University of Reading

Harold Pinter's early BBC roles: between tradition and innovation

Article

Published Version

Creative Commons: Attribution 4.0 (CC-BY)

Open Access

Davies, W. (2022) Harold Pinter's early BBC roles: between tradition and innovation. Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television, 42 (3). pp. 555-573. ISSN 0143-9685 doi: 10.1080/01439685.2021.1991078 Available at https://centaur.reading.ac.uk/101093/

It is advisable to refer to the publisher's version if you intend to cite from the work. See Guidance on citing.

To link to this article DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01439685.2021.1991078

Publisher: Taylor & Francis

All outputs in CentAUR are protected by Intellectual Property Rights law, including copyright law. Copyright and IPR is retained by the creators or other copyright holders. Terms and conditions for use of this material are defined in the End User Agreement.

www.reading.ac.uk/centaur

CentAUR

Central Archive at the University of Reading

University of Reading

Reading's research outputs online

Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/chjf20

Harold Pinter's Early Bbc Roles: Between Tradition and Innovation

William Davies

To cite this article: William Davies (2021): Harold Pinter's Early Bbc Roles: Between Tradition and Innovation, Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television, DOI: 10.1080/01439685.2021.1991078

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/01439685.2021.1991078

© 2021 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.

Published online: 02 Nov 2021.

Submit your article to this journal

View related articles

View Crossmark data

Full Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at
https://www.tandfonline.com/action/journalInformation?journalCode=chjf20

Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television, 2021
https://doi.org/10.1080/01439685.2021.1991078

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

OPEN ACCESS Check for updates

HAROLD PINTER'S EARLY BBC ROLES: BETWEEN TRADITION AND INNOVATION

William Davies

Using previously undocumented files from the BBC's Written Archives Centre, this article accounts for Harold Pinter's roles in BBC radio and television productions through the 1950s. The article fills the gaps in Pinter's history with the BBC by detailing these archival records. It also examines the reception of these productions and situates them both in Pinter's career and the history of the BBC. Along the way, this article argues that Pinter's BBC work provides a way in to exploring the different evolutionary histories of BBC radio and television as they competed with one another for audience attention and management support.

Before he found fame with plays like *The Caretaker* (1960) and *The Homecoming* (1964), Harold Pinter spent most of the 1950s as a jobbing actor. The importance of Pinter's early theatre roles for his writing career is well known, particularly through Michael Billington's work mapping Pinter's years as a repertory company actor.[1] Until recently, the significance of the BBC during this time, both as another source of early acting roles and as an institution that nurtured Pinter creatively and as a performer, has been comparatively neglected. In 2020, the 'Harold Pinter's Transmedial Histories' special issue of this journal, edited by Jonathan Bignell, Amanda Wrigley and me, brought together a series of articles examining aspects of Pinter's career in radio, television and film, including his writing and later acting for the BBC.[2] The present article complements this work by focussing in on Pinter's so far undocumented BBC acting roