs, p.18. Besides the Potter scripts, Blade on the Feather, Rain on the Roof and Cream in My Coffee which did eventually get produced, the other three Potter projects cited in the original deal included a rough idea for a drama revolving around the singer Sam Browne. There was also, according to Trodd, a sketchy outline for a Potter drama based on a meeting between Charles Dickens and Hans Christian Andersen. (Kenith Trodd, Personal Interview, Tape Recording, BBC Television Centre, London, 8 November 1989). In Potter on Potter, the writer himself also cites the idea for a play about Hitler's last days in the Bunker in 1945 and the fact that Goebbels' children were also there. (Graham Fuller [ed.], Potter on Potter, London: Faber and Faber, 1993, p.58) None of these notions were ever developed into scripts. They were really just ideas quickly sketched out in order to conclude the deal with LWT. Meanwhile, the other three works in the nine drama package were projects brought to LWT under the aegis of Trodd: an adaptation of the William Trevor short story, The Ballroom of Romance; a two-part Jim Allen drama, called The Commune, about a community's fight against Government cuts in social services and finally, a much vaguer idea for a drama that would function as a vehicle for the talents of the actor, Ken Campbell. (Source: Trodd, Personal Interview)

6. Potter, "For 17 Years...", p.10.

7. Downs, p.18. In interview, Trodd asserts his belief that the reason Grade presented the LWT Board with seriously underestimated costs for the first three Potter plays was because he had simply compared the budgets of Trodd's BBC work and thought the producer could deliver the equivalent for the same costs at LWT. What he had failed to realise was that (at least before the days of 'Producer Choice'), all costings at the BBC had to be treated with extreme caution because there was an 'above the line' and a 'below the line' budget. 'Above the line' was the budget individually given to Trodd by the BBC to produce a particular play but underneath this was a whole raft of hidden costs that were met elsewhere within the Corporation. These had to do with the employment and

maintenance of a fixed staff which worked across a range of BBC productions. Before the days of 'Producer Choice' and the extensive use of free-lance crews at the BBC, every production was thus cushioned by hidden subsidies that were beyond the accounting of the individual producer. It was this fact which Grade seems to have overlooked in his 'purchase' of Potter and Trodd and which led to trouble over budgets. (Trodd, Personal Interview) Trodd's view has also been cited in a recent unauthorised biography of Grade which touches on the PFH / LWT deal. See Mihir Bosé, Michael Grade: Screening the Image, London: Virgin Books, 1992, p.110).

8. Trodd, Personal Interview. To produce Rain on the Roof in the TV studio would have been feasible since domestic interiors predominate in the drama. Despite Potter urging him to compromise in order to keep faith with LWT, Trodd refused, responding that he had been 'bought' by the company to make drama on film and that any changes to this would be going back on the bold claims he and Potter had made, amidst the blaze of publicity which had surrounded the deal. By this time, Trodd was an ardent campaigner for drama shot on film rather than in the TV studio. In 1977, he had compiled the famous "Trodd Index" of the first 100 BBC dramas to be shot on film. This was in stark contrast to Potter who favoured the writer-led arena of the electronic studio (: § 5.2). The "Trodd Index" was first published in Vision, Vol.2, No.1, March 1977, pp.13-19. It was subsequently revised and updated, with a new introduction by Trodd, for Jayne Pilling and Kingsley Cranham (eds.), The Screen on the Tube - Filmed TV Drama, Cinema Dossier No.1, (Norwich: Cinema City, 1983), pp.53-75.

9. Peter Fiddick, "Counting the Pennies", The Guardian, 29 July 1980, p.9.

10. Trodd, Personal Interview.

11. Downs, p.19. After its rejection by LWT, Trodd took the two-part The Commune back to the BBC where it became a single film, United Kingdom (Dir: Roland Joffé; tx. BBC-1 Play for Today, 11 December 1981). The Ballroom of Romance, which had been a part of the original PFH package of plays, also later became a BBC single film under Trodd. Since the end of the LWT deal, Trodd has been on a rolling contract with the BBC which also allows him to do 'independent' work outside the Corporation.

12. Downs, p.19.

13. Michael Grade qtd. in Robin Stringer, "LWT Drops Potter Films", The Daily Telegraph, 29 July 1980, p.1.

14. Fiddick, p.9.

15. John Wyver, "For a Few Pennies More", Time Out, 8 - 14 August 1980, p.24.

16. Trodd, Personal Interview. Trodd's testimony is confirmed by Time Out's report that LWT management faced an open revolt following the collapse of the PFH deal. See Wyver, p.24.

17. Trodd's attitude to budgets is best summed up by his remark: "Does anybody say, 'You know that film at the Haymarket? I must go and see it, it came in under budget'. Nobody ever said it. What they go and see are good films. So if ever I was in a position that [a director] wanted

something he felt was crucial to the film, I backed him". (Trodd, qtd. in Bosé, p.112)

18. Wyver, p.24: "When they signed the PFH agreement, LWT obviously felt that they would have little need to worry about budgets. But as the awareness of a possible cash crisis grows within commercial television, what are now seen as extravagances are being cut back on".

19. Dennis Potter, "Why British TV Is Going to the Dogs", Daily Mail, 30 July 1980, p.12.

20. Potter, "Why British TV...", p.12. The irony, of course, is that Grade - the enemy of the 'independent' producer in 1980 - would, later in the decade, take over from Jeremy Isaacs as Chief Executive of Channel Four (in 1988). Potter and Grade would also become firm allies and friends again - indeed to such an extent that the writer, in his final interview, would cite his "fondness" for Grade and entrust him (along with BBC-1 Controller Alan Yentob) with the task of making sure his final works, Karaoke and Cold Lazarus, were produced in accordance with his last wishes (Dennis Potter, interview, Without Walls: An Interview with Dennis Potter, tx. Channel 4, 5 April 1994) (: § Conclusion). Perhaps as a result of guilt over the PFH affair, Grade became Potter's champion in the eighties. As Director of Programmes at the BBC, he ensured that The Singing Detective was broadcast uncut, whilst he also personally authorised the unbanning of Brimstone and Treacle (: § 5.3 d). A year later, Potter would return the compliment by 'defecting' to Channel 4 with Lipstick on Your Collar, when Grade became Chief Executive (: § 6.1 a). It was on Channel 4 that Potter mainly stayed in his final years - benefiting from Grade's willingness to clear the schedules for him, whenever he wished to communicate his opinions about the way television and society in general were heading (: § Conclusion). One clue as to why Grade and Potter should find each other so mutually compatible comes from Kenith Trodd's remark that both men have the ability to "create an atmosphere, a situation, a feeling of euphoria when everything seems possible". (Trodd, qtd. in Bosé, p.107) It was thus the flamboyance and larger than life, colourful nature of Grade to which Potter responded.

21. Soundtrack, Rain on the Roof, wr: Dennis Potter; dir: Alan Bridges; prod: Kenith Trodd; tx. ITV 26 October 1980. Videocassette Recording.

22. Dennis Potter, "My Heritage is Chips Says Dennis Potter", interview by Anne de Courcey, London Evening News, 17 October 1980, p.9.

23. Soundtrack, Rain on the Roof. The names of the husband and wife in the play, Janet and John, echo the adult literacy theme.

24. Note that Potter's father died in November 1975, at a time which coincided with a move to a greater faith and spiritual optimism in the writer's own work (: § 2.3 d).

25. John Wyver, writing in Time Out, expressed the view that out of the three LWT plays, Rain on the Roof was the "Potter script dangerously close to self-parody". (Wyver, "Television: Selections", preview of Rain on the Roof, 24 - 30 October 1980, p.76)

26. Dennis Potter, "Some Sort of Preface...", Waiting for the Boat. On Television, (London: Faber and Faber, 1984), p.34.

27. Dennis Potter, "The Long Non-Revolution of Dennis Potter", interview by John Wyver, Time Out, 17 - 23 October 1980, p.18.

28. Fiddick, p.9.

29. Trodd, Personal Interview. Niven went to Hollywood. Mason stayed in Britain during the war.

30. Losey, an American exile from McCarthyism, had based himself in England for many years, before taking up residence in France in the seventies and early eighties. He famously collaborated with Pinter on The Servant (1963), as well as Accident (1967) and The Go-Between (1971). The director, in fact, first encountered Potter as long ago as 1967, when they had both appeared on a BBC TV programme, The Look of the Year, significantly to discuss the thirties (: Losey from direct experience as a political radical during the period; Potter from childhood memory). It was then that Losey first developed an interest in working with the writer. For reference to Losey's encounter with Potter, see Tom Milne (ed.), Losey on Losey, (London: Secker and Warburg, 1967), p.41. For Losey's career biography, see, amongst many other sources, Michel Ciment (ed.), Conversations with Losey (London: Methuen, 1985).

31. Losey in fact turned Sufficient Carbohydrate down because, as he put it in a letter to the writer, he felt "the play as a whole, not up to the standard" of other Potter works he had seen. (Joseph Losey. Letter to Dennis Potter, 1 December 1982. Joseph Losey Archive, British Film Institute) A number of suggestions for other collaborative projects with Potter can be found amongst Losey's personal correspondence. In one letter to Graham Greene, he moots Potter as a possible writer for a film adaptation of Greene's novel, Dr. Fischer Goes to Geneva (Joseph Losey. Letter to Graham Greene, 11 December 1982. Losey Archive). Other proposals made during this time were adaptations of Muriel Spark's Not To Disturb; Joan Didion's A Book of Common Prayer and Aldous Huxley's Chrome Yellow.

32. In keeping with his 'new entrepreneurism' of the early eighties, Potter used his money from scriptwriting in Hollywood to buy up the rights to some of his old television plays - for example, Alice and Double Dare - with a view to turning them into feature film scripts. Schmoedipus was one of those.

33. Trodd, Personal Interview. In 1975, such a convergence between the film and television industries had been advocated by a Government Committee looking into the future of the British film industry, backed by Harold Wilson. Under David Rose, Channel Four's Film on Four initiative had taken up the idea, funding feature films for theatrical release and subsequent television transmission. By 1982, with producers like Trodd campaigning for all-film drama, the BBC felt it had to respond to this new competition which was in danger of sucking away its dramatic talent. In contrast with Trodd, Potter was always much more sanguine about the move to film. His Track 29 initiative can be seen as an attempt simply to keep abreast of the times - both in terms of helping the BBC not to fall by the wayside in this new, more competitive climate and also trying to maintain an international (as well as national) profile for his work, in the wake of his screenwriting activities in Hollywood.

34. According to Rick McCallum, Potter gave him \$ 25 000 expenses and a challenge to see if he could raise the necessary finance to turn Track 29 / Tears Before Bedtime into a viable movie project. In fact, prior to

Losey's involvement, Potter had originally wanted to direct the film himself. McCallum had struck a deal with the new film division of A & M records for Track 29 to feature Sting (fresh from his work on the movie version of Brimstone and Treacle) in the central role of the young 'outsider' character, Martin. Due to illness, however, Potter was not fit enough at the time to take on the demanding role of first-time director and so the deal collapsed. This therefore illustrates how far back Potter's desire to direct his own work actually stretched (: § 6.1 a). McCallum also states that in deciding to work for Potter, he "burned a lot of bridges" - giving up a lucrative lifestyle in Hollywood in order to become a 'guerilla' independent producer because he responded so much to Potter's work, having enjoyed working with him so much on the movie version of Pennies. (Rick McCallum, Personal Interview, Tape Recording, BBC Television Centre, 16 March, 1990).

35. Joseph Losey. Letter to Ann Duffey, 17 August 1983. Losey Archive.

36. Joseph Losey. Letter to Anthony Higgins, 17 August 1983. Losey Archive.

37. Rick McCallum, Personal Interview, Tape Recording, BBC Television Centre, 9 March 1990. The BBC's decision was undoubtedly for budgetary reasons. It clearly felt that with no in-house facilities of its own in this area, the costs of production and post-production on 35mm were going to be too expensive for a single film.

38. Patricia Losey, Afterword, Conversations with Losey, (ed.) Michel Ciment, (London: Methuen, 1985), p.385. Losey died on 22 June 1984. According to McCallum, Potter used his own money to recompense Losey for the collapse of the film. (McCallum, Personal Interview)

39. Kenith Trodd, "Trodd on the Road to Success", interview by Roma Felstein, Broadcast, 3 August 1984, p.23.

40. Kenith Trodd, "Infiltrating Aunty", A.I.P. & Co., No.68, October 1985, p.8. In an article for the Association of Independent Producers, Trodd nevertheless still lamented the slowness of change at the BBC, in terms of its reluctance to allow its producers to put together their own crew, make their own deals, work on 35mm or balance their own budget, as their counterparts did at Channel Four.

41. In fact, a 1989 BBC film, Poison Candy, was the first to be shot and edited on 35mm for theatrical release abroad. This was quickly followed by the Trodd-produced She's Been Away (wr: Stephen Poliakoff; dir: Peter Hall; tx. BBC 1 Screen One, 8 October 1989) which became a prize-winning film at the Venice Film Festival. In many ways, it was Potter's model, worked out with Track 29, which provided the blueprint by which the BBC would later try to reconcile itself in this fashion with the world of independent film production outside its walls. Such a trend towards film-making has continued in BBC TV drama into the nineties, though it now seems to be undergoing something of a retrenchment under the Director-Generalship of John Birt. With the appointment of Charles Denton as Head of the Drama Group in 1993, Mark Shivas has been moved sideways and now heads only the Corporation's film arm (BBC Films). There is talk of the single television studio play making a comeback (- a move which may be as much for reasons of production cost, as any desire to see a flowering of new writing and directing talent). For further discussion of these trends, see, for example, Charles Denton's

comments on assuming the Headship of BBC TV Drama Group in "Nowhere to Go Except Up", interview by Andy Lavender, The Times, 21 July 1993, p.35.

42. Dennis Potter, "A Suitable Sleuth for Treatment", interview by Philip Oakes, Radio Times, 15 - 21 November 1986, p.100. Gorky Park was published in 1981. A Cold War thriller, its plot revolves around Chief Investigator Arkady Renko of the Soviet Militia, as he sets about trying to solve the murder of three faceless bodies, discovered in the snow in Gorky Park. His resulting investigation uncovers a web of corruption, stretching from the smuggling activities of an American businessman to the K.G.B. itself. Potter, with his knowledge of Russian and his personal interest in the Cold War stretching back to National Service days, clearly had an ability to respond to this material (: § 2.1). Though a conventionally plotted thriller, the film offered a chance to portray to American audiences, a different view of the Soviet Union than the usual Cold War stereotypes. For one thing, it had a Russian (Renko) as the hero and an American as the villain (Osborne, the businessman). Also, Renko's work with the militia provided an opportunity to represent the Soviets not as an alien threat but as ordinary individuals, persevering against their own political system and its attendant corruption - again, unusual for Hollywood in the early Reagan years.

43. As Apted put it in one interview, "It was slightly like being castrated. All the strengths I have as a director are to be able to move into a place and use the human and physical geography. Not to have that was very difficult. I had to second guess and rely on second-hand material which is difficult with Russia because everything's political. I mean, you can't read a book about Russia without wondering whether it was written by the C.I.A. or K.G.B..." (Michael Apted, "The Rover's Return", interview by Nick Roddick, Stills, February - March 1984, p.33)

44. The American stars included William Hurt (Renko), Lee Marvin (Osborne) and Brian Dennehy in the role of Kirwill, an American cop who comes to Moscow looking for his missing son. Marvin would subsequently be cast in Losey's abandoned version of Track 29, while Dennehy, ten years later, would star in the BBC production of Potter's screenplay, Midnight Movie (in 1993). (: § Conclusion).

45. This is in accord with Potter's adaptations for TV where he seldom sought to impose his own authorial point of view (: § 2.3 d).

46. The movie version of Brimstone had a complex financing arrangement that involved numerous investors ("Sherwood Productions"; "Namara Films" and "Alan Solkein in association with Herbert Solow" are listed in the credits). As a result, this created compromises. Only Denholm Elliot as Mr. Bates survived from the cast of the original TV play. For the role of the invading demon, the pop star, Sting, was enlisted in an attempt to attract American investors. As Trodd recalls, these investors were less interested in Sting's acting abilities than in trying to gain a Police album out of the deal (Trodd, Personal Interview). In order to recoup investment in the film, a great many 'spin-offs' were marketed in the wake of the movie's release. A soundtrack album featuring Sting and his group The Police, together with other 'post-Punk' bands, was released. Meanwhile, one of the investors, Namara (Quartet Books), published a novelization of the screenplay (written, in fact, by Potter's daughter, Sarah). At the same time, Sting released a single (his version of an old Tin Pan Alley dance number, known to Potter and Trodd) called "Spread A Little Happiness". This got to Number 16 in the British pop charts.

47. Trodd, Personal Interview. The remnants of this attempt to 'radicalise' Brimstone can be found in the pop video Sting subsequently made to promote "Spread A Little Happiness". It features himself as Martin, singing the song, as he feeds the hungry in a thirties-style soup kitchen. In keeping with the overall religious theme of the film, he is wearing a vicar's dog-collar.

48. For example, see Robert Brown, review of Brimstone and Treacle feature film, BFI Monthly Film Bulletin, Vol.49, No.584, September 1982, pp.195-6. Critics, familiar with the fact that it had started life as a TV play, attacked the film for these reasons.

49. The Dreamchild script was written very quickly by Potter - in four and half days, after he had read that Alice Hargreaves had visited America in the thirties. (Graham Fuller [ed.], Potter on Potter, London: Faber and Faber, 1993, p.116) It can be easily seen how this premise had such a fascination for the writer: the nineteen thirties period setting; the relationship between childhood and old age, fiction and reality; the contrast between England and America. Above all, the idea of personal transformation - of finding a new life and having new experiences in a 'New World' - chimed exactly with Potter's own recent experiences of screenwriting in the capitalist 'Wonderland' of Hollywood (: § 3.0).

50. McCallum, Personal Interview.

51. Gavin Millar, Personal Interview, Tape Recording, Central London, 14 March 1990.

52. McCallum, Personal Interview. The scenes improvised by the director that ended up on the cutting room floor included those of Dodgson as a 'good uncle' figure, playing with Alice and her friends. Also, one whole character was cut out of the film: Nigel Hawthorne was cast in the role of Alice's father, the Dean of Oxford, only to find himself completely edited out of the released version of the movie.

53. Trodd, Personal Interview.

54. Dennis Potter, interview by Aljean Harmetz, New York Times, 4 October 1985, p.20. The reasons why Potter particularly wanted to keep control of this film can easily be deduced from its personal themes. See Note 49 overleaf and discussion of Dreamchild in Chapter Three.

55. Trodd, Personal Interview. Though Potter in interview denied that Trodd ever had much to do with the creation of his work: "I always self-generate [projects] and then go to somebody with them and it was always to him until suddenly with the new drugs and what have you, I started going out a little bit more into the world". (Dennis Potter, Personal Interview, Tape Recording, Eastbourne Mews, London, 10 May 1990) For further discussion of Potter's disputes with Trodd in the eighties, see Section 6.1 a.

56. Potter, Personal Interview. Potter's opinion may seem biased but his view is confirmed independently by Dreamchild's director, Gavin Millar. Millar states it would be wrong to think Trodd played no part in the making of the film but it is true to say the producer was less in evidence than during the shooting of Cream in My Coffee. To all intents and purposes, in terms of servicing the director's day to day needs, Millar states McCallum "was the producer of Dreamchild". (Millar, Personal Interview)

57. Trodd, Personal Interview. Trodd reiterates the point that he always has several projects on the go at once: "When we were doing Dreamchild, I was doing Four Days in July. When we were doing Brimstone and Treacle the movie, I was doing The Ballroom of Romance... When I was doing A Month in the Country, we were doing The Singing Detective - they were all overlapped..."

58. Millar, Personal Interview. Dreamchild was praised as "imaginative and gripping... a fascinating exploration". (Clancy Sigal, review, The Listener, 6 February 1986, p.36) According to Rick McCallum, the film was also amongst Spielberg and Scorsese's favourite films of the eighties. (McCallum, Personal Interview, 16 March 1990)

59. Qtd. in Aurthur Osman, "Potter's Right Royalty Gesture", The Times, Midland Diary, 23 September 1980, p.3. An example of Potter's claims for radio matching his beliefs in a 'common culture' through television, is his assertion in the station's tender document that local radio must "attempt to jump across the too easily built fences of the print... culture". (Potter, Severn Sound, ILR Franchise Application, Gloucester: Gloucestershire Broadcasting Company, p.23. IBA Archive)

60. The idea for a companion piece to Hide and Seek had arisen from an interview which the writer gave to The Times in 1984, in which he had suggested that the novel was an outdated form, largely displaced by film and television. It "hasn't got the mileage, the guts, the bravado to be of its time", Potter had said. (Potter, "A Risky Stand Against the Ironic Mode", interview by Bryan Appleyard, The Times, 14 March 1984, p.12) That prompted a furious response from novelist Paul Theroux who wrote to him asking him if he was aware how offensive his remarks were. Potter was later to recall that the full stop at the end of Theroux's postcard went right through the page. (Potter, "Making a Drama out of a Crisis ", interview by Bryan Appleyard, The Times, 9 September 1986, p.12) A year later, the writer became taken with the germ of an idea for a new work, involving the image of a man breaking down on a train. It could have become a TV work or screenplay but remembering Theroux, Potter began to write it as a novel. Amongst the good reviews, critic W. Stephen Gilbert wrote that the book revealed "a natural novelist, a novelist with the focus and control of a screenwriter, a screenwriter with the subtlety and detail of a novelist..." (W. Stephen Gilbert, "Potter's Field", review of Ticket to Ride, The Listener, 2 October 1986, p.23) Perhaps the most significant aspect about Ticket to Ride was that written around the same time as The Singing Detective, it shares some common structural similarities with it: see Chapter Three, n.109.

61. Sufficient Carbohydrate was premiered at the Cottage Theatre, Hampstead in December 1983. The play subsequently transferred to the West End in February 1984 where it enjoyed a successful run at the Albery Theatre. Potter later adapted it into a film, Visitors (Dir: Piers Haggard; tx. BBC-2 Screen Two, 22 February 1987) (: \$ 6.1 a). The writer had been approached before by various parties to write for the stage. In 1968, the National Theatre had commissioned a work from him and in 1976, the Oxford Playhouse but until his diversification away from television in the early eighties, nothing had ever appeared. A number of his television plays had, however, been adapted for the stage: not only the banned Brimstone and Treacle but also Son of Man, Only Make Believe and Vote, Vote, Vote for Nigel Barton (in which additional material from Stand Up was incorporated). More recently, Blue Remembered Hills has been staged by a number of theatre companies. These theatre runs were only ever after the television event and always subordinate to it. In contrast

to his vision of the more democratic space of television, Potter's consistent view of theatre was always that it was a minority pursuit for the middle classes. See, for example, his interview with Robert Cushman, "The Values of a Playwright", Radio Times, 3 - 9 April 1976, p.65.

62. Dennis Potter, "God Does Not Let Us See Him Because There's a Smile on His Face as He Looks Down on Our Antics", interview by James Murray, Daily Express, 22 May 1976, p.14.

63. Potter, "Some Sort of Preface...", p.32. If one ignores the 1987 Screen Two film, Visitors, this thought proved correct.

64. Potter, "Some Sort of Preface...", p.33.

65. Trodd was instrumental in these changes. Along with Graham Benson, he became one of the two producers appointed to oversee the first run of Screen Two films, launched in January 1986. See "BBC-2 Film Package Duo", Broadcast, 24 August 1984, p.5.

66. Potter, "The Values of a Playwright, p.61. See Section 2.3 d.

67. Dennis Potter, "Dennis in Wonderland", interview by James Saynor, Stills, No.21, October 1985, p.13.

68. Dennis Potter, qtd. in "Redemption from Under the Skin", profile, The Observer, 7 December 1986, p.9.

69. Tender Is the Night had long been a novel which the BBC Series and Serials Department had wished to adapt for television. Originally, Jonathan Powell was to have been producer but on becoming Head of Series and Serials, the project was bequeathed to former script editor Betty Willingale. Robert Knights directed the production. Source: Betty Willingale. Letter to the author. 4 July 1990.

70. Dennis Potter, "Return of the Prodigal Potter", interview by Sue Summers, The Sunday Times, 15 September 1985, p.17.

71. At the same time, as Jonathan Powell has acknowledged, the BBC Series and Serial Department was also under pressure in terms of its output. The success of Granada's The Jewel in the Crown had eroded the BBC's credibility as world leader in this type of 'quality' serial production. As Powell puts it, at that time, "We needed Dennis Potter more than he needed us". (Jonathan Powell, "Potter Tributes", The Guardian, 8 June 1994, sec. 2, p.4)

72. Philip Purser, Halliwel's Television Companion (ed.) Leslie Halliwell with Philip Purser, (London: Grafton Books, 1986), p.813. Tender won praise from viewers. In a letter to the Radio Times, one viewer described the "powerful performances, lavish locations and astute adaptation" as adding up to make the serial "almost perfection itself". Others, however, were less sure, feeling it had a "weak plot, unexplained incidents, funereal pace [and] unsympathetic characters". ("Letters", Radio Times, 23 - 29 November 1985, p.96)

73. Potter, "Return of the Prodigal Potter", p.17.

74. Dennis Potter, "Potter's Art", interview by Steve Grant, Time Out, 8 October 1986, p.25. Hence whereas in Pennies, Tin Pan Alley numbers were used almost uniformly to represent an alternative 'non-naturalistic' realm

of the spirit, the 1986 drama frequently progresses beyond this to suggest that popular music can be a potent instrument in the spiritual quest for self-discovery. Though nothing new in Potter's writing (see Moonlight on the Highway, for example), The Singing Detective takes this much further than before. The songs are used more sparingly. They become more revelatory. Remembered by the main protagonist, Philip Marlow, from his childhood, they help him as an adult to see things in a new way. A good example of this comes at the beginning of Episode Three when Marlow recalls the image of his father standing on a railway platform, forlornly waving goodbye to the train carrying his wife and child away to London. Over the image, Potter's script indicates the 1940 Mills Brothers tune, "Paper Doll" should play, with its verse: "I'll buy a paper doll to call my own..." (Dennis Potter, The Singing Detective, Published Script, London: Faber and Faber, 1986, p.86) The possession motif in the song anticipates subsequent flashbacks in the same episode in which the adult Marlow will recall witnessing his mother commit adultery. The song thus has a revelatory, investigatory function, being the first clue which leads inexorably to Marlow's disentanglement of the repressed mysteries of his own past.

75. Jon Amiel, Personal Interview, Tape Recording, Highgate, London, 27 February 1990. In a tribute to Potter, which appeared in The Guardian the morning after the writer's death, Jonathan Powell asserted his belief that Potter had originally pitched him the idea of an American searching for his lost love in post-war London because he was "wise enough to know that even the best intentioned tyro executive might have a problem with six hours of television about a man with a skin disorder in hospital". (Powell, "Potter Tributes", Sec 2, p.4) The difference between Potter's initial idea and the final script may simply, however, have been an evolution of the forties search narrative in the writer's mind: that is, the idea of a search led Potter to incorporate the cultural archetype of the era, the 'private eye'. Just as Potter's thirties drama, Pennies from Heaven, played on its links with the key film genre of the period (the musical), so too did his new drama then begin to develop associations with the archetypal genre associated with the forties: film noir. Likewise, the idea of a 'Singing Detective' - a crooner in a dance band who also solved mysteries - may not simply just have arisen from Potter's wish to incorporate the popular tunes of the forties into his drama. It may also be a reference to the original 'Singing Detective' of that period: Dick Powell, who literally made the transition from being a crooner in thirties musicals to playing Chandler's Philip Marlowe, when he starred in the 1944 RKO film, Farewell My Lovely (Dir: Edward Dmytryk).

76. Potter, "A Suitable Sleuth", p.98. This sadness echoes that which Potter had earlier expressed about the single play in Waiting for the Boat. See note 63.

77. Potter, "Potter's Art", p.25.

78. Emergency Ward 9 had the thirty minute format of the sit-com. As Chapter One noted, it was a social comedy about the misunderstanding and resentment between different social classes in a hospital ward. Like the whole era of the studio play itself, it too had long been 'lost' (: § 1.2).

79. Emergency Ward 9, Camera Script, p.4. Compare this with Episode Six of The Singing Detective in which Marlow is seen sitting up in bed working, whilst a hospital physiotherapist looks on: "Words. Words make me hold my breath", he tells her. (Potter, The Singing Detective, p.226)

Like Padstow, Marlow is also marked out as different from all the other (working class) patients on the ward - more educated, solitary and aloof.

80. Potter, The Singing Detective, p.108.

81. Potter, The Singing Detective, p.114. Hence the 'liberalism' of Padstow is displaced onto an earnest young houseman. Marlow is made older and more cynical than Padstow. It is he who dishes out the verbal abuse. In interview, Jon Amiel attests that during one of Potter's many visits to hospital, "there was a pakistani in the next bed of whom [the writer] was fond", just as Marlow is ultimately shown to be fond of Ali in the 1986 drama. Like the character Ali, this figure later died. (Amiel, Personal Interview)

82. Emergency Ward 9, Camera Script, p.26.

83. Note that according to Robert Cushman in the Radio Times of 1976, Emergency Ward 9 was written after Potter "had seen death for the first time in hospital". (Cushman, p.62) In a similar way to George's death in The Singing Detective, the 1966 play counterpoints the physical reality of this - in this instance, with the moral sanctimoniousness of the teacher and lay preacher, Padstow (: § 1.2).

84. Potter, "Some Sort of Preface...", p.19.

85. Potter, The Singing Detective, p.29.

86. Potter, "Potter's Art", p.23.

87. Potter, Personal Interview.

88. Potter, Personal Interview.

89. Dennis Potter, "Philip Marlow, Spotted Dick", interview by David Lewin, You Magazine, The Mail on Sunday, 2 November 1986, p.11: "I remember at one point dropping the pen and walking around the table and thinking, 'Come on now. It's only words and if anybody can write about it, I can'. But there were moments during the longhand of it when I felt 'Oh God, no' [and] then I felt I had to have a funny scene or another song because I have to entertain myself".

90. As Potter expressed it to the Radio Times, "Doctors think like detectives... They always believe they can come up with a cure. And this conjunction between their arrogance and the conventions of a detective story in which the mystery is neatly solved, is not displeasing to me". (Potter, "A Suitable Sleuth", p.100)

91. Potter, The Singing Detective, p.87.

92. Potter, The Singing Detective, p.94.

93. This is best indicated by the increasing fusion of narrative strands as the drama progresses: a gradual coalescence between Marlow's 'fantasy' and what the audience have been led to believe was external 'reality'. Hence the present-day (the eighties) becomes a noir landscape. Marlow's estranged wife, Nicola, is shown plotting with her apparent lover to defraud the hospitalised writer of a lucrative film deal. The atmosphere of subterfuge, paranoia and suspicion increasingly comes to resemble Marlow's thriller fantasies. When, in Episode Six, Nicola stabs her lover

in the throat, just as a scene from the 1945 thriller strand had shown Binney to have been stabbed, that coalescence is complete. The Nicola sub-plot is revealed to be the same dark Marlow fantasy as his noir detective novel: the same paranoid fiction (: § 5.3 c). Potter would return to this image of the eighties as a noir landscape of paranoia, repression and uncertainty in his 1987 novel (later 1989 TV serial), Blackeyes (: § 6.1 b).

94. Potter, "Return of the Prodigal Potter", p.17.

95. Potter, Personal Interview.

96. Potter, "A Suitable Sleuth", p.99.

97. Dennis Potter, "Potter Bears All", interview, London Evening Standard, 17 November 1986, p.6.

98. This information on the schedule and budget of the production is provided by the journalist James Saynor who visited the set during shooting. (James Saynor, Personal Interview, Tape Recording, Marylebone, London, 10 November 1989) BBC costings always have to be treated with caution, however: see note 7.

99. McCallum, Personal Interview, 9 March 1990.

100. Amiel, Personal Interview.

101. McCallum, Personal Interview.

102. Amiel, Personal Interview.

103. Trodd, Personal Interview. As Trodd puts it, Potter was mortified that he had left the production. When Trodd phoned Potter from Italy to ask how he had got on with Amiel, Potter's reply was that while the director was fine, he thought Trodd should no longer be on the production. In a tit for tat response, Trodd retorted that if that was the case, then Potter should no longer be the putative director of their planned film version of Sufficient Carbohydrate, as had been previously agreed. Enraged that Trodd should try and deprive him of his cherished ambition to direct his own work, Potter then tried to secure the producer's resignation from The Singing Detective and bring in McCallum in his place. Given Trodd was under contract as producer, there was nothing, however, which Potter could do to remove him. The rift between the two men proved intractable. Undoubtedly, it fuelled Potter's suspicions about Trodd's reluctance to let him direct his own work and contributed to their break-up during the production of Blackeyes (: § 6.1 a). Meanwhile, the choice of Amiel to direct The Singing Detective was something which, Trodd states, he had an "instinct about". Amiel was a former RSC and BBC script editor whose ability to handle writers would stand him in good stead with dealing with Potter. He had made the transition to directing through a number of BBC productions, though it was two of his pieces in particular, Busted and Gates of Gold, which, the director states, convinced Potter that he had the necessary directorial range to work on The Singing Detective. In the wake of the success of working on Potter's drama, Amiel has since graduated to making feature films. (Amiel, Personal Interview)

104. Amiel, Personal Interview.

105. Amiel, Personal Interview.

106. In interview, Potter states there is only really one aspect of Brecht he shares and values and that is the idea of avoiding emotional empathy - in other words, that it is easy to generate emotions in audiences but more difficult to make them think. (Potter, Personal Interview) This also helps explain his use of a distancing voice-over in Blackeyes to distance the audience from liking the child abuser, Kingsley (: § 6.1 c) See Conclusion for further discussion of Potter in relation to Brecht.

107. Amiel, Personal Interview. This ending is of some interest. As both Potter and Amiel describe it in interview, the drama was to have originally ended with a revelation about who the real arch-manipulator of all the narrative strands has been. In a comic twist, the name of one of Marlow's fellow patients, a senile old man whom Marlow had christened 'Noddy' (on account of his inability to stop nodding his head), was to have been revealed at the end as none other than 'Dennis Potter' himself. As Potter put it, it was an ending which Jon Amiel did not find satisfying: "It was a joke Jon couldn't live with. And I thought maybe [he's] right..." (Potter, Personal Interview) Amiel, for his part, states that after the big emotions which the previous five episodes had explored, this ending for the drama was too much like a writer games-playing: "Like a solution to a cross-word puzzle." (Amiel, Personal Interview) Notwithstanding this observation, such an ending, in which all layers of the drama are peeled away to reveal the 'real' writer, echoes the gradual stripping away of layers of 'fact' and 'fiction' which similarly revealed 'the Author' in Hide and Seek (: § 3.1; 5.3 c). Note that the special relationship which develops between Marlow and 'Noddy' in the 1986 drama is the remnant of this original plot idea of 'Noddy' as creative progenitor of Marlow.

108. Amiel, Personal Interview.

109. Amiel, Personal Interview. Again, this connects with the idea that while Amiel was for empathy, Potter was for the suppression of empathy. In the sixties, Williamson had played such 'angry' characters as Marler, the ferociously violent 'working class boy made good', in The Reckoning (Dir: Jack Gold, Columbia UK 1969). If his character echoed that of Marlow in The Singing Detective, even down to his surname, also significant is the fact that Williamson had famously recreated Hamlet on stage in the sixties, as an 'angry' rebel whose mood reflected attitudes of the period. (: § 5.3 c)

110. Amiel, Personal Interview.

111. Amiel, Personal Interview. As Amiel makes clear, the scenes in hospital were drained of all primary colours, with one notable exception: the bright red blouse worn by Marlow's wife Nicola, whenever she came to visit him. In this way, Nicola's status in Marlow's mind as 'scarlet woman' was emphasised. At the same time, for the film noir scenes, Amiel states he deliberately drew upon the image from the famous fifties advertisement, "You're Never Alone With A Strand", when framing shots of Marlow the detective, standing on Hammersmith Bridge alone, smoking a cigarette.

112. Note that it was thus more of a collaboration, rather than one party's contribution dominating the other's. In an essay titled "Who Done it ?", which appeared in British Television Drama in the Eighties, Joost Hunnigher gave an outline of some of the production details from The

Singing Detective and in so emphasising the contributions of the director and other personnel, almost gave the impression that it was Amiel 'who done it' rather than Potter. See Joost Hunningher, "The Singing Detective (Dennis Potter): Who Done It ?", British Television Drama in the Eighties, ed. George Brandt, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, pp.234-57. This seems to be going too far. As the director made clear in interview with me, The Singing Detective had changes made to it in terms of its ending and overall tone but this was only ever "in terms of what was already there". (Amiel, Personal Interview) Aside from the refashioning of certain aspects, outlined in the main text, all of the creative elements of The Singing Detective were already in place right from the very first draft of the script which Amiel saw. When the director loaned me the original script for a brief period, comparison with the final production revealed no major changes in scenes or structure. The production was realised in terms that stuck very closely to Potter's original blueprint. Amiel's chief contribution to the creative conception of The Singing Detective was in terms of his ability to act as story editor, urging Potter to rewrite and dig into himself more in order to bring out the emotions from which, because the material was so personally close to him, the writer had initially distanced himself. Amiel was thus the writer's catalyst rather than the sole progenitor of The Singing Detective. Given the drama's strong structural and thematic links with his other writing, to play down Potter's creative contribution to the work that ultimately reaches so closely into himself seems somewhat perverse (: § 5.3 c).

113. Examples of 'rewrites' that Amiel and Potter undertook at the editing stage principally revolve around flash-edits or short montage sequences consisting of shots taken from different episodes. The most memorable example of this is at the very end of the drama where a variety of images taken from all six episodes are juxtaposed associatively, as Vera Lynn's "We'll Meet Again" plays on the soundtrack (: § 5.3 c). As noted previously, Potter was always fascinated by the manipulation of images in the editing suite (: § 0.1). In both The Singing Detective and Blackeyes, he enjoyed trying to manipulate film as a 'dream' language by joining up disparate images and making unexpected associative connections between them through editing. This was what he meant by the editing stage as 'final rewrite' (: § 6.1 c; d).

114. Potter, The Singing Detective, p.231.

115. Potter, The Singing Detective, p.247.

116. Potter, The Singing Detective, p.248.

117. Potter, The Singing Detective, p.248.

118. To emphasise the parallel, the parts of both the Russian, 'Sonia' and the 'real' prostitute (upon whom Marlow has clearly based his thriller femme fatale) are played by the same actress (Kate McKenzie) in the finished production.

119. Potter, The Singing Detective, p.249.

120. Potter, The Singing Detective, p.187.

121. This is in keeping with Potter's 'non-naturalistic' emphasis (spelled out in his "Realism and Non-Naturalism" paper of 1977) on the manufacture

of all TV and TV drama, as opposed to what he sees as the medium's endemic, concealing 'naturalism' (: § 3.4).

122. Potter, The Singing Detective, p.248-9.

123. Potter, The Singing Detective, p.249.

124. Potter, The Singing Detective, p.58.

125. Potter, The Singing Detective, p.112.

126. Potter, The Singing Detective, p.117.

127. Potter, The Singing Detective, p.115. Potter's script directions make clear that "from the boy's incredulous point-of-view, the love-making seems akin to violence, or physical attack". (p.113)

128. Dennis Potter, Hide and Seek, (London: André Deutsch / Quartet Books, 1973; reprint, London: Faber and Faber, 1990), p.115. (Page reference is to the reprint edition.)

129. Potter, The Singing Detective, p.99. The characters of 'Lili' and Mrs. Marlow were both played by Alison Steadman in the production.

130. Potter, The Singing Detective, p.77.

131. Potter, The Singing Detective, p.186.

132. Thus in Hide and Seek, the infant Miller's awareness of "red marks" on his mother's neck "turning purple", become associated in the adult's mind with touching her cold, dead cheek. (Potter, Hide and Seek, p.33) (: § 3.1) Similarly, one sees sexual assault associatively linked with the death of a 'mother' in A Beast with Two Backs, Moonlight on the Highway and also in terms of the 'dead' mother-child bond in Schmoedipus / Track 29 (: § 1.3; 2.0 b; 2.2; 6.0).

133. Potter, The Singing Detective, p.71.

134. Potter, The Singing Detective, p.232.

135. Certainly, it is the suppression of emotion - of things that cannot be said - that dominates those scenes, subsequent to 'the Fall' in Episode Three, in which father and son do meet. At the beginning of Episode Six, when Mr Marlow is reunited with his son at the railway station on the latter's return from London, the dialogue between them is characterised by monosyllables. It is only when Mr Marlow suddenly exclaims, "I love you, Philip. I love you with all my heart", that the boy becomes animated. Once more, however, his concern is to suppress the revelation of feeling which, since the incident with his mother on the Underground, he has learned can literally 'kill': "Shhh !", he retorts. "... Some bugger might be listening, Dad. Kip tha' quiet !" (Potter, The Singing Detective, p.222.)

136. Potter, The Singing Detective, p.78.

137. William Shakespeare, Hamlet, Act 1, Sc.4, 1.67, The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (eds.) Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), p.661.

138. Potter, The Singing Detective, p.126.
139. Potter, The Singing Detective, p.9.
140. Potter, The Singing Detective, p.23-4.
141. Potter, The Singing Detective, p.39-40.
142. "Clever dick ! Clever dick ! Makes me sick !" are the taunts which the young Philip Marlow receives from his fellow pupils in Episode Two of the drama (Potter, The Singing Detective, p.76).
143. One clue for the change of classroom 'crime' from that depicted in Stand Up, comes from the following recollection which Potter recorded as long ago as 1959, in his early 'political' book, The Glittering Coffin: "There was the humiliating moment at school, at the primary school with the decaying classrooms, when the headmaster had gathered together the two top standards - the nine and ten year olds - to read out one of my compositions and had called me out in front of them all and given me sixpence for something that 'no boy in the whole of England could have done so well'. In my rage and misery at being identified as 'different', in the sense that no working class schoolboy wants to be different, I stayed behind after the final bell and wrote 'shit' on the blackboard so that I could be a hero again at the subsequent 'inquest'". (Dennis Potter, The Glittering Coffin, London: Gollancz, 1960, pp.76-7) The 'shit' on the blackboard becomes the 'shit' on the teacher's table in The Singing Detective. Both represent the rebellion of the ten year old child against the structures of patriarchal authority.
144. Potter, The Singing Detective, p.91.
145. Potter, The Singing Detective, pp.98-9.
146. Potter, The Singing Detective, p.165. The teacher's diction here is significant - if the young Philip does not own up to what he knows, to what he has seen, regarding the 'mess' on her table, then he will have to have 'the Big Stick': "You do know this", she warns him. "You do know that you will have to have the Big Stick... in front of the whole school..."
147. Potter, The Singing Detective, p.138.
148. Potter, The Singing Detective, p.166.
149. Potter, The Singing Detective, p.212. Marlow tells Gibbon, "I sat in my desk, perjurer, charlatan, and watched and listened and watched and listened as one after another they nailed that backward lad hands and feet to my story. I have not seriously doubted since that afternoon that any lie will receive almost instant corroboration and almost instant collaboration if the maintenance of it results in the public enjoyment of someone else's pain, someone else's humiliation". This idea of a lie becoming a truth for the sake of the persecution of an innocent echoes Stand Up, Nigel Barton and A Beast with Two Backs (: § 1.1; 1.3).
150. Just as with the earlier single plays, the clever child is therefore cast in a symbiotic relationship with the backward child as the same type of outcast from the community. In The Singing Detective, however, this is taken further and is dealt with much more explicitly than ever before. As Marlow reveals to Gibbon in this key Episode Six scene,

Binney himself came to be overwhelmed by the weight of the evidence ranged against him by the other children: "... this poor little sod came in the end to believe he had done it." As the writer recalls, it was only years later, when telling the classroom story to an old friend from his village, that he began to suspect his actions that day as 'a teller of stories' might have had lasting consequences. Asking his friend what became of Binney, his 'victim', he received the reply: "Mark is in the looney bin... Been there for years. A complete nutter". (Potter, The Singing Detective, p.213) Akin to Christ in Son of Man, Binney was thus literally crucified as 'a looney' - as his name suggests, consigned to the 'bin' in order to save Marlow and to allow him to continue his climb up the ladder of scholarly success.

Given that this motif of the victimised 'looney' child seems to be something of a recurring obsession in Potter's work, it seemed legitimate to ask the writer in interview whether it had any autobiographical origins. Potter's reply was sharp: "Why do you want to ask that?... Does it in any way address itself to the scene to know whether any such thing actually happened?... In a way - say it were the case that something very much less dramatic but similar had happened, in a way that diminishes the piece..." (Potter, Personal Interview) The actual autobiographical 'facts' are irrelevant beside the general 'truth' the fictional scene communicates. Nevertheless, for the record, Potter did talk on another occasion about the origins of the classroom betrayal scene. In the more informal context of a 1987 appearance on the Wogan chat show, he told of how, as a child of six at school, he stole a daffodil from the classroom window sill and when confronted by the teacher, put the blame on a child in another class, not thinking in his naivety that the teacher would go into the other class and fetch the child. If this closely mirrors the daffodil scene in Stand Up, Potter went further on the Wogan show by naming the child: "This was a child [who] I used to see running through the woods. His name was Abraham. I used to say, 'What you doing, Abe?' He'd say 'Trainin'... So I knew he was a potential victim from then on..." (: § 1.1) Compare this anecdote with Marlow's assertion to his psychotherapist in the 1986 drama that he used to see the young Mark Binney running through the woods: "'What bist thou doing, Mark?' I'd say, 'Trainin', he'd answer" (Potter, The Singing Detective, pp.212-3). Hence from all the evidence, 'Abe' appears the real-life prototype for both Georgie Pringle in Stand Up and Mark Binney in The Singing Detective. As Potter suggested on the Wogan show in 1987, "There are some things in childhood in particular [which] are written on your mind with such vividness, such pain and comedy, that they are bound to resurrect themselves in whatever you do..." (Dennis Potter, Interview, Wogan, tx. BBC-1 25 September 1987. Videocassette Recording.)

151. Something of the same positive-negative ambiguity is present in the child Marlow's blaming of Mark Binney for the 'flesh-crime' with which he himself is complicit. On one level, the boy Mark is an innocent, a scapegoat for Philip's own deeds but on another 'deeper' symbolic level, the young Marlow is indeed right to lay the blame for the moral 'mess' in which he finds himself at the door of a Binney. This is indicated in Episode Five, in the course of the child's revelations to his mother about the 'crime' he has seen in the woods. As he tells the shocked Mrs. Marlow, he saw her "doing that stuff. With thik Mr. Binney. With Raymond Binney. Mark's Dad". (Potter, The Singing Detective, p.186.) Hence Philip's surface lie has an underlying 'truth' to it. The defecation crime in the class has been as a consequence of his witnessing the sex 'crime' in the Forest between his mother and Mark's father, Mr. Binney senior. Behind the novice writer's fiction thus lies a deeper 'truth'.

152. Potter, The Singing Detective, p.233.

153. All of this has clear links with a familiar Christian literary and dramatic form: the spiritual autobiography of crisis. From St. Augustine's Confessions in the 4th Century A.D. through Wordsworth's Prelude to Eliot's Four Quartets in the twentieth century, the spiritual autobiography of crisis follows the familiar narrative pattern of an interior journey by the poet from darkness to light, despair to hope, whose end, as Eliot put it in the Four Quartets, is in its beginning so that to end is "to arrive where we started / And know the place for the first time". (T.S. Eliot, Four Quartets, London: Faber and Faber, 1944, p.86.) Hide and Seek can be seen to fit this form, with its apparently confessional prose which leads the 'Author' through a Dantean hell of personal suffering inexorably back to "The Beginning ! It came up at him... from a hand wet with soapy water" (Potter, Hide and Seek, p.164) (: § 3.1). At the culmination of his journey of the mind in the 1986 drama, Marlow, too, finds his own end at the beginning, achieving a sense of reintegration with his past and the boy in the tree. Moreover, akin to the poet at the end of Dante's Divine Comedy, the face of God which the protagonist is at last able to gaze upon as a reward for coming through spiritual trials, is also shown to be a reflection of his own. Man is revealed to be his own God: the middle-aged Marlow at the end becomes his own 'God the Father', recognising through his fictions his own sovereign power to shape his destiny. The Singing Detective is thus a veritable Christian epic: its narrative power deriving from the familiarity of the basic narrative structure it follows.

154. This has been legally proven. In 1990, Potter's elderly mother won substantial damages from the BBC and The Listener magazine in relation to comments which Mary Whitehouse made on the BBC Radio Four programme, In the Psychiatrist's Chair about The Singing Detective revolving around Potter having witnessed his mother commit adultery. The Listener, which printed the interview, subsequently had to carry an apology, making it clear that Mrs. Potter had always been faithful to her late husband. Mary Whitehouse later claimed that the reason for her comments was that she had 'blacked out' during the interview. See Ruth Picardie, "Feuds Corner: Mary Whitehouse v Dennis Potter and his Mum", The Guardian, 30 April 1992, sec.2, p.23.

155. Potter, "Potter Bears All", p.6: "Thus the playwright described... his first thoughts the morning after watching the first episode of... his new BBC television play".

156. For example, an item on The Singing Detective appeared on the BBC's Breakfast Time news programme (tx. BBC-1 14 November 1986). Also the BBC trailed the drama heavily prior to transmission, using clips from the drama with extracts from an interview featuring Potter talking about his new work.

157. John Lyttle, "Sing as You Go...", City Limits, 6 - 13 November 1986, p.21. First transmitted in November 1985, the Troy Kennedy Martin scripted thriller, Edge of Darkness, was an 'authored' serial, the success of which with audiences and critics had largely been greater than its BBC-2 scheduling had anticipated. Its initial transmission on the 'minority' channel was immediately followed by a December repeat run on BBC-1 (chiefly through the initiative of the Controller of BBC-1, Michael Grade, whose admiration for the serial fuelled his desire that it should be seen by a wider audience). The drama subsequently went on to win many awards for the BBC.

158. Alasdair Milne, D.G.: The Memoirs of a British Broadcaster, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1988), p.181-2. In interview, Milne attests how "happy we were to get Dennis" back at the BBC. (Alasdair Milne, Personal Interview, Tape Recording, Holland Park, London, 5 March 1990)

159. The goal essentially remained that which he first articulated in the sixties - the desire to communicate with as much of the potential audience as possible and as many different types and classes of viewer, in order to demonstrate the possibility, however temporary and qualified, of a 'common culture'. Akin to the BBC's perception of a threat to its conception of itself as a public service broadcaster for all of the audience, the proliferation of media outlets in the eighties and the consequent fragmentation of audiences, meant that Potter had to work harder to achieve this aim, being more aggressive in the marketing of his own work and the concept of broadcasting communality it represented, precisely because of the more aggressive market-orientated media environment in which he found himself.

160. David Lewin, "Philip Marlow, Spotted Dick", p.33.

161. Adam Mars-Jones, "The Art of Illness", The Independent, 14 November 1986, p.11.

162. In interview, Jon Amiel asserts that he found this aspect hurtful to his ego, though he states he did not begrudge Potter the credit he was due for The Singing Detective. (Amiel, Personal Interview)

163. Martin Cropper, "Arch-Manipulator in Promising Form", review of Episode One, The Singing Detective, The Times, 17 November 1986, p.13.

164. Christopher Dunkley, "Every Sunday for Six Weeks: Drama from Heaven", review of Episode One, The Singing Detective, Financial Times, 17 November 1986, p.23.

165. Libby Purves, "Sons and Stinging Invective", The Times, 3 December 1986, p.15.

166. Maureen Paton, "Is There Real Menace in Dennis ?", Daily Express, 2 December 1986, p.5.

167. Qtd. in Louise Court, "Writer Defends BBC Sex Scenes", Daily Express, 1 December 1986, p.3.

168. Gerald Howarth M.P. qtd. in Signals: Sex on Television, tx. Channel 4, 2 November 1988.

169. Amiel, Personal Interview.

170. Michael Grade qtd. in "'Writer Defends BBC Sex Scenes", Daily Express, 1 December 1986, p.3. Grade was later to deploy a similar argument, based on Potter's reputation and the BBC's paternalist 'trust' of him, when he unbanned Brimstone and Treacle in 1987 (: § 2.3 c).

171. Amiel, Personal Interview.

172. Tony Purnell, "TV Comment", Daily Mirror, 2 December 1986, p.13.

173. See for example, Patrick Stoddart, "The Winning Detective ?", Radio Times, 21 - 27 March 1987, p.3.

174. Amiel, Personal Interview. Potter, on the night of the ceremony, was less diplomatic. As the tabloids gleefully reported the next day, he became 'The Swearing Detective', muttering a four letter curse within earshot of their reporters. He was annoyed because the She-Devil drama was an adaptation, whereas The Singing Detective was an original work for television. He was also angry that his 1986 drama had been passed over for the award of Best Serial, in the same way as BAFTA had passed over Pennies eight years before (: § 4.1 b). As he put it to the Daily Mail, the BAFTA awards were decided by a jury system, not a voting system like the Oscars. He believed The Singing Detective had been possibly left out because of its controversy: "I'm appalled the BAFTA awards are based on factionalism and not democracy", he said. (Dennis Potter, qtd. in Baz Bamigboye, "Singing Detective Writer Rages at TV Snub", Daily Mail, 23 March 1987, p.5) Nevertheless, there was a consolation prize. Two weeks later, on 3 April 1987, Potter was honoured twice by the Broadcasting Press Guild. As its Chairman, Martin Jackson, put it, when he gave the award of best TV serial to The Singing Detective, "this is the 'to hell with BAFTA' award". (Martin Jackson, qtd. in "And to Hell with BAFTA, Mr. Potter", Daily Mirror, 4 April 1987, p.4)

175. Potter, Personal Interview.

176. Qtd. in "Letters", Radio Times, 17 - 23 January 1987, p.80. The magazine reported that The Singing Detective "had produced [its] biggest postbag" and that the balance of opinion was tipped by letters (652 in all) expressing hostility towards depiction of Marlow's psoriasis and particularly, the sex scenes in Episode Three. On the other hand, it reported that the view of correspondents who stuck with the serial beyond the half-way point was "3 to 2 favourable".

177. Evidence for this comes from the correspondent who found the drama 'sadistic and semi-pornographic'. The only reason, she claimed, that she and her husband had bothered to watch the drama right to the end was "because it had such unanimous acclaim by the critics we felt we were missing something..." ("Letters", p.80)

178. This concept of television drama as 'social event' has been raised and discussed by amongst others, John Caughie and John Tulloch. As Caughie has stated, "within the social space of television... and within the way it circulates, television programmes have the capacity to be events as much as to be texts". (John Caughie, "Progressive Television and Documentary Drama", Popular Television and Film, [eds]. Tony Bennett, Susan Boyd-Bowman, Colin Mercer and Janet Woollacott, London: British Film Institute, 1981, p.351. First published, Screen, Vol.21, No.3, 1980, pp.9-35) Similarly, Tulloch has suggested that the "television text's circulation by other media forms which celebrate it as TV event" invariably "help place it as social event in the public discourse". (John Tulloch, Television Drama: Agency, Audience and Myth, London: Routledge, 1990, p.149) In the case of The Singing Detective, the public discourse of the media - the praise of the critics, the condemnation of the tabloids - formed the backdrop against which individual judgements of viewers and communities of viewers were made and measured. Far from this simply being a case, however, of audience attitudes determined by dominant media opinion, this kind of comparative judgement could often become a means for viewers to assert a quite conscious resistance to it. This is certainly what is suggested by the letter from the viewer who found the drama 'semi-pornographic'. She ends her correspondence by making it explicitly clear whose opinion she is reacting against: "We

found this series... an insult to anyone's intelligence except, apparently, that of TV critics !" ("Letters Page", p.80)

179. Brimstone and Treacle was finally transmitted by BBC-1 on 25 August 1987. It was followed by a special Did You See ? programme, reviewing the play and discussing the reasons for its original ban.

180. Dennis Potter, interview, Wogan, tx. BBC-1 15 July 1988. Videocassette Recording. Appearing on the chat show, Potter described these events with some astonishment.

181. Graham Fuller, "Dollars from Heaven", The Listener, 4 May 1989, p.31. This article reported on the success in America of both Potter and Mike Leigh.

182. This was certainly the view of Papp's Theater. One of its managers asserted his belief that Potter's work had struck a chord with American audiences, precisely because "we are absolutely starved of anything complex or layered on film and television". (Qtd. in Fuller, "Dollars from Heaven", p.31) It is interesting to speculate on whether the American networks' increasing efforts in the late eighties and early nineties to attract up-market audiences with more 'challenging' or off-beat TV series had something to do with the State-side success of The Singing Detective. Certainly, by 1990, David Lynch, the co-creator of Twin Peaks, had been in touch with Potter, with a view to working with him on a film adaptation of the D.M. Thomas novel, The White Hotel. (Potter, Personal Interview)

183. The feature film script of The Singing Detective makes interesting reading. Potter changes the name of his main character, Philip Marlow, to Dan Dark (his Christian name an echo of Potter's afflicted 'Daniel' in Hide and Seek). As with the Hollywood Pennies script, events are relocated to Chicago but unlike the TV version of The Singing Detective, the period setting of the thriller strand is not the forties but the fifties. This allows Potter to have his characters mime to rock n'roll songs from the fifties, such as "Heartbreak Hotel", in a similar fashion to his use of music in Lipstick on Your Collar (: S Conclusion). All of the conspiracy strand of the original TV drama (the smuggling plot involving Nazi rocket scientists) is jettisoned, thus making the screenplay much more streamlined. Meanwhile, Dark / Marlow's childhood memories in the movie version are not of the Forest of Dean but the corn-belt of Illinois. (The Singing Detective, Screenplay, First Draft, October 1990. Hollywood Scripts Limited) Initially, the names of Rain Man team, star Dustin Hoffman and director Barry Levinson, were mentioned in connection with the project. This then mutated to Al Pacino and David Cronenberg, respectively. After several meetings, however, Cronenberg pulled out. At the time of writing, American producer Stephen Haft is trying to interest new parties in the project.

184. Potter, Wogan (tx. 1988).

185. Dennis Potter, qtd. in "Redemption from under the Skin", Profile, The Observer, 7 December 1986, p.9.

186. Potter, "Redemption...", p.9..

187. As Potter told Terry Wogan in an appearance on his chat show in 1987, "I thought I'd hit on the secret ! All I have to do is write about [the illness] in a particularly graphic way and it won't come. It'll stay

there like a distant curse. Then - bang ! Out of the sky... if you ever assume too much, you see - bang !" (Potter, Wogan tx. 1987)

188. Potter, Personal Interview.

189. Potter, Wogan (tx. 1988).

190. Potter, Wogan (tx. 1988). Hence one way of getting away from the 1986 drama was to sell it to Hollywood for (according to the writer in interview) "a considerable sum", whilst at the same time changing it: stripping it of all autobiographical resonances and syncopating it with rock n' roll numbers. As Potter expressed it in interview, "What do I care ?" (Potter, Personal Interview)

191. The paradox of having to work to the imperatives of a market system whilst at the same time seeking to uphold some values counter to it, had been anticipated several years earlier by Potter in his preface to Waiting for the Boat when he wrote of the writer, uncertain in the modern world, "tempted into selling himself as a 'personality', chat-show fodder, hype merchant..." (Potter, "Some Sort of Preface...", p.32)

192. McCallum, Personal Interview.

193. Mark Shivas, Personal Interview, Tape Recording, BBC Television Centre, London, 19 March 1990. - Though, as noted previously, the pendulum may now be swinging away from expensive film production back to a revival of the single studio play. See note 41.

194. Potter, Personal Interview.

195. Dennis Potter, qtd. in "Singing for Your Fiction Takes the Sting Out of Life", Profile, The Sunday Times, 22 November 1986, p.27.

CHAPTER SIX

1. "Openings", Screen International 23 - 30 July 1988, p.16.
2. Rick McCallum, Personal Interview, Tape Recording, BBC Television Centre, London, 16 March 1990.
3. Track 29, Original Screenplay, 16 October 1982, p.3. Joseph Losey Archive, British Film Institute.
4. Track 29, p.68.
5. Track 29, p.14.
6. Track 29, p.5.
7. Schmoedipus, BBC Camera Script, p.23. BBC Television Script Unit.
8. Track 29, p.16.
9. McCallum, Personal Interview.
10. McCallum, Personal Interview.
11. McCallum, Personal Interview.
12. "Openings Worldwide", Screen International, 17 - 24 September 1988, p.38.
13. Margaret Walters, "Railway Children", review of Track 29, The Listener 4 August 1988, p.32.
14. McCallum, Personal Interview.
15. "Collaboration or Collision ?" was the title of a Glasgow Film Theatre season in October 1988 which featured the work of Nicolas Roeg and Dennis Potter.
16. Adam Barker, "What the Detective Saw or A Case of Mistaken Identity", BFI Monthly Film Bulletin, Vol.55, No.654, July 1988, p.194.
17. McCallum, Personal Interview.
18. Richard Combs, review of Track 29, BFI Monthly Film Bulletin, Vol.55, No.654, July 1988, p.192.
19. See, for example, A Beast with Two Backs, Son of Man and Traitor (: § 1.3; 1.4; 2.1).
20. "Not Guilty", review of The Past Is Myself by Christabel Bielenberg, The Economist, 13 November 1982, p.116.
21. McCallum, Personal Interview.
22. These details are taken from a personal interview with the journalist James Saynor who researched the production background of Christabel for an article that appeared in The Listener magazine in 1988 ("One Girl's War", The Listener, 28 July 1988, pp.3-5). Personal Interview, Tape Recording, Marylebone, London, 10 November 1989.

23. McCallum, Personal Interview. According to McCallum, the then Head of BBC TV Drama, Peter Goodchild, loved the book and put intense pressure upon Trodd to bring it to the BBC.
24. Dennis Potter, interview by Graham Fuller, American Film Vol.14, No.5 1989, p.33.
25. Christabel Bielenberg, The Past Is Myself, (1970; London: Corgi, 1988), p.225.
26. Dennis Potter, Christabel, Published Script, (London: Faber and Faber, 1988), p.90.
27. Potter, Christabel, p.89.
28. Peter Edwards, Personal Interview, Tape Recording, BBC Television Centre, London, 19 March 1990.
29. Clare Douglas, Personal Interview, Tape Recording, Central London, 28 February 1990.
30. Kenith Trodd, interview, Kaleidoscope, tx. BBC Radio 4, 24 November 1988. Audiocassette Recording. In line with his preoccupations with shooting drama realistically on film, Trodd was always far more conservative than Potter with regard to experimentation and what would work with audiences. As noted previously, he criticised the writer for sometimes 'enjoying the maze' of his narratives too much to the detriment of viewer comprehension (: § 4.0). This undoubtedly explains Trodd's enthusiasm for Christabel.
31. Peter Tory, review of Christabel, Daily Express, 10 December 1988, p.32. Ratings for each episode were as follows: Episode 1: 7.4 million; 2: 6.7 million; 3: 6.9 million; 4: 8.7 million (BARB figures, publ. Broadcast 2 - 23 December 1988, p.32).
32. Douglas, Personal Interview. Potter later claimed "Christabel was a mistake... in that I stood aside from the source of my feelings." (Dennis Potter, "Arrows of Desire", interview by John Wyver, New Statesman and Society, 24 November 1989, p.18).
33. Michael Grade, qtd. in "Grade Dramas", Daily Express, 15 December 1988, p.9.
34. Kenith Trodd, Personal Interview, Tape Recording, BBC Television Centre, London, 8 November 1989.
35. Trodd, Personal Interview.
36. Dennis Potter, Personal Interview, Tape Recording, Eastbourne Mews, London, 10 May 1990.
37. Mark Shivas, Personal Interview, Tape Recording, BBC Television Centre, London, 19 March 1990.
38. McCallum, Personal Interview.
39. Potter, Personal Interview.
40. Trodd, Personal Interview.

41. Potter, Personal Interview.
42. Trodd, Personal Interview.
43. Trodd, Personal Interview.
44. Dennis Potter, "Dennis in Wonderland", interview by James Saynor, Stills, October 1985, p.13.
45. Trodd, Personal Interview.
46. Trodd, Personal Interview.
47. McCallum, Personal Interview.
48. Potter, Personal Interview.
49. McCallum, Personal Interview.
50. Though in 1994, Potter and Trodd's love-hate 'marriage' as long-time friends and colleagues, would very much harmonise again, for sentimental reasons, as a result of events surrounding the diagnosis of Potter's terminal cancer. Trodd would be entrusted to produce Potter's final television plays, Karaoke and Cold Lazarus (: § Conclusion).
51. In early 1990, the material was then re-edited as a feature film for theatrical release abroad, though, in the wake of British critical reaction to the TV version, it never achieved international distribution as a film.
52. Potter, Personal Interview.
53. Dennis Potter, Blackeyes, (London: Faber and Faber, 1987), p.135.
54. Potter, Blackeyes, p.183.
55. Potter, Blackeyes, p.185.
56. Potter, Blackeyes, p.8.
57. Christine Gledhill, "Klute 1: Contemporary Film Noir and Feminist Criticism", Women in Film Noir (ed.) E. Ann Kaplan, (1978; London: BFI, 1980) p.17.
58. Potter, Blackeyes, p.15.
59. As Gledhill observes: "The femme fatale is noted for changeability and treachery." (Kaplan (ed.), p.18)
60. Potter, Blackeyes, p.63.
61. Potter, Blackeyes, p.184.
62. Potter, Blackeyes, p.154.
63. See Julian Moynahan, Vladimir Nabokov, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971), p.46.

64. Paula J. Kaplan, The Myth of Women's Masochism (London: Methuen, 1986), p.19.
65. J. Kaplan, p.228.
66. Lorna Sage, "Old Man's Dream", review of Blackeyes novel, The Observer, 4 October 1987, review sec., p.27.
67. Julian Symons, "Literary Cartwheels", review of Blackeyes, The Listener, 1 October 1987, p.22.
68. Potter, "Arrows of Desire", p.17.
69. Dennis Potter, "Dark Angel", interview by Nigel Andrew, Radio Times, 25 November - 1 December 1989, p.4.
70. There is, however, one major structural change which foreshadows the later alterations Potter would make during production. This relates to the prominence of Jeff, the shadowy author in the novel whose true identity was only revealed at the very end of the book. By contrast, he appears almost immediately in the two sets of scripts, both of which constantly return to him sitting in his mews flat opposite Jessica's, where he is shown bent over a word processor, apparently composing the narrative which the serial / film is itself unfolding. In this way, the 'manufacture' of the drama is foregrounded.
71. Shivas, Personal Interview. Though, as noted earlier, Blackeyes in the end did not receive international distribution as a film.
72. Trodd, Personal Interview.
73. Shivas states that the other half of Blackeyes' budget came from ABC in Australia, New Zealand's TVNZ and a company called Paravision. (Shivas, Personal Interview) Described by Rick McCallum as their "small English arm", Paravision was in fact jointly owned by Nestlé and L'Oreal, two large international conglomerates with massive interests in film, distribution and cable which had come together to test the waters of a possible move into what promised to be an increasingly deregulated media environment in Britain. Attaching themselves to the BBC by way of co-production deals was seen as the first step in this aim since as McCallum puts it, "if connected with the BBC, they could use this incredible exposure about [the] BBC which is a fantastic name to have". McCallum estimates total costs on the Blackeyes production were £2.4 million as a TV drama; £1.8 million as a film. (McCallum, Personal Interview)
74. Indeed comparison of the budget of Blackeyes with that of The Singing Detective reveals that the four hour 1989 drama cost almost as much to make as Potter's 6 x 90 minute 1986 work (: \$ 5.3 b). In many ways, it seems the BBC were banking on Blackeyes to be The Singing Detective Mark II.
75. The main reason for this was to protect Potter's health. In his desire to direct, he had deliberately put himself at physical risk by returning in October 1988 to an old 'cytotoxic' drug, methotrexate, which, though guaranteeing he would not suffer a severe attack of psoriatic arthropathy whilst working on Blackeyes, also entailed some unpleasant side-effects. Weekends, for example, were ruled out for

- shooting, being set aside for what Potter termed "upchuck time". (Potter, Personal Interview).
76. Dennis Potter, Interview, Saturday Matters with Sue Lawley, tx. BBC 1 11 November 1989.
 77. Edwards, Personal Interview.
 78. Edwards, Personal Interview.
 79. Dennis Potter, "Black and Blue", interview by James Saynor, The Listener, 1 June 1989, p.7.
 80. Dennis Potter, interview, The Media Show, tx. Channel 4, 16 April 1989. This interview formed part of a feature on Blackeyes 'in production'.
 81. McCallum, Personal Interview.
 82. McCallum, Personal Interview.
 83. McCallum, Personal Interview.
 84. Edwards, Personal Interview.
 85. Edwards, Personal Interview.
 86. Edwards, Personal Interview.
 87. Edwards, Personal Interview.
 88. McCallum, Personal Interview.
 89. Potter, "Arrows of Desire", p.17.
 90. Douglas, Personal Interview.
 91. Douglas, Personal Interview.
 92. Douglas, Personal Interview.
 93. Edwards, Personal Interview.
 94. Douglas, Personal Interview.
 95. Soundtrack, Blackeyes, Episode Four, tx. BBC-2 20 December 1989. Videocassette Recording.
 96. Soundtrack, Blackeyes, Episode Four.
 97. Soundtrack, Blackeyes, Episode Four.
 98. Potter, Personal Interview.
 99. McCallum, Personal Interview.
 100. Douglas, Personal Interview. Douglas states: "You probably don't see it on the television screen because it's in too much of a long shot but the picture freezes as she opens the door, the gate in the wall..."

101. Potter, "Arrows of Desire", p.17.
102. Soundtrack, Blackeyes, Episode One, tx. BBC-2 29 November 1989. Videocassette Recording.
103. Soundtrack, Blackeyes, Episode Four.
104. Dennis Potter, Hide and Seek, (London: André Deutsch / Quartet Books, 1973; reprint, London: Faber and Faber, 1990), p.11. (Page references are to the reprint edition); Soundtrack, Blackeyes, Episode One.
105. Potter, Hide and Seek, p.163.
106. Soundtrack, Blackeyes, Episode Two, tx. BBC-2 6 December 1989. Videocassette Recording.
107. Viewed in this light, Blackeyes becomes a kind of self-accusation. For example, in Episode One, the ending of the serial is anticipated when, during a dream sequence involving Kingsley, the authorial voice-over states: "The dream he dreams every night. And perhaps the one I dream too, half in fear, half in lust or shame-faced desire. But when they're not outcrops of sickness, his dream, my dream, are they not premonitions? Or are they self-accusations? Desires for punishment?" (Soundtrack, Blackeyes, Episode One)
108. Potter, Blackeyes, p.79.
109. The reference is to the title of an early Potter single play script which never got produced. In 1966, Potter was commissioned by the BBC to write a 'Christmas play'. The result was Almost Cinderella - a play that inverted the Cinderella tale and which in so doing, so upset the then Head of BBC Plays, Gerald Savory, that he never let get it beyond the script stage. As Kenith Trodd recalls, Prince Charming was to have had a club foot and a hare-lip, while Cinderella was to be "the character of the Snow Queen - [the] idea of the unattainable, upper-class girl..." At the end of the play, she was to have been strangled by Prince Charming at the stroke of midnight. (Trodd, Personal Interview) In line with the later idea of casting comedians in central dramatic roles, Tony Hancock had been mooted for the role of Prince Charming (: § 4.1 b). Savory, however, would have none of this and the resulting row made it to the press, with Potter complaining that "tinkering with a fairy story" seemed to be "worse blasphemy [to the BBC] than tinkering with the Bible," as he was later to do with Son of Man. (Dennis Potter, "A Playwright Comes of Age", interview by Philip Purser, The Sunday Telegraph Magazine, 2 April 1969, p.37) Having remained unproduced, the script proved unlocatable in research at the BBC Television Script Unit. In interview, Potter maintained the work had never been very good in the first place and that he had probably destroyed his copy of the script. (Potter, Personal Interview). From the scant details that we do have about it, the play seems interesting for several reasons. For one thing, it provides an early example of Potter's use and inversion of fairy tale structures (: § 3.3). It also, however, seems to echo, perhaps only half-knowingly, the theme of male misogyny that the writer would later much more self-consciously examine and explore in Double Dare and Blackeyes. In the figure of 'Prince Charming', we see a 'damaged', 'crippled' male protagonist who, 'torn' between his flesh and spirit, strangles the unattainable lady of his dreams, in the same way as Martin would later do to Helen in Double Dare (: § 2.3 b). The 'Cinderella' motif in Blackeyes may, similarly, be an echo of that early, fierce exploration of male

sexual angst and longing which so ruffled feathers at the BBC. For his part, Potter's friend Kenith Trodd thinks there is a relationship between the figure of the 'unattainable, upper class girl' in Almost Cinderella and the writer's own personal experience of Oxford. He relates it to the scene in Stand Up in which the working-class 'rebel', Barton, reluctantly attends an Oxford student party and encounters upper-class Jill, who eventually becomes his girlfriend in the play (: § 1.1). Trodd states that as with Cinderella, "you get something [in that scene] of that feeling of distaste for those parts of the world which are attracted to you and you are kind of attracted back but also appalled". (Trodd, Personal Interview)

110. Blackeyes, Original Screenplay, September 1988, p.16. Courtesy, Rick McCallum.

111. Soundtrack, Blackeyes, Episode One. Note that this is a direct quotation from the Brothers' Grimm fairy tale. See Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, Selected Fairy Tales, trans. David Luke, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982), p.74.

112. Casanova, Episode One, BBC Camera Script, June 1971, p.73.

113. Potter, Hide and Seek, p.77.

114. Potter, Hide and Seek, p.82.

115. Dennis Potter, Ticket To Ride (London: Faber and Faber, 1986), p.188. Note that in the TV version of Blackeyes, the actress Gina Bellman is kitted out in small white boots for the scene in which Blackeyes drowns herself in the Round Pond in Kensington Gardens.

116. Dennis Potter, The Singing Detective, Published Script, (London: Faber and Faber, 1986), p.23.

117. Potter, Personal Interview.

118. Dennis Potter, Blackeyes, Episode One, Television Script, September 1988, p.50. Courtesy, Rick McCallum.

119. Soundtrack, Blackeyes, Episode Four.

120. Dennis Potter, interview, Desert Island Discs, tx. BBC Radio 4, 17 December 1977. Transcript, BBC Written Archives, Caversham.

121. Richard Last, "The Emptiness of Potter's Blackeyes", review of Episode Four, Blackeyes, Daily Telegraph, 21 December 1989, p.13.

122. BARB ratings as published Broadcast 15 and 22 December 1989, p.32 and p.21 respectively (Episodes One and Two); The Stage & Television Today 4 and 11 January 1990, p.17 and p.19 respectively (Episodes Three and Four). In terms of Episode One's performance, Blackeyes' audience was one "which one of the major channels would have been proud of". It came in at No.63 in the top 100 most watched programmes for the week ending 1st December 1989, ahead of such popular ITV drama as The Equalizer (6.7 million). Source: Broadcast 22 December 1989, p.21.

Every episode of Blackeyes was watched by at least a million more viewers than the corresponding episode of any other drama serial scheduled in the same BBC-2 Wednesday night drama slot over the Autumn and Winter of 1989-90:

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| <u>Nice Work</u> | (Eps 1 to 4): 3.25m; 3.07m; 3.43m; 2.86m |
| <u>Summer's Lease</u> | (Eps 1 to 4): 4.09m; 3.17m; 2.89m; 2.79m |
| <u>Blackeyes</u> | (Eps 1 to 4): 7.15m; 5.73m; 5.32m; 3.87m |
| <u>Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit</u> | (Eps 1 to 3): 2.94m; 4.45m; 3.91m; -- |

[m = millions] Compiled from BARB figures as published in Broadcast, The Stage and Television Today, The Listener.

123. Shivas, Personal Interview.

124. Potter, Personal Interview.

125. Madeleine Pallas, "The Pain that Drives Potter Potty", The Sun, 30 November 1989, p.12.

126. Qtd. in Dennis Potter, "Black Cloud Lifts At Last for Potter", interview by Martina Devlin, Edinburgh Evening News, 10 February 1990, Weekend Sec., p.7.

127. Stephen Pope, "Model Dennis Potter", preview Blackeyes, The Independent, 29 November 1989, p.9.

128. Stephen Pope, "Next Week's Television", preview Blackeyes, The Independent, 25 November 1989, p.55.

129. Douglas, Personal Interview.

130. McCallum, Personal Interview.

131. Douglas, Personal Interview. Douglas stated Potter "does listen and he especially listens if different people make the same point... but we didn't have the time in the editing..."

132. Potter, Personal Interview.

133. Hence this seems to be what lay behind Richard Last's comments in The Telegraph about Blackeyes' 'emptiness'. All he could feel was 'incomprehension', precisely because Potter had undermined 'time, place and reality'. Without those, the drama, to him, had no point. In turn, this seems to suggest that in spite of Potter's own 'non-naturalistic' incursions, the need for TV drama to have some 'realism' (some reference point in an external reality with which audiences can identify) is deeply engrained in the British viewing psyche. As Chapter Four touched upon, it is significant, for example, that some of Potter's most 'popular' dramas like Pennies From Heaven and Blue Remembered Hills shared simple linear plot-lines that were grounded in fixed notions of an external reality. These then provided the foundation upon which Potter would attempt to 'disorientate' his audience through the innovation of 'non-naturalistic' devices such as miming to music or adults as children. On the other hand, dramas like Casanova which manipulated and undermined the very assumptions of 'time, space and reality' proved less popular (: § 4.0, n.47).

134. - Though, of course, the narrative takes another twist in Episode Four when the authorial voice-over reveals he has been the true manipulator of events.

135. "Letters", The Observer 31 December 1989, p.26.

136. John Wyver, "Arrows of Desire", The New Statesman and Society, 24 November 1989, p.18.

137. For an interesting historical analysis of this, see, for example, the work of the religious scholar, Elaine Pagels. She has convincingly related women's traditional subordination within Western culture to the development of early thinking in the Christian Church around sexual matters and the Old Testament myth of 'the Fall'. The links here with Potter's own attempts to deal with and overcome notions of a 'Fall' are palpable. See Elaine Pagels, Adam, Eve and The Serpent (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1988).

138. Soundtrack, Blackeyes, Episode Two.

139. Potter, Personal Interview.

CONCLUSION

1. Dennis Potter, Personal Interview, Tape Recording, Eastbourne Mews, London, 10 May 1990.
2. Potter, Personal Interview.
3. Dennis Potter, interview, Arena, tx. BBC-2 30 January 1987. Videocassette Recording, Repeat Transmission, BBC-1 29 June 1987.
4. Dennis Potter, "Realism and Non-Naturalism 2", The Official Programme of The Edinburgh International Television Festival 1977, August 1977, p.36.
5. Potter, Personal Interview.
6. Dennis Potter, Hide and Seek, (London: André Deutsch / Quartet Books, 1973; reprint, London: Faber and Faber, 1990), p.115. (Page references are to the reprint edition.)
7. Potter, Hide and Seek, p.113.
8. Potter, Hide and Seek, pp.109-10.
9. Dennis Potter, Introduction, Brimstone and Treacle, (London: Eyre Methuen, 1978), p.2.
10. Potter, Introduction, p.3.
11. Dennis Potter, interview, Vogan, tx. BBC-1 25 September 1987. Videocassette Recording.
12. Potter, Personal Interview.
13. Lynne Truss, "Margins", The Listener, 15 March 1990, p.48. Truss accused Potter of this in 1990. This prompted the latter to write a stinging letter to The Listener, denying the accusation. See "Letters", The Listener, 29 March 1990, p.22.
14. Potter, Personal Interview.
15. Potter, Personal Interview.
16. Potter, Personal Interview.
17. Potter, Personal Interview.
18. Potter, Personal Interview.
19. Dennis Potter, "Dollars from Hollywood", interview by Robert Brown, BFI Monthly Film Bulletin, Vol.49, No.582, July 1982, p.127.
20. In interview, Potter reiterated that the one belief he shared with Brecht was that in drama "it is easy to play on emotions... easy to make people laugh; easy to make them cry". (Potter, Personal Interview) (: § 5.3 b n.106)
21. Casanova, Episode Six, Camera Script, p.2. BBC Television Script Unit.

22. Dennis Potter, interview, Without Walls Special, tx. Channel Four 5 April 1994. Videocassette Recording.
23. Simon Hattenstone, "The Shooting Party", The Guardian, 1 October 1991, sec. 2, p.34. Secret Friends was co-funded by Channel Four as one of their Film on Four's. The plan for the film was that it would gain a theatrical release, prior to its television transmission on Channel Four. By November 1991, however, it had become clear that no distributor was willing to pick it up. It would take another ten months before it gained a limited theatrical release, limping around the art-house circuit.
24. Phillipa Bloom, review of Secret Friends, Empire, No.40, October 1992, p.38; Jonathan Romney, review, Sight and Sound, Vol.2, No.6, October 1992, p.55.
25. Dennis Potter, interview by Tom Hibbert, Empire, No.40, October 1992, p.49.
26. See, for example, Potter's comment to Graham Fuller that he hoped with Lipstick to be "back in the situation" he had enjoyed with The Singing Detective: "I think Lipstick is the one that people are going to approach more easily and enjoy more readily than most of my other stuff. That might be a good sign, mightn't it?" (Dennis Potter, interview by Graham Fuller, Potter on Potter, [ed.] Graham Fuller, London: Faber and Faber, 1993, p.141.)
27. Potter, Potter on Potter, p.98.
28. For example, such sentiments were certainly the opinion of the Daily Telegraph's reviewer who declared, after seeing Episode One, that whilst making for excellent entertainment, the miming device was beginning to look threadbare: "One was left with the suspicion that what had started out as a useful shorthand for the discrepancy between people's interior and exterior lives had become simply a way of giving the story a bit of variety". (Max Davidson, "Privates on Parade", review of Lipstick on Your Collar, The Daily Telegraph, 22 February 1993, p.17) Meanwhile, looking back on the serial a year later, Allison Pearson of The Independent on Sunday recalled her feeling that with Lipstick, "Potter was in danger of becoming a parody of himself". (Allison Pearson, "Dennis in Heaven", The Independent on Sunday, 12 June 1994, review sec., p.4.)
29. Potter makes this clear at the very end of the drama, when Francis is temporarily in hospital with a broken leg. He receives a visit from Lisa, the niece of an American colonel and the resulting scene between them clearly shows that the pair are highly compatible with each other since both share the same bookish interests. After the couple talk for a while, excitedly sharing their love of Proust and Nietzsche, Francis asks what her father does for a living. She lowers her eyes and embarrassed, confesses that he is simply a 'Philistine' who owns a lot of oilwells in Texas. With that, Potter's script directions state the scene should cut from "one brief swoop at Francis' incredulous face and explode into an oil gusher. Dramatic, almost violent - black gold going whoosh !" (Dennis Potter, Lipstick on Your Collar, Published Script, London: Faber and Faber, 1993, p.201) As the ejaculatory force of this image suggests, Francis' 'love of the mind' for Lisa is finally cemented by more 'material' desires and ambitions - sexual attraction, mixed in with his realisation that if he sticks beside her, he can get rich.

30. Steve Clarke, "Potter's Cold Feet at Lipstick on the Collar", The Daily Telegraph, Television and Radio Section, 20 February 1993, p.19. The article reported that after completing Episode One, Potter had run out of ideas and wanted to call the whole thing off. He actually returned his fee to Channel Four but the Channel refused to accept the cheque.

31. Potter, Potter on Potter, p.140.

32. Potter's attack on Rupert Murdoch came in Opinions: Britain 1993, tx. Channel Four, 21 March 1993. The immediate source of his anger was tabloid assertions that Lipstick on Your Collar depicted and condoned rape and violence towards women: a gross distortion, as Potter put it, of a scene in which his main female character, Sylvia, was shown to be the victim of domestic violence at the hands of her Corporal husband. If this was the immediate cause, his resentment against Murdoch had been simmering at least as far back as Blackeyes. Speaking in 1990, Rick McCallum had asserted his belief that Potter's treatment by the tabloids would some day produce a stinging response from him in his work. (Rick McCallum, Personal Interview, Tape Recording, BBC Television Centre, London, 16 March 1990)

33. Produced in 1993, Midnight Movie was perhaps further proof that Potter's almost constant production of new original work as a writer was beginning to tail off somewhat. The script was in fact not a new work but an old feature film screenplay which he had written during his 'new entrepreneurialism' period of the early eighties but which had never been produced by Hollywood. Dealing with the arrival of an American film director and his wife in England, the screenplay was a nod at Potter's 'patron' of the time, Herbert Ross. After the MGM flop of Pennies, however, it never saw the light of day. Having formed a new independent production company in 1990, Whistling Gypsy Productions, Potter raided his past canon in his efforts to make every piece of work yield its maximum potential. Adapting Ticket to Ride into a feature film can be seen in this light, as can the production of Midnight Movie at the BBC (directed by Lipstick's director, Renny Rye and starring Brian Dennehy and Jim Carter). In September 1993, this trend continued when shooting began in Vienna of another one of Potter's old screenplays which had been written during his Hollywood period. Mesmer was based on the life of the late eighteenth century hypnotist, Anton Mesmer - a Casanova-type fraudster who nevertheless drew the world's attention to the awesome 'spiritual' powers of the mind. Potter's screenplay (which had been on the point of being produced four times previously) is a love story, depicting Mesmer's relationship with a beautiful blind pianist. In 1993, the script was finally picked up by Australian producer, Lance Reynolds (with David Bowie as executive producer) and with Roger Spottiswoode directing Alan Rickman as Mesmer. Thus it is important to note that aside from his much-publicised new television dramas, Karaoke and Cold Lazarus, Potter has two posthumous feature films awaiting release. In addition, just before learning of his terminal cancer, he also adapted for the BBC, Cara Massimina - a novel by John MacDowell which he had optioned for his production company in 1993.

34. Dennis Potter, "Occupying Powers", 1993 James MacTaggart Lecture, reprinted in The Guardian, 28 August 1993, sec. 2, p.21.

35. This is suggested by the rapturous way in which the interview was received by reviewers in the press - all of whom in various ways viewed Potter as symbol of an old idealism which had now largely vanished from British television and British society in general. Thus Allison Pearson

claimed that with the death of Potter, "we may be saying goodbye to the hope of a civilised intelligence to proclaim the truth of things". (Allison Pearson, "Under Our Skin to the Last", review of Without Walls Special, The Independent on Sunday, 10 April 1994, review sec., p.24) Ginny Dougary waxed lyrical on the righteousness of Potter's struggles: "And the wisps of smoke from the cigarette clasped in his poor, buckled hand, spiralled heavenwards". (Ginny Dougary, "Potter Finds Bliss in Agony", review of Without Walls Special, The Daily Telegraph, 6 April 1994, p.19) Meanwhile, Nancy Banks-Smith declared she would always love Potter for making her feel that television mattered (Nancy Banks-Smith, "Angels at his Table", review of Without Walls Special, The Guardian, 6 April 1994, sec. 2, p.6) Viewers, too, found the interview "an emotional experience" that "moved [them] to tears": see "Letters" page, Radio Times, 30 April - 6 May 1994, p.117.

36. Potter, Without Walls Special.

37. Melvyn Bragg, qtd. in Mike Ellison and Andrew Culf, "'Great Artist' Potter Leaves Plays Legacy", The Guardian, 8 June 1994, p.1.

38. Kenith Trodd, "Giant of the Small Screen", The Daily Telegraph, 8 June 1994, p.21.

39. His wife, Margaret, had suffered a relapse of breast cancer after Potter's diagnosis and died very quickly. From this, it is not unreasonable to speculate that since she and Potter had always been a devoted couple, she lost all will to live, once it became clear her husband was dying.

40. The television broadcast was a special Late Show tribute, featuring archive clips of Potter plays, together with interviews with some of his television colleagues: Dennis Potter: A Life in Television, tx. BBC-2, 7 June 1994. Heritage secretary, Peter Brooke, had been a contemporary of Potter's at Oxford. He told the press on the day of the writer's death: "He was one of the greatest writers for television that the country has produced and a man who endured illness with fortitude and humour. His death robs us of a great talent". (Peter Brooke M.P., qtd. in Susannah Herbert, "Dennis Potter Dies of Cancer Nine Days After His Wife", The Daily Telegraph, 8 June 1994, p.1)

41. Evidence for this comes from viewers' comments to Channel Four, in the wake of Potter's death. Viewer Jane Cowley declared Potter's work had always moved her, connecting with her "more than any politician ever has". (The Slot, tx. Channel Four, 9 June 1994) Meanwhile, on the audience opinion show, Right to Reply, another viewer, Sally Ann-Lever, asserted she had been so moved by Potter's death she had decided to write her own first play. (Right to Reply, tx. Channel Four, 11 June 1994) The eulogies continued in the letters pages of the Radio Times, with various tributes to Potter's 'greatness' as a writer as well as demands that the BBC and Channel Four honour his last wishes and produce Karaoke and Cold Lazarus ("Letters", Radio Times, 25 June - 1 July 1994, p.113) As this groundswell of popular opinion shows, people were moved and even stimulated into action by Potter's passing.

42. Potter, Personal Interview.

43. Kenith Trodd, qtd. in David Lister and Maggie Brown, "'Classic' Last Works Show Writer in Top Form", The Independent, 8 June 1994, p.4.

44. Potter, Without Walls Special.

45. Potter, Without Walls Special.

46. Dennis Potter, "Last Pearls", The Daily Telegraph, 4 June 1994, arts sec., p.2.

47. Potter, "Last Pearls", p.2.

48. "Dennis Potter's Last Pearls Cast Before Swine", The Daily Telegraph, 11 June 1994, arts sec., p.15.

49. In interview, Potter acknowledged the influence of Hide and Seek on The Singing Detective and Blackeyes but said it was dangerous territory for him as a writer to admit this too readily. If he became too aware of it during the act of composition, his "engine would stall" as a working writer. (Potter, Personal Interview)

50. The image echoes Potter's own comment in interviews that "every writer has a small field to keep ploughing... and eventually you turn up the coins you want. I know I always return to the same motifs". (Dennis Potter, interview by Graham Fuller, American Film, Vol.14, No.5, March 1989, p.31.) Evidence that the title of Potter's short story was a self-aware acknowledgement that these 'last pearls' were being dug out of the same field comes from The Daily Telegraph's quoting of the letter which Potter enclosed when he sent the paper his last piece of creative work. Dated 25 May, the letter said: "It seems I can still scrape out a word or two... There is, at least, something truthful in this, my first and last short story, if only in the descriptions of how one has to cut a path through diamorphine swamps and the tenacity with which one unconsciously holds on to old creative ideas !" (Dennis Potter, qtd. in "Dennis Potter's Last Pearls", p.15) In his very last piece of work, Potter could finally acknowledge what he could not readily admit too much in interview in 1990: namely that like the writer in his short story, every time he thought he was doing a fresh piece of work, he was actually, even if he did not quite know it at the time of writing, returning to re-examine the themes and ideas of an old work.

51. For example, there is talk now of trying to encourage many more new writers into television. With the death of Potter, the cry has gone up, 'Who will be the next Dennis Potter ? Where will he come from ? Has television changed so much that the individual vision of a Potter could never be allowed to exist today ?' In the memorable words of Potter's fellow TV dramatist, Alan Plater, if a new Dennis Potter appeared today, the industry would probably give him or her "a cup of coffee and an episode of Eastenders". (Alan Plater, "Potter Tributes", The Guardian, 8 June 1994, sec.2, p.4) To this end, viewer and fan of Potter, Jane Cowley, moved by the writer's death, suggested on Channel Four the setting up of a 'Dennis Potter Foundation' for the injection of new writing blood into television. Responding, Kenith Trodd thought it an excellent suggestion - one Potter would have approved of since his fear, too, had been that the very conditions of television drama production had made the climate hostile for the emergence of new talent. Significantly, however, Trodd added that someone else had already thought of the idea, with the result that details of a new annual BBC competition to encourage new writers into television would soon be announced. (Kenith Trodd, interview, The Slot, tx. Channel Four, 9 June 1994)

52. Kenith Trodd, "Potter Tributes", The Guardian, 8 June 1994, sec.2, p.3.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

WORKS BY DENNIS POTTER

1. Television Drama

Note: The following is a complete list of Dennis Potter works written for television - all of which were used in the course of this study. The abbreviation '[NFA]' indicates that a copy of this work is available for viewing at the National Film Archive, c/o British Film Institute and that this was the source used. '[SCR]' indicates that only the original television script survives for consultation (: a complete list of Potter scripts consulted is given in Section 3). '[VCR]' indicates that a private videocassette recording of either the original or repeat transmission was used. '[BBC VCR]' indicates that tapes of transmission were viewed via the BBC. This list has been compiled from a variety of sources, including Programme Indices held at the BBC Written Archives Centre, Caversham; research using the Radio Times and the TV Times, as well as the author's own notes, taken at the time of a drama's particular transmission. Transmission dates given are those for British television.

24.2.65 9.41pm The Confidence Course 60m BBC-1 The Wednesday Play
b/w VTR Dir: Gilchrist Calder Prod: James MacTaggart; with Dennis Price,
Stanley Baxter, Geoffrey Matthews, Neil McCarthy. [SCR]

13.10.65 9.05pm Alice 75m BBC-1 The Wednesday Play b/w 35mm film
Dir: Gareth Davies Prod: James MacTaggart; with George Baker, Rosalie
Crutchley, Debbie Watling, David Langton. [NFA]
Repeated 9.02pm 6.7.66 BBC-1 (except Wales).

8.12.65 9.40pm Stand Up, Nigel Barton 75m BBC-1 The Wednesday Play
b/w 35mm film Dir: Gareth Davies Prod: James MacTaggart; with Keith
Barron, Jack Woolgar, Janet Henfrey, Vickery Turner.
Repeated 9.05pm 7.9.66 BBC-1.
Repeated 9.30pm 11.8.87 BBC-1 Potter Retrospective Season. [VCR]

15.12.65 9.45pm Vote, Vote, Vote for Nigel Barton 80m BBC-1 The
Wednesday Play b/w 35mm film Dir: Gareth Davies Prod: James
MacTaggart; with Keith Barron, Valerie Gearon, John Bailey, Cyril Luckham.
Repeated 9.00pm 14.9.66 BBC-1.
Repeated 9.30pm 18.8.87 BBC-1 Potter Retrospective Season. [VCR]

11.4.66 9.50pm Emergency Ward 9 30m BBC-2 Thirty-Minute Theatre
b/w live / VTR Dir: Gareth Davies Prod: Harry Moore; with Terence de
Marney, Tenniel Evans, Gillian Lewis, Dan Jackson.
Repeated 8.34pm 10.7.67 BBC-2 (4.7.67 BBC West). [SCR]

2.11.66 9.35pm Where the Buffalo Roam 75m BBC-1 The Wednesday Play
b/w 35mm film Dir: Gareth Davies Prod: Lionel Harris; with Hywel
Bennett, Meg Jenkins, Glyn Houston, Aubrey Richards. [NFA]
Repeated 9.06pm 2.8.67 BBC-1.
Repeated 9.43pm 25.8.76 BBC-2 Festival 40: Classic TV Drama.
Repeated 9.00pm 21.7.93 BBC-2 The Wednesday Play Season.

3.5.67 9.41pm Message for Posterity 75m BBC-1 The Wednesday Play
b/w VTR Dir: Gareth Davies Prod: Lionel Harris; with Joseph O'Connor,
Patrick Magee, Patricia Lawrence, Tony Holland. [SCR]

13.5.68 9.00pm The Bonegrinder 79m 45s (excl. breaks) Rediffusion
Playhouse b/w film Dir: Joan Kemp-Welch Exec. Prod: Peter Willes; with
Margaret Tyzack, George Baker, Weston Gavin, Brian Oulton. [NFA]

10.11.68 9.00pm Shaggy Dog 51m 10s LWT Company of Five b/w VTR
Dir: Gareth Davies Prod: Stella Richman; with John Neville, Ann Bell,
Cyril Luckham, Derek Godfrey. [SCR]

20.11.68 9.08pm A Beast with Two Backs 75m BBC-1 The Wednesday Play
b/w film / VTR Dir: Lionel Harris Prod: Graeme McDonald; with Patrick
Barr, Denis Carey, Basil Henson, Geraldine Newman.
Repeated 9.30pm 4.8.87 BBC-1 Potter Retrospective Season. [VCR]

12.4.69 9.00pm Moonlight on the Highway 50m Kestrel / LWT Saturday
Night Theatre b/w VTR / 16mm film Dir: James MacTaggart Prod: Kenith
Trodd; with Ian Holm, Anthony Bate, Deborah Grant, Robin Wentworth. [NFA]

16.4.69 9.17pm Son of Man 90m BBC-1 The Wednesday Play b/w VTR
Dir: Gareth Davies Prod: Graeme MacDonald; with Colin Blakeley, Robert
Hardy, Brian Blessed, Bernard Hepton.
Repeated 9.07pm 4.6.69 BBC-1.
Repeated 9.30pm 28.7.87 BBC-1 Potter Retrospective Season. [VCR]

23.5.70 9.00pm Lay Down Your Arms 75m Kestrel / LWT Saturday Night
Theatre 16mm b/w film Dir: Christopher Morahan Prod: Kenith Trodd; with
Nikolas Simmonds, Leonard Trolley, Peter Cellier, John Warner. [NFA]

5.11.70 9.22pm Angels Are So Few 65m BBC-1 Play for Today Colour VTR
Dir: Gareth Davies Prod: Graeme MacDonald; with Tom Bell, Christine
Hargreaves, Susan Richards, Erik Chitty. [BBC VCR]

13.6.71 9.00pm Paper Roses 55m Granada Sunday Night Theatre 16mm film
Dir: Barry Davis Prod: Kenith Trodd Exec. Prod: Peter Eckersley; with
Bill Maynard, Aimee Delamain, John Carson, Desmond Perry. [NFA]

14.10.71 9.21pm Traitor 60m BBC-1 Play for Today Colour VTR
Dir: Alan Bridges Prod: Graeme MacDonald; with John Le Mesurier, Jack
Hedley, Neil McCallum, Lyndon Brook.
Repeated 9.27pm 27.2.73 BBC-2.
Repeated 9.30pm 21.7.87 BBC-1 Potter Retrospective Season. [VCR]

16.11.71 - 21.12.71 Casanova BBC-2 Colour VTR / film 6 episodes.
Dirs: John Glenister, Mark Cullingham Prod: Mark Shivas.
Ep.1. 9.27pm Steed in the Stable 55m; with Frank Finlay, Norman
Rossington, George Benson, Zienia Merton.

2. 9.21pm One At A Time 53m 56s; with FF, NR, Patrick Newell, David
Swift, Elaine Donnelly, Julia Cornelius, Brigid Erin Bates, Caroline
Dowdeswell.

3. 9.20pm Magic Moments 55m 15s; with FF, NR, PN, Frederick Peisley,
Lyn Yeldham.

4. 9.23pm Break a Window 47m 49s; with FF, NR, DS, Ania Marson.

5. 9.20pm Fevers of Love 49m 20s; with FF, NR, PN, Valerie Gearon.

6. 9.20pm Golden Apples 58m 26s; with FF, NR, Graham Crowden, Gillian
Hills.

Re-edited repeat: Part 1 (16-30.11.71) 9.00pm 9.9.74 BBC-2;

Part 2 (7-21.12.71) 9.01pm 10.9.74 BBC-2. [BBC VCR]

4.7.72 9.20pm The Sextet 5: Follow the Yellow Brick Road 70m BBC-2
Colour VTR Dir: Alan Bridges Prod: Roderick Graham; with Denholm

Elliott, Richard Vernon, Dennis Waterman, Billie Whitelaw, Michele Dotrice, Ruth Dunning, Bernard Hepton.
 Repeated 9.02pm 24.7.73 BBC-1.
 Repeated 9.30pm 14.7.87 BBC-1 Potter Retrospective Season. [VCR]

12.2.73 9.26pm Only Make Believe 75m BBC-1 Play for Today Colour VTR
 Dir: Robert Knights Prod: Graeme MacDonald; with Keith Barron, Georgina Hale, Rowena Cooper, Alun Armstrong. [NFA]
 Repeated 9.26pm 2.5.74 BBC-1.

21.11.73 9.00pm Vessex Tales 3: A Tragedy of Two Ambitions 50m
 BBC-2 Colour 16mm film (adapted from the story by Thomas Hardy)
 Dir: Michael Tuchner Prod: Irene Shubik; with Paul Rogers, John Hurt, David Troughton, Lynne Frederick. [NFA]

14.2.74 10.43pm Joe's Ark 63m BBC-1 Play for Today Colour VTR
 Dir: Alan Bridges Prod: Graeme MacDonald; with Freddie Jones, Angharad Rees, Christopher Guard, Dennis Waterman.
 Repeated 9.30pm 7.7.87 BBC-1 Potter Retrospective Season. [VCR]

20.6.74 9.27pm Schmoedipus 67m 2s BBC-1 Play for Today Colour VTR
 Dir: Barry Davis Prod: Kenith Trodd; with Anna Cropper, John Carson, Tim Curry, Bob Hoskins. [NFA]
 Repeated 9.26pm 10.4.75 BBC-1.

1.3.75 - 22.3.75 8.15pm Late Call BBC-2 Colour VTR 4 x 52m episodes
 (adapted from the novel by Angus Wilson) Dir: Philip Dudley Prod: Ken Riddington; with Dandy Nichols, Leslie Dwyer, Michael Bryant, Tim Morand.
 Repeated 7.30pm from 1.5.76 (with subtitles). [NFA]

1976 (banned) Brimstone and Treacle 72m 39s BBC-1 Play for Today
 Colour VTR Dir: Barry Davis Prod: Kenith Trodd; with Michael Kitchen, Denholm Elliott, Patricia Lawrence, Michelle Nichols.
 Original planned transmission date: 6.4.76.
 Unbanned: 25.8.87 BBC-1 Potter Retrospective Season. [VCR]

6.4.76 9.41pm Double Dare 65m BBC-1 Play for Today Colour 16mm film
 Dir: John McKenzie Prod: Kenith Trodd; with Alan Dobie, Kika Markham, Malcolm Terris, Joe Melia. [NFA]
 Repeated 9.57pm 28.7.77 BBC-1.

21.4.76 9.26pm Where Adam Stood 75m BBC-2 Playhouse
 Colour 16mm Film ('based on incidents from' Father and Son by Edmund Gosse)
 Dir: Brian Gibson Prod: Kenith Trodd; with Alan Badel, Ronald Hines, Max Harris.
 Repeated 9.27pm 27.7.77 BBC-2.
 Repeated 9.30pm 30.6.87 BBC-1 Potter Retrospective Season. [VCR]

22.1.78 - 5.3.78 8.05pm The Mayor of Casterbridge BBC-2 Colour VTR
 7 x 52 m episodes (adapted from the novel by Thomas Hardy)
 Dir: David Giles Prod: Jonathan Powell; with Alan Bates, Anne Stallybrass, Anna Massey, Janet Maw.
 Repeated 10.25pm from 27.1.78 BBC-2.
 Repeated 9.26pm from 26.6.79 BBC-2. [BBC VCR]

7.3.78 - 11.4.78 9.27pm Pennies from Heaven BBC-1 Colour VTR / film
 6 episodes Dir: Piers Haggard Prod: Kenith Trodd; with Bob Hoskins, Gemma Craven, Cheryl Campbell, Kenneth Colley. [NFA]
 Ep.1. Down Sunnyside Lane 72m

2. The Sweetest Thing 80m
3. Easy Come, Easy Go 85m
4. Better Think Twice 100m
5. Painting the Clouds 100m
6. Says My Heart 80m

Repeated 9.35pm from 1-15.12.78 BBC-2

Repeated 9.00pm weekly from 7.2.90 BBC-2.

30.1.79 9.28pm Blue Remembered Hills 71m 42s BBC-1 Play for Today
Colour 16mm film Dir: Brian Gibson Prod: Kenith Trodd; with Michael
Elphick, Colin Welland, Helen Mirren, Janet Duvitski, Colin Jeavons, John
Bird, Robin Ellis. [VCR]

Repeated 9.44pm 30.5.80 BBC-2 Playhouse.

Repeated 8.35pm 3.11.86 BBC-2 Fiftieth Anniversary Celebrations BBC TV.

Repeated 9.00pm 19.5.91 Channel 4 Film Four Today Season.

19.10.80 10.00pm Blade on the Feather 95m PFH / LWT Colour 16mm film
Dir: Richard Loncraine Prod: Kenith Trodd Exec. Prod: Tony Wharmby;
with Tom Conti, Donald Pleasance, Kika Markham, Denholm Elliott, Phoebe
Nicholls. [VCR]

Repeated 9.30pm 3.3.83 Channel 4 ITV Playhouse.

26.10.80 10.00pm Rain on the Roof 90m PFH / LWT Colour 16mm film
Dir: Alan Bridges Prod: Kenith Trodd Exec. Prod: Tony Wharmby; with
Cheryl Campbell, Malcolm Stoddart, Ewan Stewart. [VCR]

Repeated 9.30pm 10.3.83 Channel 4 ITV Playhouse.

2.11.80 10.00pm Cream in My Coffee 105m PFH / LWT Colour 16mm film
Dir: Gavin Millar Prod: Kenith Trodd Exec. Prod: Tony Wharmby; with
Peggy Ashcroft, Lionel Jeffries, Martin Shaw, Peter Chelsom, Shelagh
McLeod. [VCR]

Repeated 9.30pm 17.3.83 Channel 4 ITV Playhouse

23.9.85 - 28.10.85 9.30pm Tender Is the Night BBC-2 Colour 16mm film
6 x 55m episodes, produced in association with Showtime Entertainment
and The Seven Network, Australia, by arrangement with 20th Century Fox,
(adapted from the novel by F.Scott Fitzgerald).

Dir: Robert Knights Prod: Betty Willingale; with Peter Strauss; Mary
Steenburgen, Sean Young, Edward Asner. [VCR]

Repeated 10.20pm from 26.9.85 BBC-2

Repeated 9.30pm from 2.7.86 BBC-1

16.11.86 - 21.12.86 9.00pm The Singing Detective BBC-1 Colour 16mm film
6 episodes, produced in association with the Australian Broadcasting
Corporation. Dir: Jon Amiel Prod: John Harris and Kenith Trodd Exec.
Prod: Rick McCallum; with Michael Gambon, Janet Suzman, Patrick Malahide,
Bill Paterson. [VCR]

Ep.1. Skin 68m 28s

2. Heat 69m 6s

3. Lovely Days 63m 2s

4. Clues 67m 26s

5. Pitter Patter 58m 16s

6. Who Done It 76m 25s

Repeated 9.25pm from 1.6.88 BBC-2

Repeated 10.10pm from 11.7.94 BBC-1

22.2.87 10.00pm Visitors 88m 54s BBC-2 Screen Two Colour 16mm film,
produced in association with Polymuse and WV Entertainment (based on
Potter's 1983 stage play Sufficient Carbohydrate).

Dir: Piers Haggard Prod: Kenith Trodd; with Michael Brandon, Glynis Barber, John Standing, Nicola Pagett, Robert MacNaughton. [VCR]

16.11.88 - 7.12.88 9.25pm Christabel BBC-2 Colour 16mm film
4 x 55m episodes, produced in association with the Arts and Entertainment Network (based on The Past is Myself by Christabel Bielenberg).

Dir: Adrian Shergold Prod: Kenith Trodd Exec. Prod: Dennis Potter; with Elizabeth Hurley, Stephen Dillon, Nigel le Vaillant, Geoffrey Palmer, Ann Bell. [VCR]

Repeated 10.25pm from 19.11.88 BBC-2.

29.11.89 - 20.12.89 9.25pm Blackeyes BBC-2 Colour 35mm film
4 x 55m episodes, produced in association with the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, Television New Zealand, Paravision and Blackeyes Ltd. (based on Potter's 1987 novel Blackeyes).

Dir: Dennis Potter Prod: Rick McCallum; with Gina Bellman, Michael Gough, Carol Royle, Nigel Planer. [VCR]

21.2.93 - 28.3.93 9.00pm Lipstick on Your Collar Channel 4 Colour 35mm film, 6 x 58m episodes, produced by Whistling Gypsy Productions for Channel 4. Dir: Renny Rye Prod: Rosemarie Whitman Exec. Prod: Dennis Potter; with Giles Francis, Louise Germaine, Ewan McGregor, Kymberley Huffman, Peter Jeffrey. [VCR]

Television scripts still to be produced (known):

Cara Massimina (adapted from the novel by John MacDowell)

Karaoke

Cold Lazarus

Unproduced television scripts (known):

Almost Cinderella (commissioned BBC TV 1966)

By the Waters of Babylon (c.1968: original BBC draft of what became Moonlight on the Highway).

A Dance to the Music of Time (adaptation of Anthony Powell's sequence of novels. Aborted when Potter and Trodd quit the BBC for LWT in 1979)

2. Feature Films (in order of production):

1981 USA. Pennies from Heaven Dir: Herbert Ross Prod: Nora Kaye and Herbert Ross Exec. Prod: Rick McCallum. A Hera Production for MGM (based on Potter's BBC television serial); with Steve Martin, Bernadette Peters, Jessica Harper, Vernel Bagneris, Christopher Walken.

1982 UK. Brimstone and Treacle Dir: Richard Loncraine Prod: Kenith Trodd Exec. Prod: Naim Attallah. Namara Films / Alan E. Solkein in association with Herbert Solow. A Pennies From Heaven Film (based on Potter's banned television play); with Sting, Denholm Elliott, Joan Plowright, Suzanna Hamilton.

1983 USA. Gorky Park Dir: Michael Apted Prod: Gene Kirkwood and Howard W. Koch Jr. Exec. Prod: Bob Larson. Eagle Associates for Orion (based on the novel by Martin Cruz Smith); with William Hurt, Lee Marvin, Brian Dennehy, Joanna Pacula.

1985 UK. Dreamchild Dir: Gavin Millar Prod: Rick McCallum and Kenith Trodd Exec. Prod: Dennis Potter and Verity Lambert. A PFH film for Thorn EMI Screen Entertainment (incorporating material based on Potter's 1965 TV play, Alice); with Coral Browne, Ian Holm, Peter Gallagher, Nicola Cowper.

1987 UK. Track 29 Dir: Nicolas Roeg Prod: Rick McCallum Exec. Prod: Denis O'Brien and George Harrison. A Handmade Film (based on Potter's 1974 television play, Schmoedipus); with Theresa Russell, Gary Oldman, Christopher Lloyd, Sandra Bernhard.

1991 UK. Secret Friends Dir: Dennis Potter Prod: Rosemarie Whitman Exec. Prod: Robert Michael Geisler and John Roberdeau. A Whistling Gypsy Production presented by Film Four International and Robert Michael Geisler and John Roberdeau (based on Potter's 1986 novel, Ticket to Ride); with Alan Bates, Gina Bellman, Frances Barber, Colin Jeavons.

1993 UK. Midnight Movie Dir: Renny Rye. A Whistling Gypsy Production for BBC Films; with Brian Dennehy, Jim Carter, Polly Walker.

1993 UK / Aus. Mesmer Dir: Roger Spottiswoode Prod: Lance Reynolds Exec. Prod: David Bowie. A L.E.V.E.R.G.R.E.E.N. Ltd. film; with Alan Rickman, Amanda Ooms.

Unproduced Screenplays (known):

Note: The following is a list of titles of screenplays discovered in the course of this study, which are known to have been written by Potter at various stages of his career, yet which to date remain unproduced. In most cases, the actual scripts are unavailable because they remain the exclusive property of the commissioning film companies. The titles have been culled from a variety of sources, including personal interviews with practitioners, as well as from passing references to them in various published articles. Details collected in this fashion are necessarily vague and so the list has been compiled in alphabetical order by title rather than chronological sequence. Estimates of approximate periods of composition are, however, provided in parentheses:

Double Dare (early eighties American screen version of Potter's 1976 television play)

Ghost Writer (treatment of a proposed film, originally to have been directed by Piers Haggard, which was submitted to the National Film Development Fund in 1978)

The Next Step / Unexpected Valleys (unproduced sequel to Herbert Ross' 1977 ballet film, The Turning Point. Written for Ross c. 1979-80)

Opium Blue (Potter completed Dickens' last unfinished novel, The Mystery of Edwin Drood, in screenplay form during the late eighties)

The Phantom of the Opera (updating of the famous story to Paris during the Nazi Occupation. Written for Lorimar but rejected in 1988 by the company's assigned director, Wolfgang Petersen)

Pushkin (based on the life of the Russian poet, Aleksandr Pushkin. Written in late eighties for Quincey Jones at Warner Bros. but shelved)

The Singing Detective (unproduced American screen version of Potter's 1986 TV serial. First draft of screenplay dated October 1990)

Under the Volcano (adaptation of Malcolm Lowry's novel, written in the early to mid seventies for director Alan Bridges).

The White Hotel (adaptation of D.M Thomas' novel, written in 1990, originally for director David Lynch)

3. Television and Film Scripts

Note: the following is a list of those television and film scripts by Potter which were consulted during the researching and writing of this study. The list is divided into published and unpublished scripts. Items are listed in alphabetical order by title. Details of archive sources are given for unpublished scripts.

a. Published Television Scripts

Blue Remembered Hills in Waiting for the Boat, On Television (London: Faber and Faber, 1984)

Christabel (London: Faber and Faber, 1988)

Cream in My Coffee in Waiting for the Boat, On Television (London: Faber and Faber, 1984)

Follow the Yellow Brick Road in The Television Dramatist, (ed.) Robert Muller, (London: Elek, 1973)

Joe's Ark in Waiting for the Boat, On Television (London: Faber and Faber, 1984)

Lipstick on Your Collar (London: Faber and Faber, 1993)

The Singing Detective (London: Faber and Faber, 1986)

Stand Up, Nigel Barton in The Nigel Barton Plays: Two Television Plays (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967)

Vote, Vote, Vote for Nigel Barton in The Nigel Barton Plays: Two Television Plays (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967)

b. Unpublished Television Scripts

Angels Are So Few, BBC Camera Script, April 1970. BBC Television Script Unit.

Blackeyes, TV version, Episodes 1 - 4, September 1988. Rick McCallum.

Blade on the Feather, Pre-Production Script, May 1980. BFI Script Library.

The Bonegrinder, Camera Script, Associated Rediffusion, November 1967. BFI Script Library.

Casanova, BBC Camera Scripts, Episodes 1 - 6, June - October 1971. BBC Television Script Unit.

Casanova, Draft Scripts, Episodes 1 - 6. Mark Shivas Collection, BFI.

The Confidence Course, BBC Camera Script, February 1965. BBC Television Script Unit.

Cream in My Coffee, Pre-Production Script; Shooting Script; Rehearsal Script, March 1980. BFI Script Library.

Emergency Ward 9, BBC Camera Script, April 1966. BBC Television Script Unit.

Message for Posterity, BBC Camera Script, April 1967. BBC Television Script Unit.

Paper Roses, Granada Rehearsal Script, November 1970. BFI Script Library.

Pennies from Heaven, BBC Rehearsal Scripts, Episodes 1 - 6, August 1977. BBC Television Script Unit.

Rain on the Roof, LWT Rehearsal Script, January 1980. BFI Script Library.

Schmoedipus, BBC Camera Script, December 1973. BBC Television Script Unit.

Shaggy Dog. LWT Rehearsal Script, April 1968. BFI Script Library.
The Singing Detective, Rehearsal Script, Episodes 1 - 6. Jon Amiel.

c. Screenplays (unpublished)

Blackeyes, Feature Film Version, September 1988. Rick McCallum.
Brimstone and Treacle, Final Draft, 23 August 1981. BFI Script Library.
Dreamchild, Original Draft, 26 April 1983. Gavin Millar.
Gorky Park, Revised Third Draft, 20 December 1982. BFI Script Library.
Mesmer, Final Draft, 5 April 1993. Hollywood Scripts Ltd.
Pennies from Heaven, Final Draft (MGM), 18 August 1980, with revised pages, 1981. BFI Script Library.
Pennies from Heaven, Original Draft (Greg Smith, Norfolk International Productions), 28 December 1978. BFI Script Library.
The Singing Detective, First Draft, October 1990. Hollywood Scripts Ltd.
Track 29, Original Draft, 16 October 1982. Joseph Losey Archive, BFI.
Track 29, Combined Dialogue and Continuity, Post-Production Release Script, 10 March 1988. BFI Script Library.

4. Published Theatre Scripts

a. Original Stage Play.

Sufficient Carbohydrate (London: Faber and Faber, 1983)

b. Stage Plays Adapted from Original Television Material

Brimstone and Treacle (London: Eyre Methuen, 1978; reprint, London: Samuel French, 1979)

Son of Man: A Play (London: André Deutsch / Samuel French, 1970)

5. Radio Drama

Note: In the late seventies and early eighties, two of Potter's old television plays were adapted for BBC radio by Derek Hoddinott. Transmission details are as listed in the Programme Indices, BBC Written Archives Centre, Caversham.

28.11.79 3.15pm Alice 45m BBC Radio 4. Ad. and Prod: Derek Hoddinott.

20.5.81 3.02pm Traitor 48m BBC Radio 4 Ad. and Prod: Derek Hoddinott; with Denholm Elliott, Ian Ogilvy.

6. Published Fiction

a. Novels.

Blackeyes, (London: Faber and Faber, 1987; rev. ed., 1989)

Brimstone and Treacle, (London: Quartet Books, 1982) (Note: novelisation of Potter's 1981 screenplay, adapted by his daughter, Sarah Potter.)

Hide and Seek, (London: André Deutsch / Quartet Books, 1973; reprint, London: Faber and Faber, 1990)

Pennies from Heaven (London: Quartet Books, 1981) (Note: novelisation by Potter of his own Pennies screenplay.)

Ticket to Ride, (London: Faber and Faber, 1986)

b. Short Story.

"Last Pearls", The Daily Telegraph, 4 June 1994, arts sec., p.2.

7. Published Poetry

"The Artist", Verse and Prose, (ed.) Dennis Potter, The Dane, Magazine of St. Clement Dane's Grammar School, Vol.35. No.13, July 1953, p.441. Hammersmith Public Library, West London.

8. Published Non-Fiction

a. Monographs.

The Changing Forest: Life in the Forest of Dean Today, Britain Alive series, (London: Secker and Warburg, 1962).

The Glittering Coffin, (London: Gollancz, 1960).

b. Collected interviews.

Potter on Potter (ed.) Graham Fuller, (London: Faber and Faber, 1993).

Seeing the Blossom (London: Faber and Faber, 1994) (Note: comprising transcripts of Potter's 1994 Without Walls interview; 1993 James MacTaggart Lecture; 1987 Arena interview).

c. Introductions and Prefaces.

Introduction, Brimstone and Treacle, (London: Eyre Methuen, 1978), pp.1-4.

Introduction, Follow the Yellow Brick Road in The Television Dramatist (ed.) Robert Muller, (London: Elek, 1973), pp.303-5.

Introduction, The Mayor of Casterbridge by Thomas Hardy, (London: Pan Books, 1978), pp.vii-ix.

Introduction, The Nigel Barton Plays: Two Television Plays, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), pp.7-22.

Introduction, Tender Is the Night by F. Scott Fitzgerald, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987).

"Some Sort of Preface..." and Introductions to Blue Remembered Hills, Joe's Ark and Cream in My Coffee in Waiting for the Boat, On Television (London: Faber and Faber, 1984), pp.11-35; 39-40; 89-90; 135-7 respectively.

"Strike Up the Band", Introduction to Pennies From Heaven, Radio Times, 4 - 10 March 1978, p.72.

d. Scripts.

"Atlee", "Budget Day", "Canon Collins", "Entitled to Know", "Filth", and "Mother's Day" (sketches co-written with David Nathan) in That Was The Week That Was (ed.) David Frost and Ned Sherrin, (London: W.H. Allen, 1963), pp.98-9; 53; 108-9; 44-5; 24-5; 90-1 respectively.

e. Lectures and Speeches.

"Occupying Powers", 1993 James MacTaggart Lecture, Edinburgh International Television Festival, published in The Guardian, 28 August 1993, Sec. 2, p.21.

"Realism and Non-Naturalism 2", Paper, 1977 Edinburgh International Television Festival, published in The Official Programme of The Edinburgh International Television Festival 1977, August 1977, pp.34-7.

f. Key Articles.

Note: Potter's journalistic output was prodigious in his early career and hence far too extensive to itemise in full. The following is a selected list of key articles which are either cited in the text or which seem germane to his work as a creative writer and dramatist. Potter's journalism included not only feature-writing and TV criticism for The Daily Herald (between 1961 and 1964) but also a weekly personal column in the pre-Murdoch Sun (1964-8), as well as television and book reviewing

for The New Statesman, New Society, The Times and The Sunday Times, throughout the nineteen sixties and seventies. After he resigned from The Sunday Times in November 1978, his journalistic output became far more sporadic. Articles listed here are given alphabetically by title.

- "Aberfan", New Society, 27 October 1966, p.638.
"Armchair Revolution", New Society, 20 June 1968, p.716.
"Base Ingratitude", New Statesman, 3 May 1958, p.562.
"Blackeyes and Bruises" (on directing Blackeyes), The Sunday Telegraph, 26 November 1989, TV and Radio Sec., pp.24-5.
"A Boswell in the Bicarbonate", review of Churchill: The Struggle for Survival by Lord Moran, New Society, 26 May 1966, p.26.
"Carry on Wireless", New Society, 5 January 1967, pp.25-6.
"Cue Teleciné - Put on the Kettle", New Society, 22 September 1966, pp.456-7.
"The Face at the Window", The Times, 3 August 1968, p.15.
"The Gaudy Roundabout", review of The Young Meteors by Jonathan Aitken, New Society, 21 September 1967, pp.403-4.
"George Orwell", New Society, 1 February 1968, pp.107-8.
"Greenery-Yallery", New Statesman, 14 July 1967, p.60.
Review of Holocaust, The Sunday Times, 10 September 1978; repr., Encounter, December 1978, pp.16-17.
"How I'm Shaking Up the Mush Machine", Daily Mail, 25 May 1979, p.9.
"I Really Must Tell You I'm So Very Happy", The Sun, 13 May 1968, p.3.
Review of The Least Worst Television in the World by Milton Shulman, The Times, 15 March 1973, p.10.
"Metaphysics of a Chocolate Maker", review of Despair by Vladimir Nabokov, New Society, 28 July 1966, pp.167-8.
"A Note from Mr. Milne", New Statesman, 23 April 1976, p.648.
"Modern Poetry", Verse and Prose (ed.) Dennis Potter, The Dane, Magazine of St. Clement Dane's Grammar School, Vol.35, No.13, July 1953, p.433.
"Painted Ocean", review of Sir Francis Chichester's televised knighthood, New Statesman, 2 June 1967, p.773.
"Reaction", Encore, Vol.11, No.3, May - June 1964, p.39.
"Small Victim", New Statesman, 21 June 1958, p.800.
"The Spectre at the Harvest Feast", review of Never and Always (dir: Denis Mitchell), The Sunday Times, 19 June 1977, p.22.
"Sting in the Brain", review of In Two Minds (wr: David Mercer), New Statesman, 10 March 1967, p.338.
"The Swatting of the Gnats" (on commercial television), New Statesman, 16 June 1967, pp.851-2.
"Switch On, Switch Back", The Times, 5 July 1969, pp.17; 22.
"Switch On, Switch Over, Switch Off", The Times, 15 March 1973, p.10.
"TV Drama - Last Refuge of the Individual", TV Times, 18 - 24 October 1980, pp.127; 130.
"The Uncle Tom Show", review of The Black and White Minstrel Show, New Statesman, 5 May 1967, pp. 528-9.
"Whenever We Say the Word", Views No.5 (Summer 1964), pp.76-9.
"Why British TV Is Going to the Dogs", Daily Mail, 30 July 1980, p.12.
"Writer Exposed", The Sun, 20 May 1968, p.13.
"Writers Are Kings without Riches", The Daily Herald, 25 January 1964, p.12.

g. Published Letters.

- Letter. The Listener, 29 March 1990, p.22.
"Potter Rights", Broadcast, 6 October 1980, p.9.
"Writers' Attitudes to Wealth Creation", The Independent, 17 June 1987, p.17.

h. Documents.

Severn Sound, ILR Franchise Application, (Gloucester: Gloucestershire Broadcasting Company, 1979). IBA Archive.

i. Records.

Sleeve Notes. The Singing Detective. Music from the BBC TV Serial. BBC Records, REN 608. 1986.

9. Non-Fiction Broadcasts

Note: The following is a complete list of non-fiction broadcasts given by Dennis Potter on British television and radio. The list excludes broadcast interviews, profiles, reviews of plays and so on which are listed separately. As with the listings for television drama, transmission details have been compiled from a variety of sources, including Programme Indices held at the BBC Written Archives Centre, Caversham; research using the Radio Times and TV Times, as well as notes taken by the author at the time of a particular programme's transmission. Programme descriptions under each item come from these sources too. '[NFA]' next to a particular item indicates that a copy of the programme is available for viewing at the National Film Archive and that this was the source used. '[TRA]' next to a particular item indicates that a transcript of the broadcast exists and was used for this study. '[VCR]' indicates that a private videocassette recording of a television transmission was used. The list is divided into two sections: television and radio transmissions.

a. Television.

3.6.60 9.29pm Between Two Rivers 30m BBC TV Documentary b/w film
Wr. and narr: Dennis Potter Ph: A.A. Englander Prod: Anthony de Lotbinière.

Repeated 10.31pm 16.11.60 BBC TV. [NFA]

16.10.60 - 25.6.61 Bookstand 30m BBC TV Book Programme b/w
Pres.: Dick Taverne Dir: Christopher Burstall Prod: Stephen Hearst
Script Associate: Dennis Potter (until 25.6.61) Dir., Dramatised Extracts:
John McGrath.

Note BBC Written Archives lists Potter as co-presenter / interviewer in the following broadcasts:

27.11.60 4.22pm Interviewer.

11.12.60 4.20pm 'Film insert. Children and parents interviewed by Dennis Potter on Grimm's Fairy Tales'.

5.3.61 4.20pm Out West: Discussion.

19.3.61 4.15pm Alone across the Atlantic - Francis Chichester interviewed by Dennis Potter.

2.4.61 4.16pm 'A Middle Class Education': Discussion

16.4.61 4.25pm All We Possess by K. Hyson. Author interviewed by Dennis Potter.

25.6.61 4.15pm The Jazz Scene by Francis Newton. Discussion with the author.

Also 30.5.62 10.02pm Writings of Edna O'Brien. Interview by Dennis Potter.

24.11.62 - 28.12.63 That Was the Week That Was 50m BBC TV b/w
Pres.: David Frost Prod. and Dir: Ned Sherrin Exec. Prod: Alasdair Milne.

Note: Potter contributed scripts, along with co-writer David Nathan.

13.6.67 11.05pm Bravo and Ballyhoo 30m BBC-1 b/w film. (Replacing Sir Francis Chichester in London Highlights). Commentary written and narrated by Dennis Potter.

9.7.83 8.45pm Shakespeare in Perspective: "Cymbeline" 25m 10s BBC-2 Colour Film. Wr. and Pres: Dennis Potter Dir: Sally Kirkwood Prod: Victor Poole; "Dennis Potter presents a personal view of Cymbeline. Introduction to BBC Television Shakespeare Production of Cymbeline tx. BBC-2 10.7.83". [TRA]

21.3.93 8.00pm Opinions: Britain 1993 - Dennis Potter 25m Channel 4 Colour VTR Wr. and Pres: Dennis Potter Prod. and Dir: Sebastian Cody. 'An Open Media Production for Channel 4'. [VCR]
Extracts repeated The Opinions Debate: What's Wrong, What's Right, What's Next? 5.05pm 28.3.93 Channel 4. [VCR]

b. Radio.

29.5.58 6.25pm Town and Country BBC Home Service "A View of Oxford from the editor of Isis".

5.9.76 6.15pm With Great Pleasure... 45m BBC Radio 4. Prod: Brian Patten. "Dennis Potter presents his personal choice of poetry and prose." Repeated 11.15pm 9.12.79 BBC Radio 4. [TRA]

27.12.76 9.25pm And with No Language but a Cry 10m BBC Radio 4. Wr. and Narr: Dennis Potter Prod: Hubert Hoskins. "A Christmas reflection by Dennis Potter". [TRA]

26.12.77 2.15pm A Christmas Forest 45m BBC Radio 4 Prod: Brian Patten. "Dennis Potter spent his childhood in the Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire. The sounds of childhood Christmas still ring in his ears and the images remain as powerful as ever. With Robert Potter. Children of Berry Hill Country Primary School & Berry Hill Silver Prize Band take part." Repeated 6.50pm 23.12.78 BBC Radio 4. [TRA]

2.1.78 5.40pm Serendipity 15m BBC Radio 4. "Dennis Potter goes to the archive auction".

23.2.78 8.30pm The Other Side of the Dark 15m BBC Radio 4. Wr. and narr: Dennis Potter Prod: Michael Mayne. Note: First of a series of talks for Lent, collectively titled All in the Waiting. "The six weeks of Lent are a preparation for Easter. On Easter Eve, the ancient liturgy now used again in many churches consists of four parts. The contributor examines the first of these themes, that of light and darkness." [TRA]

INTERVIEWS

1. Broadcast Interviews, Profiles, Reviews etc.

Note: The following comprises a list of interviews, profiles, appearances, discussions and / or reviews pertaining to Potter and his work, which have been transmitted by British television and radio since 1958. As with the section above, this has been compiled from BBC Programme Indices, research using the Radio Times and TV Times, as well as the author's own notes taken at the time of a programme's particular transmission. Programme descriptions also come from these sources. The

list is divided into television and radio transmissions respectively. '[TRA]' next to a particular item indicates a transcript of this transmission exists and was used for this study. '[VCR]' indicates a private videocassette recording of a TV transmission, whilst '[ACR]' indicates an audiocassette recording of a broadcast was used.

a. Television.

25.8.58 9.30pm Does Class Matter ? Programme 2: "Class in Private Life" BBC TV b/w. Potter interviewed by Christopher Mayhew. [TRA]

8.2.60 6.45pm Tonight BBC TV b/w. Interview concerning Potter's book The Glittering Coffin.

30.9.60 6.50pm Tonight BBC TV b/w. "The Chipped White Cups of Dover": Took part in discussion on English personality, based on publication of the pamphlet.

7.12.65 11.09pm Late Night Line-Up BBC-2 b/w. On The Wednesday Play.

17.12.65 11.11pm Late Night Line-Up BBC-2 b/w. Review: The Power Game and Vote, Vote, Vote for Nigel Barton. Took part in discussion.

8.5.66 10.40pm Late Night Line-Up BBC-2 b/w. Discussion.

8.7.66 11.01pm Late Night Line-Up BBC-2 b/w. Interview by Tony Bilbow on "How Useful are Festivals". Interview, the "Star System".

28.12.66 10.20pm Twenty-Four Hours BBC-1 b/w. Took part in discussion on respective BBC productions of the "Alice" story (Potter's 1965 version and Jonathan Miller's 1966 version).

1.1.67 10.50pm The Look of the Year BBC-1 b/w. Took part in discussion on major events in the Arts during 1966.

4.2.68 10.40pm Talkback BBC-1 b/w. Discussion on Softly, Softly.

20.4.69 6.15pm Son of Man Reviewed BBC-1 b/w. Took part in discussion. Repeated 11.30pm same night.

1.3.70 6.25pm Heroes and Hero Worship - What I Believe BBC-1 b/w. Took part in discussion on Son of Man.

23.5.71 6.15pm Myth and Truth: Death and Resurrection Stories BBC-1 Colour. Interview.

14.10.71 11.27pm Late Night Line-Up BBC-2 Colour. "Interview by Michael Dean about Traitor - the Play for Today shown earlier that night. Dennis Potter talks about the play and his career in general". [TRA]

4.1.73 11.45pm Real Time BBC-2 Colour. Took part in discussion on All in a Day and The Candidate.

15.2.73 11.53pm Real Time BBC-2 Colour. Interview about his work.

28.6.73 11.31pm Real Time BBC-2 Colour. Took part in discussion.

14.8.73 10.15pm The Hart Interview: Dennis Potter BBC-1 Colour.

1.10.76 11.05pm Russell Harty LWT Colour. Interview.

13.2.77 6.16pm The Anno Domini Interview BBC-1 Colour (not Scotland). "Colin Morris talked to TV playwright Dennis Potter about his work, his illness and his religious beliefs". [TRA]

1.8.77 11.52pm Late Night Line-Up: Festival 77 BBC-2 Colour. "Michael Dean introduced live edition of the programme which discussed TV output from 1964-72. Dennis Potter and Christopher Morahan, former head of plays for BBC TV, took part".

7.11.77 11.02pm Tonight BBC-1 Colour. "Ludovic Kennedy interviewed Dennis Potter about his writing". [TRA]

11.2.78 10.30pm The South Bank Show: Man of Television LWT Colour. Profile of and interview with Potter by Melvyn Bragg.

21.7.78 5.54pm Nationwide BBC-1 Colour. "Kieran Prendiville reported on the success of Pennies from Heaven".

17.5.80 8.31pm The Levin Interviews BBC-2 Colour. "Bernard Levin in conversation with Dennis Potter, playwright".
Repeated 4.50pm 18.11.82 BBC-2. [TRA]

16.5.82 9.59pm Omnibus BBC-1 Colour. "Presenter Barry Norman interviewed Dennis Potter about Hollywood's interpretation of his musical Pennies from Heaven". [TRA]

9.3.84 9.25pm Whicker! BBC-2 Colour. "Alan Whicker talked to James Anderton, Chief Constable Manchester Police; Dennis Potter, playwright and Daphne Rae, wife of headmaster Westminster school, about TV violence, the effects it has and a variety of other topics."

24.1.86 7.30pm Saturday Review BBC-2 Colour. Interview.
Extracts repeated 1.1.87 Saturday Review: Review of the Year.

3.11.86 11.15pm Late Night Line Up Flashback BBC-2 Colour. "Alan Rusbridger (TV critic The Observer) looked back at interesting moments during the life of LNU and invited comments from various people associated with it." Potter one of the contributors.

14.11.86 8.22am Breakfast Time BBC-1 Colour. "Tony Wilkinson reported on the new TV programme, The Singing Detective".

22.1.87 10.10pm Question Time BBC-1 Colour. Chaired by Sue Lawley. Potter was one of the panellists.

30.1.87 9.30pm Arena BBC-2 Colour. Profile of and interview with Potter by Alan Yentob.
Repeated 11.10pm 29.6.87 BBC-1 as prelude to retrospective season of Potter plays. [VCR]

25.8.87 11.15pm Did You See...? Special: Brimstone and Treacle BBC-1 Colour. Report on and studio review of unbanned Brimstone and Treacle. Included short interview with Potter. [VCR]

25.9.87 7.00pm Wogan BBC-1 Colour. Chat show guest. [VCR]

15.7.88 7.00pm Wogan BBC-1 Colour. Chat show guest. [VCR]

21.7.88 7.45am Breakfast Time BBC-1 Colour. Short Potter interview and preview of Track 29.

2.11.88 9.15pm Signals: Sex on Television Channel 4 Colour. The history of sex on television, including discussion of Potter; clips from past Potter plays and past Potter interviews. [VCR]

11.11.88 7.00pm Wogan BBC-1 Colour. Preview of Christabel and interview with Christabel and Peter Bielenberg. [VCR]

1.12.88 11.05am Open Air BBC-1 Colour. 'Live' phone-in and interview with Kenith Trodd and Christabel Bielenberg on Christabel. [VCR]

30.3.89 8.35am Breakfast Time BBC-1 Colour. Report by Andrew Burroughs on Gordon Cook's special Oscar for the development of camera lenses. Clip of lenses being used in the filming of Blackeyes.

16.4.89 9.00pm The Media Show Channel 4 Colour. Report on the filming of Blackeyes, including interview with Potter. [VCR]

5.11.89 10.15pm Heart of the Matter BBC-1 Colour. Report by Joan Bakewell on sex on television and the deregulation of broadcasting. Including interview with Potter. [ACR]

9.11.89 11.15pm The Late Show Special: The Art of the Screenwriter BBC-2 Colour. Report on screenwriting course taught by American Robert McKee. Contributions on difficulties of screenwriting from Potter, Alan Plater and others.

11.11.89 10.50pm Saturday Matters with Sue Lawley BBC-1 Colour. Potter was chat show guest. [VCR]

23.11.89 11.15pm The Late Show BBC-2 Colour. Item by John Wyver assessing Potter's work and previewing Blackeyes. [VCR]

24.11.89 7.00pm Wogan BBC-1 Colour. Preview of Blackeyes with guest Nigel Planer. [VCR]

29.11.89 11.15pm The Late Show BBC-2 Colour. Report on and review / discussion of Blackeyes following screening of Episode 1 on BBC-2 earlier that evening. [VCR]

30.11.89 9.05am Open Air BBC-1 Colour. Viewer phone-in reactions to Episode One of Blackeyes. [VCR]

3.12.89 8.00pm The Media Show Channel 4 Colour. Feminist writers and critics on Blackeyes. [VCR]

4.12.89 2.50pm Behind the Screen BBC-2 Colour. Report on Blackeyes. Interviews with Potter and two of the cast. [VCR]

14.12.89 11.05am Open Air BBC-1 Colour. Viewer reactions to Episode Three of Blackeyes. [VCR]

11.1.90 10.00pm See For Yourself BBC-1 Colour. Marmaduke Hussey and Michael Checkland questioned by viewers on Blackeyes. [VCR]

21.1.90 9.30pm The Talk Show with Clive James BBC-2 Colour. Potter featured as one of the guests. [VCR]

22.2.90 11.05am Open Air BBC-1 Colour. Viewers' praise for repeat of Pennies from Heaven. [VCR]

12.4.90 11.20pm The Late Show BBC-2 Colour. Report on increasing use of preview process in Hollywood. Contributions from Rick McCallum on previews of the MGM Pennies From Heaven and of Track 29. Repeated 8.10pm 19.8.90 BBC-2. [VCR]

27.11.91 7.00pm Channel 4 News Channel 4 Colour. Report on Secret Friends, including interview with Potter. [VCR]

7.12.92 11.15pm The Late Show BBC-2 Colour. Tribute to the late Denholm Elliott, including discussion with Potter. [VCR]

4.3.93 11.15pm The Late Show BBC-2 Colour. Review of Lipstick on Your Collar. [VCR]

5.3.93 12.00pm English File: New Approaches - Drama BBC-2 Colour. Schools programme comparing television and stage versions of Blue Remembered Hills. Repeated 12.00pm 24.9.93 BBC-2. [VCR]

3.4.93 6.30pm Right to Reply Channel 4 Colour. Short Potter interview, responding to tabloid accusations against Lipstick on Your Collar. [VCR]

26.5.93 10.30pm Barry Norman at the Cannes Film Festival BBC-1 Colour. Short interview with Alan Rickman on future production of Mesmer. [VCR]

27.8.93 7.00pm Channel 4 News Channel 4 Colour; 9.00pm Nine O'Clock News BBC-1 Colour. News Reports on Potter's MacTaggart Lecture. [VCR]

28.8.93 8.45pm ITN Weekend News ITN Colour; 10.20pm BBC Weekend News BBC-1 Colour. News Reports on response of BBC Director-General John Birt to Potter's attacks on him. [VCR]

30.8.93 7.00pm Right to Reply Special: Dennis Potter in Edinburgh Channel 4 Colour. Broadcast excerpts of Potter's 1993 MacTaggart Lecture, plus subsequent discussion with Potter. [VCR]

5.4.94 9.00pm Without Walls Special: An Interview with Dennis Potter. Channel 4 Colour. Potter's last television interview. Repeated 9.30pm 9.6.94 Channel 4. [VCR / published Channel 4 TRA]

9.4.94 6.30pm Right to Reply Channel 4 Colour. Viewer appeals to BBC and Channel 4 to honour Potter's wishes for his final dramas. [VCR]

23.4.94 6.30pm Right to Reply Channel 4 Colour. Viewer Jane Cowley interviews Alan Yentob and Michael Grade and receives positive responses in terms of honouring Potter's wishes for his last plays. [VCR]

24.4.94 10.00pm British Academy Awards Ceremony 1994 ITV Colour. Special announcement that BAFTA Best Television Writer Award to be re-named the 'Dennis Potter Award' in tribute to the dying playwright. [VCR]

23.5.94 11.15pm The Mary Whitehouse Story BBC-2 Colour. Special Late Show on Whitehouse, including interview with Kenith Trodd on Whitehouse's reactions to past Potter plays. [VCR]
Repeated 7.20pm 24.7.94 BBC-2.

7.6.94 1.00pm The One O'Clock News BBC-1 Colour; 3.52pm News BBC-2 Colour; 5.40pm Early Evening News ITN Colour; 6.00pm Six O'Clock News BBC-1 Colour; 9.00pm Nine O'Clock News BBC-1 Colour; 10.30pm Newsnight BBC-2 Colour. News reports on Potter's death. [VCR]

- - - 7.00pm Channel 4 News Channel 4 Colour. Extended report on Potter's death, including details of writer's last scripts and interviews with among others, Kenith Trodd. [VCR]

- - - 9.00pm Dennis Potter: A Life in Television BBC-2 Colour. Special Late Show tribute, including interviews with Potter colleagues; archive clips from Potter plays and Potter interviews. [VCR]

- - - 10.00pm News at Ten ITN Colour. Report on Potter's death, including tribute from Heritage Secretary, Peter Brooke, M.P.. [VCR]

9.6.94 7.50pm The Slot Channel 4 Colour. Viewer Jane Cowley calls for setting up of special 'Dennis Potter Foundation' to encourage new writers. Interview with Kenith Trodd. [VCR]

11.6.94 6.30pm Right to Reply Channel 4 Colour. Tribute to Potter from viewer Sally-Anne Lever. [VCR]

b. Radio.

13.2.60 2.00pm The World of Books BBC Home Service. The Glittering Coffin. Recorded Speaker.

17.4.60 4.15pm The Brains Trust / Youth Brains Trust BBC Home Service. Recorded speaker.

17.11.60 10.00pm Ten O'Clock News and Comment BBC Home Service. "Immorality among young people". Recorded Speaker.

30.8.61 8.42pm Rene Cutforth with Something to Say. BBC Home Service. Recorded Speaker.

6.10.61 10.00pm Ten O'Clock News and Comment BBC Home Service. "The Establishment". Recorded Speaker.

31.5.62 10.30pm Books and Authors BBC Third Programme. The Changing Forest written by Dennis Potter.

16.4.63 2.00pm Woman's Hour BBC Light Programme. "Aspects of University Life: The Pull Between Home Roots and College". Recorded Speaker.

Repeated 9.10am 12.5.63 Home for the Day BBC Home Service.

25.4.63 2.00pm Woman's Hour BBC Light Programme. "Talk of Books and Writers". Speaker.

15.5.63 2.16pm Woman's Hour BBC Light Programme. "Ideas in the Air". Took part in discussion.

4.2.64 2.00pm Woman's Hour BBC Light Programme. "Showpiece: writing comedy scripts for television".

23.6.65 2.00pm Woman's Hour BBC Light Programme. "Ideas in the Air". Took part in discussion.

Repeated 11.30am 27.6.65 Home for the Day BBC Home Service.

2.12.66 2.00pm Woman's Hour BBC Light Programme. "Ideas in the Air".

9.12.66 9.30pm Third Degree BBC Third Programme. First Round of a Quiz Programme. Guest Personality.

6.1.67 8.15pm Any Questions ? BBC Light Programme. From Monmouthshire. Panellist.

3.5.67 1.00pm The World at One BBC Home Service. Interview with Potter about his new BBC TV play Message for Posterity.

20.2.70 8.15pm Any Questions ? BBC Radio 4. Panellist.

25.11.71 8.45pm Scan BBC Radio 4 "Michael Billington interviewed Dennis Potter on Casanova". [TRA]

26.11.71 8.30pm Any Questions ? BBC Radio 4. Panellist.

14.1.72 2.02pm Woman's Hour BBC Radio 4. "Ideas in the Air". Took part in a discussion about 'Labelling People'.

23.11.73 10.45pm Kaleidoscope BBC Radio 4. Review of Hide and Seek. [TRA]

10.4.76 6.45pm Critics' Forum BBC Radio 3. Review of Double Dare.

25.4.76 8.15pm Sunday BBC Radio 4. "Potter interviewed about his work as a playwright".

30.4.76 7.45am Thought for the Day BBC Radio 4. Interview.

18.2.77 7.30pm Pick of the Week BBC Radio 4. Excerpt from Anno Domini TV interview.

7.9.77 9.30pm Kaleidoscope BBC Radio 4. "Television Festival: Conference devoted to television drama and documentary. Marcel Ophuls who gave the MacTaggart Memorial Lecture at The Television Festival and Dennis Potter, playwright, talking about the current problems of British television."

21.10.77 8.30pm Any Questions ? BBC Radio 4. From The Subscription Rooms, Stroud, Gloucester. Panellist.
Repeated 8.30pm 22.10.77 BBC Radio 4.

17.12.77 6.15pm Desert Island Discs BBC Radio 4. Guest. [TRA]

27.1.78 9.30pm Kaleidoscope BBC Radio 4. Review of TV adaptation of The Mayor of Casterbridge.

13.3.78 9.05am Start The Week BBC Radio 4. On Pennies from Heaven. Potter interviewed by Joan Bakewell. Took part in subsequent discussion.

15.3.78 9.30pm Kaleidoscope BBC Radio 4. Potter interview and review of Pennies from Heaven.

18.3.78 5.45pm Critics' Forum BBC Radio 3. Review of Pennies from Heaven.

- 31.1.79 9.30pm Kaleidoscope BBC Radio 4. Potter interview and review of Blue Remembered Hills.
- 10.2.79 5.45pm Critics' Forum BBC Radio 3. Review of stage production of Brimstone and Treacle, performed at the Open Space Theatre.
- 22.10.80 9.30pm Kaleidoscope BBC Radio 4. Interview with Potter about a retrospective season of his work at the National Film Theatre.
- 7.9.82 9.30pm Kaleidoscope BBC Radio 4. Potter interview and review of the film version of Brimstone and Treacle.
- 8.12.83 9.40pm Kaleidoscope BBC Radio 4. Potter interview and review of his stage play, Sufficient Carbohydrate.
- 1.2.84 9.05am Midweek BBC Radio 4. Interview with Potter regarding West End opening of his play, Sufficient Carbohydrate.
- 2.2.84 6.04pm John Dunn BBC Radio 2. Interview with Potter regarding Sufficient Carbohydrate.
- 18.9.85 11.02pm Round Midnight BBC Radio 2. Interview with Potter regarding his TV adaptation of Scott Fitzgerald's Tender Is the Night.
- 5.3.86 2.02pm Woman's Hour BBC Radio 4. Interview with Potter regarding his career and new film, Dreamchild.
- 5.5.86 9.45pm Kaleidoscope Special: Making Television Sing BBC Radio 4. Interview with Potter regarding his career in television with reference to Pennies from Heaven; The Singing Detective; Vote, Vote, Vote for Nigel Barton and his career as a Labour politician.
Repeated 4.30pm 6.5.86 BBC Radio 4.
- 17.11.86 9.05am Start The Week BBC Radio 4. With Potter as one of the guests.
- 24.11.88 9.45pm Kaleidoscope BBC Radio 4. Interview with Kenith Trodd on Christabel as well as review. [ACR]
- 20.11.89 7.05pm Third Ear BBC Radio 3. Interview with Potter on Blackeyes and his career. [ACR]
- 2.12.89 5.45pm Critics' Forum BBC Radio 3. Review of Blackeyes. [ACR]
- 4.12.89 9.05am Start The Week BBC Radio 4. Discussion of Blackeyes with Potter. [ACR]
- 16.1.90 9.15pm Kaleidoscope BBC Radio 4. Report on TV scriptwriting course, with references made to Stand Up, Nigel Barton. [ACR]
- 29.6.91 4.30pm Writers Revealed BBC Radio 4. Interview with Potter concerning his religious beliefs. [ACR]
- 22.2.93 4.05pm Kaleidoscope BBC Radio 4. Review of Lipstick on Your Collar.
Revised repeat 9.15pm 22.2.93 BBC Radio 4.

2. Published Interviews

Note: The following is a list of published interviews pertaining to Dennis Potter and his work, which have been used in this study. It excludes book-length collections of interviews with the writer which are listed elsewhere under 'Works by Dennis Potter: Published Non-Fiction'. It also excludes reviews, profiles, news reports and so on, where there is no substantial reproduction of the first-hand interview testimony of a particular source. These are listed separately. In the following, items are listed in alphabetical order by surname of the interviewer, if known. Where possible, the title of the particular article in which the interview was reproduced is also given.

a. Interviews with Dennis Potter.

- Absalom, Steve, "Agony that Purged Potter", Daily Mail, 22 November 1986, p.17.
- Andrew, Nigel, "Dark Angel", Radio Times, 25 November - 1 December 1989, pp.4-5.
- Appleyard, Bryan, "A Risky Stand Against the Ironic Mode", The Times, 14 March 1984, p.12.
- - - , "Dennis Potter, Making a Drama out of a Crisis", The Times, 9 September 1986, p.12.
- Bakewell, Joan, "Wrestling with a Vision", The Sunday Times Magazine, 14 November 1976, pp.64-70.
- Bakewell, Joan and Nicholas Garnham, Interview in Bakewell and Garnham, The New Priesthood (London: Allen Lane, Penguin Press, 1970), pp.82-4.
- Brooks, Richard, "All in the Eye of the Beholder", The Observer, 19 November 1989, Review Sec., p.35.
- - - , "Return of Politically Incorrect Den", The Observer, 14 February 1993, Review Sec., p.63.
- Brown, Robert, "Dollars from Hollywood", BFI Monthly Film Bulletin, Vol.49, No.582, July 1982, p.129.
- Burn, Gordon, "Television Is the Only Medium that Counts", Radio Times, 8 October 1970, p.66.
- Connolly, Ray, "When the Penny Dropped", London Evening Standard, 21 March 1978, p.8.
- de Courcey, Anne, "My Heritage Is Chips Says Dennis Potter", London Evening News, 17 October 1980, p.9.
- Craig, Mary, "Grounds for Religion: Dennis Potter on 'A Protective Institution'", The Listener, 13 May 1976, p.613.
- Cunningham, John, "Flavour of Decay", The Guardian, 6 December 1983, p.11.
- Cushman, Robert, "Dennis Potter: The Values of a Playwright", Radio Times, 3 - 9 April 1976, pp.61-5.
- Devlin, Martina, "Black Cloud Lifts at Last for Potter", Edinburgh Evening News, 10 February 1990, Weekend Sec., pp.6-7.
- Dickson, E. Jane, "Potter Back on Song", Radio Times, 20 - 26 February 1993, pp.30-2.
- Dougary, Ginny, "Potter's Weal", The Times, 26 September 1992, Review Sec., pp.4-10.
- Flett, Al, "The Illness that Inspires Dennis Potter", Glasgow Herald, 24 March 1978, p.10.
- Fuller, Graham, "Dennis Potter", American Film, Vol.14, No.5, March 1989, pp.31-33; 54-5.
- - - , "Trains Potter", The Listener, 26 May 1988, pp.34-5.
- Grant, Richard, "For 17 Years I've Been Fantasising About How to Improve TV", London Evening News, 21 May 1979, p.10.
- Grant, Steve, "Potter's Art", Time Out, 8 - 15 October 1986, pp.22-5.
- - - , "Potter Gold", Time Out, 10 - 17 February 1993, pp.30-1.
- Harmetz, Aljean, Interview, New York Times, 4 October 1985, p.20.

Hattenstone, Simon, "The Shooting Party", The Guardian, 1 October 1991, Sec.2, p.34.

Hibbert, Tom, "Dennis Potter: Controversial Genius", Empire, No.40, October 1992, pp.48-9.

- - - , "Who the Hell Does Dennis Potter Think He Is ?", Q, No.80, May 1993, pp.7-9.

Jackson, Martin, "Kid's Play for Mr. Potter", Daily Mail, 27 January 1979, p.14.

Kavanagh, P.J., "Potter to the Rescue", Sunday Telegraph Magazine, 4 June 1982, pp.43-44.

"The Kind of Stories that Countrymen Tell", Radio Times, 1 November 1973, p.83.

Koenig, Rhoda, "The Pain of a Black Eye from the Critics", The Independent, 18 December 1989, p.12.

Lambert, Angela, "The Thin Skin of Democracy", The Independent, 14 November 1988, p.16.

Lawson, Mark, "Skin Flicks", The Independent Magazine, 13 February 1993, pp.28-32.

Lennon, Peter, "A Man with a Lash", The Listener, 20 November 1986, pp.14-15.

Lewin, David, "Philip Marlow, Spotted Dick", You Magazine, The Mail on Sunday, 2 November 1986, pp.32-4.

Lott, Tim, "Diamonds in the Dustbin", New Musical Express, 15 November 1986, pp.30-1.

Lyttle, John, "Sing as You Go...", City Limits, No.266, 6 - 13 November 1986, p.21.

Madden, Paul, Interview in Madden (ed.), Complete Programme Notes for a Season of British Television Drama 1959-1973, held at the National Film Theatre 11 - 24 October 1976 (London: British Film Institute, 1976), pp.35-7.

Mafham, Rowena, "One in the Eyeful for Men", Edinburgh Evening News, 25 November 1989, 'Weekend' Sec., p.5.

Mars-Jones, Adam, "The Art of Illness", The Independent, 14 November 1986, p.11.

Murray, James, "Earning Cream for his Coffee", Daily Express, 17 May 1980, p.12.

- - - , "God Does Not Let Us See Him Because There's a Grin on His Face as He Looks Down on Our Antics", Daily Express, 22 May 1976, p.14.

- - - , "What the Devil Are They Playing At ?", Daily Express, 29 March 1976, p.6.

Norman, Barry, "What the Class Barrier Did for Dennis Potter", Daily Mail, 13 December 1965, p.9.

Oakes, Philip, "Potter's Path", The Sunday Times, 7 November 1971, p.24.

- - - , "A Suitable Sleuth for Treatment", Radio Times, 15 - 21 November 1986, pp.98-100.

O'Connor, John, J., "Creator of Detective Interviewed", New York Times, 14 January 1988, Sec. C, p.30.

Paton, Maureen and Ian Lyness, "Such Painful Words", Daily Express, 8 November 1976, p.17.

"Pennies from Heaven", MGM Press Release, May 1982.

"Potter Bears All", London Evening Standard, 17 November 1986, p.6.

Purser, Philip, "A Playwright Comes of Age", Daily Telegraph Magazine, 2 April 1969, pp.10-11.

Raven, Susan, "Relative Values: Critic and Cricketer" (interview with Potter and his daughter, Sarah), The Sunday Times Magazine, 14 August 1983, pp.13-14.

Reynolds, Stanley, Interview, The Guardian, 16 February 1973, p.11.

Saynor, James, "Black and Blue", The Listener, 1 June 1989, pp.4-7.

- - - , "Dennis in Wonderland", Stills, No.21, October 1985,

pp.12-13.

- - - , "One Girl's War", The Listener, 28 July 1988, pp.4-6.
Summers, Sue, "Return of the Prodigal Potter", The Sunday Times, 15 September 1985, p.17.
Thornton, Lesley, "Innocence and Experience", Radio Times, 27 January - 2 February 1979, pp.7-8.
Tinker, Jack, "Potter's Miracle from Heaven", Daily Mail, 6 March 1984, p.28.
Twisk, Russell, "Son of Man", Radio Times, 10 April 1969, p.33.
Vincent, Sally, "The Elusive Dennis Potter", Cosmopolitan, December 1987, pp.93; 96; 98.
Ward, Alex, "TV's Tormented Master", New York Times Magazine, 13 November 1988, pp.38-41; 86-90.
Wright, Patrick, "The Last Acre of Truth", The Guardian, 15 February 1993, Sec.2, p.2.
Wyver, John, "Arrows of Desire", New Statesman & Society, 24 November 1989, pp.16-19.
- - - , "The Long Non-Revolution of Dennis Potter", Time Out, 17 - 23 October 1980, pp.18-19.
- - - , "Paradise, Perhaps", Time Out, 3 - 9 March 1978, pp.12-13.

b. Interviews with Kenith Trodd.

- Bilbow, Marjorie, "Trodd's Pilkington - In Praise of BBC Backing", Screen International, 22 - 29 November 1986, p.49.
Downs, Clare, "Producers Profile: A.I.P. Chairman Kenith Trodd", A.I.P. & Co. No. 27, July - August 1980, pp.17-20.
Felstein, Roma, "Trodd On the Road to Success", Broadcast, 3 August 1984, pp.20-3.
Myers, Kathy, "Assault on the Odeon", City Limits, 3 - 9 January 1986, p.14.
Petley, Julian, "Ken Trodd: Drama in Crisis", Stills, No.9, November - December 1983, pp.60-63.
Purser, Ann, "In at the Birth and Death of Kestrel Productions", The Stage and Television Today, 25 June 1970, p.15.
Rimmer, Dave, "The Trodd Road to Freedom", The Sunday Times Magazine, 20 November 1983, p.97.

c. Interview with Margaret Potter (wife).

- Batt, Anne, "The Man on the Moon", Daily Mail, 5 April 1977, p.16.

d. Interview with Michael Apted (Gorky Park).

- Nick Roddick, "The Rover's Return", Stills, February - March 1984, pp.30-3.

3. Personal Interviews

Note: The following is a complete list of interviews personally conducted and recorded by the author for this project. Interviewees are listed alphabetically by surname, with details, where appropriate, of location, as well as date of interview. Also provided in parentheses is description of the status of the interviewee in relation to this study.

- Amiel, Jon. Highgate, North London. 27 February 1990. (Director: The Singing Detective)

Bridges, Alan. Richmond, Surrey. 6 March 1990. (Director: Studio 4 plays; Traitor; Follow the Yellow Brick Road; Joe's Ark and Rain on the Roof)

Calder, Gilchrist. Central London. 12 March 1990. (Director: The Confidence Course)

Daish, Judy. Eastbourne Mews, London. 10 May 1990. (Literary agent: Potter's agent from the mid seventies until his death)

Davis, Barry. BBC Scotland, Glasgow. 1 May 1990. (Director: Paper Roses, Schmoedipus and the banned Brimstone and Treacle [died Sept. 1990])

Douglas, Clare. Central London. 28 February 1990. (Film editor: Christabel, Blackeyes and later, Secret Friends and Lipstick on Your Collar)

Edwards, Peter. BBC Television Centre, London. 19 March 1990. (Sound recordist: Where Adam Stood, Visitors, Christabel and Blackeyes)

Haggard, Piers. North London. 13 March 1990. (Director: BBC TV Pennies from Heaven and Visitors)

Losey, Patricia. Telephone interviews. 4 and 5 June 1990. (Widow, film director, Joseph Losey)

McCallum, Rick. BBC Television Centre, London. 9 and 16 March 1990. (Film and television producer: MGM Pennies from Heaven, Dreamchild, Track 29 and Blackeyes)

McDonald, Graeme. Anglia Films, Central London. 1 March 1990. (Former BBC plays producer; former Head of BBC-2, 1983-8; producer of A Beast with Two Backs, Son of Man, Angels Are So Few, Traitor, Only Make Believe and Joe's Ark)

Millar, Gavin. Central London. 14 March 1990. (Director: Cream in My Coffee and Dreamchild)

Milne, Alasdair. Holland Park, London. 5 March 1990. (Former Director BBC TV Programmes, 1973-77; former BBC Director-General, 1982-7; the banner of Brimstone and Treacle)

Newman, Sydney. Central London. 28 February 1990. (Former Head BBC TV Drama Group, 1963-68: original architect of The Wednesday Play; 'censor' of Vote, Vote, Vote for Nigel Barton)

Potter, Dennis. Eastbourne Mews, London. 10 May 1990. (TV playwright and novelist [died June 1994])

Purser, Philip. Central London. 1 March 1990. (Retired television critic, The Sunday Telegraph: reviewer of original broadcasts of Potter plays)

Saynor, James. Marylebone, London. 10 November 1989. (Journalist: visited the sets and researched the productions of The Singing Detective, Christabel and Blackeyes)

Shivas, Mark. BBC Television Centre, London. 19 March 1990. (Former TV producer and Head of BBC TV Drama Group, 1988-93: producer of Casanova and commissioner of Blackeyes in 1988)

Smith, Roger. Peckham, South London. 16 March 1990. (First story editor of The Wednesday Play; Potter's best friend from university days until the early seventies)

Trodd, Kenith, BBC Television Centre, London. 8 November 1989. (Television and film producer: long-standing Potter friend and colleague. The producer most associated with Potter's work)

Westbury, Ken, Whitton, Twickenham. 15 March 1990. (Film cameraman: Casanova, Pennies from Heaven, Tender Is the Night and The Singing Detective)

ADDITIONAL PRIMARY RESEARCH

1. Information from Personal Correspondence

Douglas, Clare. Letter to the author. 20 April 1990.

Marmion, Alan. Head of General Administration, IBA. Letter to the author. 6 October 1989.

Mayhew, Lord Christopher. Letter to the author. 2 March 1990.

- - - . Letter to the author. 29 April 1990.

Mitchell, Denis. Letter to the author. 13 July 1990.

Porter, Susan (Secretary to Graeme McDonald). Letter to the author. 31 May 1990.

Potter, Dennis. Letter to the author. 17 July 1990.

Purser, Philip. Letter to the author. 13 April 1990.

- - - . Letter to the author. 25 April 1990.

Saynor, James. Letter to the author. 28 January 1990.

Willingale, Betty (former BBC script editor). Letter to the author. 4 July 1990.

2. Unpublished Potter Correspondence

Note: the following is an itemisation of private correspondence that took place between Christopher Mayhew and Potter, in the aftermath of the latter's Does Class Matter ? interview in 1958. This was made available for research purposes by kind permission of Lord Mayhew. For a specimen copy of a key letter, see Appendix A.

Mayhew, Christopher. Letter to Dennis Potter. 14 October 1958.

Potter, Dennis. Letter to Christopher Mayhew. 24 June 1958.

- - - . Letter to Christopher Mayhew. 1 September 1958.

- - - . Letter to Christopher Mayhew. 14 November 1959.

3. The Joseph Losey Archive (BFI)

Note: the following is an itemisation of material pertaining to Potter which is held in the Joseph Losey Archive at the British Film Institute. The only omission is Losey's copy of the original Track 29 script, previously listed under Potter 'Screenplays'. Losey turned over all his papers and correspondence to the BFI shortly before his death, with the result that it is possible to trace his dealings with Potter and others up to the collapse of the original Track 29 in August 1983 (: § 5.1):

a. Relevant Correspondence.

Cannon, Dyan. Letter to Joseph Losey. 10 February 1983.

Daish, Judy. Letter to Joseph Losey. 16 November 1982.

- - - . Letter to Joseph Losey. 22 November 1982.
 - - - . Letter to Joseph Losey. 4 January 1983.
 - - - . Letter to Joseph Losey. 3 August 1983.
 Desmonde, Jerry (Co - Production Manager, Track 29 [1983]). Letter to Joseph Losey. January 1983.
 Duffey, Anne (Production Assistant, Track 29 [1983]). Letter to Joseph Losey. 18 August 1983.
 Greene, Graham. Letter to Joseph Losey. 20 December 1979.
 Harbottle & Lewis Ltd. (solicitors). Letter to Judy Daish. 19 July 1983.
 Losey, Joseph. Letter to Bill Craske (Co - Production Manager, Track 29 [1983]). 17 August 1983.
 - - - . Letter to Judy Daish. 18 July 1983.
 - - - . Letter to Judy Daish. 22 July 1983.
 - - - . Letter to Joan Didion. 19 October 1981.
 - - - . Letter to Derek Dodd (Designer, Track 29 [1983]). 17 August 1983.
 - - - . Letter to Anne Duffey. 17 August 1983.
 - - - . Letter to Louise Fletcher. 17 August 1983.
 - - - . Letter to Graham Greene. 11 December 1979.
 - - - . Letter to Richard Hartley (Composer). 23 July 1983.
 - - - . Letter to Anthony Higgins. 17 August 1983.
 - - - . Letter to Lee Marvin. 17 August 1983.
 - - - . Letter to Rick McCallum. 18 July 1983.
 - - - . Letter to Dennis Potter. 2 April 1981.
 - - - . Letter to Dennis Potter. 11 June 1981.
 - - - . Letter to Dennis Potter. 20 October 1981.
 - - - . Letter to Dennis Potter. 4 June 1982.
 - - - . Letter to Dennis Potter. 1 December 1982.
 - - - . Letter to Dennis Potter. 17 August 1983.
 - - - . Letter to Vanessa Redgrave. 17 August 1983.
 - - - . Telegram to Vanessa Redgrave. 8 August 1983.
 - - - . Letter to Ken Westbury (Film Cameraman, Track 29 [1983]). 17 August 1983.
 McCallum, Rick. Memo to Joseph Losey ('Private and Confidential'). Undated.
 Potter, Dennis. Letter to Joseph Losey. 25 May 1981.

b. Notes.

Appointments Schedule (Track 29 casting), 29 June 1983.
 Casting notes for Blade on the Feather, 5 February 1980.
 Casting notes for Track 29, 16 October 1982.
 "Information for Judy Daish from Joseph Losey" (CV), 11 March 1983.
 Itinerary. 25 July 1983.
 Location Photographs (45) and Design Plans for Track 29.
 "Queries and Notes Towards a Style for Track 29", 29 June 1983, pp.1-11.

4. IBA Archive

Note: the following is an itemisation of material pertaining to Potter, held in the IBA Archive, c/o ITC, 33 Foley Street, London W1P 7LB. The material is listed under two separate sections. The first lists correspondence within the IBA, which took place in the summer of 1986, after Channel Four had expressed a wish to screen the feature film version of Brimstone and Treacle. The second section details correspondence relating to Potter's involvement with the independent local radio station, Severn Sound, in 1980:

a. Brimstone and Treacle correspondence.

Glencross, David. Director of Television, IBA. Letter to John Whitney. Director-General, IBA. 20 June 1986.

- - - . Letter to John Whitney. Director-General, IBA. 3 July 1986.
- - - . Letter to John Whitney. Director-General, IBA. 1 August 1986.

b. Severn Sound.

Faire, Peter. Head of Radio Finance, IBA. Letter to Patrick Gee. Company Secretary, Severn Sound Ltd. 22 October 1980.
Gee, Patrick. Company Secretary, Severn Sound Ltd. Letter to Peter Faire. Head of Radio Finance, IBA. 16 October 1980.

5. Additional Newspaper and Periodical Research

Note: individual key articles are listed separately in other sections. Details of archive sources are listed beside each publication.

Contrast, Vols. 1 - 4, 1961 - 1966. University of Glasgow Library, Glasgow.
The Dane, Magazine of St. Clement Dane's Grammar School, Vol.35, Nos.3- 14, 1948 - 1953. Hammersmith Public Library, West London.
The Guardian, 1965 - 1986. British Newspaper Library, Colindale., North London.
The Listener, 1969 - 1988. University of Strathclyde Library, Glasgow.
New Society, 1966 - 1969. Mitchell Library, Glasgow.
New Statesman, 1958 - 1977. Mitchell Library, Glasgow.
Radio Times 1952 - 1987. Mitchell Library, Glasgow.
The Ross Gazette, 1935 - 1945. British Newspaper Library, Colindale, North London.
The Times, 1965 - 1986. British Newspaper Library, Colindale, North London.
TV Times, 1968 - 1983. IBA Archive, London; Mitchell Library, Glasgow.

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Note: listed alphabetically by title.

"Blue Pencil and Scissor Show", Text of 1978 Edinburgh Television Festival Lecture on Censorship ("Answerable Men"), publ., Broadcast, 18 September 1978, pp.17-21.
Preview, Emergency Ward 9, Radio Times, 7 April 1966, p.20.
"Giant of the Small Screen" (Potter obituary), The Daily Telegraph, 8 June 1994, p.21.
"Infiltrating Aunty" (on establishment of a BBC Film Arm), A.I.P. & Co. No.68, October 1985, pp.7-8.
Lew Stone: A Career in Music, (London: Joyce Stone, 1971).
Preview, Message for Posterity, Radio Times, 27 April 1967, p.35.
Introduction to Pennies from Heaven, Radio Times, 4 - 10 March 1978, p.43.
Sleeve Notes. Pennies from Heaven. 48 Recordings Featured in the BBC TV Serial. BBC Records REF 768, 1990.
"Pennies From Television", National Film Theatre Programme (for a season of British Television Drama, personally selected by Trodd), August 1984, pp.18-21.
"Potter Tributes" (obituary), The Guardian, 8 June 1994, Sec. 2, p.3.
"Scrutiny 3: Report from the Younger Generation", Essays in Criticism, No.14, January 1964, pp.21-32.
Sleeve Notes. The Singing Detective. Recordings Featured in the BBC TV Serial. BBC Records REN 608, 1986.
"The Trodd Index" (TV Plays shot on film). First published Vision, Vol.2, No.1, March 1977, pp.13-19; revised and updated with a new introduction by Trodd, The Screen on the Tube - Filmed TV Drama, Cinema Dossier, No.1,

(ed.) Jayne Pilling and Kingsley Cranham, (Norwich: Cinema City, 1983), pp.53-75.

REVIEWS, PROFILES, REPORTS (POTTER AND TRODD)

- Aitken, Ian, "Shout to the Top", New Statesman & Society, 22 April 1994, p.22.
- Allen, Denna, "Singing Detective Team Splits" (Potter and Trodd break-up), The Mail on Sunday, 16 July 1989, p.5.
- "And to Hell with BAFTA, Mr. Potter", Today, 4 April 1987, p.4.
- Bakewell, Joan, "Preview" (on Brimstone and Treacle banning), Radio Times 3 - 9 April 1976, p.13.
- - - , "From There to Eternity", review of Pennies from Heaven, Radio Times, 8 - 14 April 1978, p.74.
- Bamigboye, Baz, "Singing Detective Writer Rages at TV Snub" (1987 BAFTA Awards), Daily Mail, 23 March 1987, p.5.
- Banks-Smith, Nancy, "Angels at His Table", review of Without Walls interview, The Guardian, 6 April 1994, sec. 2, p.6.
- - - , review of Episode One, Casanova, The Guardian, 17 November 1971, p.10.
- - - , review of Traitor, The Guardian, 15 October 1971, p.10.
- - - , "Violent Christ According to Potter's Gospel", review of Son of Man, The Sun, 17 April 1969, p.14.
- "Banned by the BBC - Then the Show Wins a Top Award for their Rivals" (on 1976 wave of BBC censorship), Daily Mail, 27 March 1976, p.6.
- "B.A.R.B. ratings" (Blackeyes Episodes One and Two), Broadcast, 15 and 22 December 1989, pp.32; 21.
- "B.A.R.B. ratings" (Blackeyes Episodes Three and Four), The Stage and Television Today, 4 and 11 January 1990, pp.17; 19.
- "B.A.R.B. ratings" (Christabel), Broadcast, 2 - 23 December 1988, p.32
- Barnett, Anthony, "Detecting the British Disease" (on The Singing Detective), The Listener, 1 January 1987, p.24.
- "BBC Must Alter Its Distribution Policy - Trodd", The Stage and Television Today, 10 January 1985, p.24.
- "BBC-2 Film Package Duo" (launch of Screen Two under Trodd), Broadcast, 24 August 1984, p.5.
- Black, Peter, review of A Beast with Two Backs, Daily Mail, 21 November 1968, p.8.
- - - , review of Son of Man, Daily Mail, 17 April 1969, p.3.
- Bloom, Phillipa, review of Secret Friends, Empire, No.40, October 1992, p.38.
- Bowyer, Alison, "Love, Sex and Rock n' Roll", preview of Lipstick on Your Collar, TV Times, 20 - 26 February 1993, pp.6-7.
- Brayfield, Celia, "Pottering Around the Male Psyche", The Sunday Telegraph, 17 December 1989, TV and Radio sec., p.9.
- Brown, Maggie, "Potter's Dark Drama May Rouse Watchdog", The Independent, 23 November 1989, p.8.
- Brown, Robert, review of Brimstone and Treacle feature film, BFI Monthly Film Bulletin, Vol.49, No.584, September 1982, pp.195-6.
- Buckman, Peter, review of Episode Six, Pennies from Heaven, 20 April 1978, p.519.
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The Gorge, wr: Peter Nichols; dir: Christopher Morahan; prod: Tony Garnett, first tx. BBC-1 The Wednesday Play, 4 September 1968.
In Two Minds, wr: David Mercer, dir: Ken Loach; prod: Tony Garnett, first tx. BBC-1 The Wednesday Play, 1 March 1967.
Lena, Oh My Lena, wr: Alun Owen; dir: William T. Kotcheff; prod: Sydney Newman, first tx. ITV Armchair Theatre, 25 September 1960.
Let's Murder Vivaldi, wr: David Mercer; dir: Alan Bridges; prod: Graeme McDonald, first tx. BBC-1 The Wednesday Play, 10 April 1968.
On the Eve of Publication, wr: David Mercer; dir: Alan Bridges; prod: Graeme McDonald, first tx. BBC-1 The Wednesday Play, 27 November 1968.
She's Been Away, wr: Stephen Poliakoff; dir: Peter Hall; prod: Kenith Trodd, first tx. BBC-1 Screen One, 8 October 1989.
Talking to a Stranger, 4 plays, wr: John Hopkins; dir: Christopher Morahan; prod: Michael Bakewell, first tx. BBC-2 Theatre 625, 2 - 23 October 1966.
Up The Junction, wr: Nell Dunn; dir: Ken Loach; prod: James MacTaggart, first tx. BBC-1 The Wednesday Play 3 November 1965.

b. Other Television.

Cutting Edge: Comrade Philby, tx. Channel 4, 14 May 1990.
The Media Show: The LWT Franchise Story, tx. Channel 4, 3 February 1991.
Morning in the Streets (Dir: Denis Mitchell), first tx. BBC TV, 25 March 1959.
The South Bank Show: Steve Martin, tx. ITV 22 April 1990.

c. Relevant Feature Films.

Billy Liar, Dir: John Schlesinger; with Tom Courtenay, Julie Christie, Wilfred Pickles, Mona Washbourne. Anglo-Amalgamated, UK 1963.
Casanova, Dir: Federico Fellini; with Donald Sutherland, Tina Aumont, Cicely Browne, Darnen Scapitta. Universal Pictures, It / US 1977.
Chicago Joe and the Showgirl, Dir: Bernard Rose; with Kiefer Sutherland, Emily Lloyd, Patsy Kensit. Polygram, UK 1990.
Farewell My Lovely (aka Murder My Sweet), Dir: Edward Dmytryk; with Dick Powell, Claire Trevor, Anne Shirley, Mike Mazurky. RKO, USA 1944.
Hamlet, Dir: Laurence Olivier; with Laurence Olivier, Eileen Herlie, Basil Sydney, Felix Aylmer. Rank, UK 1948.
Kes, Dir: Ken Loach; with David Bradley, Lynne Perrie, Colin Welland, Brian Glover. Kestrel Films Ltd., UK 1969.
Pennies from Heaven, Dir: Norman Z. McLeod; with Bing Crosby, Edith Fellows, Madge Evans, Donald Meek. Columbia, USA 1936.
The Servant, Dir: Joseph Losey; with Dirk Bogarde, Edward Fox, Sarah Miles, Wendy Craig. Elstree, UK 1963.

Singin' in the Rain, Dirs: Stanley Donen, Gene Kelly; with Gene Kelly, Debbie Reynolds, Donald O'Connor, Jean Hagen. MGM, USA 1952.
The Wizard of Oz, Dir: Victor Fleming; with Judy Garland, Ray Bolger, Bert Lahr, Jack Haley. MGM, USA 1939.

APPENDIX A

Private correspondence between Dennis Potter and Christopher Mayhew, 1958
(access granted by kind permission of Lord Mayhew).

Specimen Copy: Dennis Potter. Letter to Christopher Mayhew. 1 September 1958:

Spion Kop
Joyford Hill
COLEFORD
gla.
1. ix. 58.

Dear Christopher,

I feel that I am letting you down badly by the delay in sending you stuff. I had every hope of having the whole lot finished by now, but I cannot seem to shake off my ill-health. The doctor seems to think that I ought to rest, but then, they always do say that. I am enclosing ch. 4 today, and will definitely be able to send off chapters 5 and 6 in the next two days. Then on Wednesday I am going up to London until Saturday to see a show, go to the Promo and the Radio Exhibition etc. with my girl friend, who is having her week's holiday. This, I am afraid, was accepted a long time ago - but will probably be all for the good, anyway.

Most of the chapters are written in rough form, thank goodness, and from Saturday will send off the other six chapters within the week. My end will undoubtedly be completed, then, by the end of the second week in this month. I know I keep saying this, but please do not worry - I really am very sorry to be a bit behind schedule.

It was a strange feeling to watch oneself on T.V. - and I felt strangely nervous! 'Reynold's News', who had the grace to repeat the headline 'Minor's son at Oxford Ashamed of Home' etc. about a hostile letter from a prospective Labour candidate who was not ashamed of his parents etc. etc., a fortnight later, has caused me too much distress. I suppose I am too thin-skinned, but even our local paper attacked me for being 'Observed' with class and 'not typical of working class homes'. My father liked the T.V. interview, but is raving mad about the rest: apparently he is getting gibes at work and so on, and the general talk in our village is by no means complimentary, except from those people who know me well. I think it is these things that have set me back - if that doesn't sound too ridiculous. I'm beginning to think that maybe I am a mob. Anyway, the vicar of a few weeks ago advised me to try and get an apology from Reynold's, and, if they refused, to go for damages. Nevill Jamieson, courses, thinks, if not seeing your professor's, that their remarks constituted clear libel, and that damages would be substantial. Trade is, advice is so expensive:

Thank you for your effort to protect me from the Philip Phillips press - the man must be either very malicious or very stupid.

Best wishes,
Dennis.

APPENDIX B

ADDRESSES OF PRINCIPAL ARCHIVES USED:

National Film Archive and BFI Script Library, c/o British Film Institute,
21 Stephen Street, London W1P 1PL.

BBC Television Script Unit, 252 Western Avenue, West Acton, London.
(closed February 1991).

BBC Written Archives Centre, Caversham Park, Reading, RG4 8TZ.

Hammersmith Public Library, Hammersmith Road, West London W12.

IBA Archive, formerly c/o Independent Broadcasting Authority, 70 Brompton
Road, London SW3 1EY. Now, c/o ITC, 33 Foley Street, London W1P 7LB.

COMPANIES:

Hollywood Scripts Limited, Enterprise House, Cathles Road,
London SW12 9LD.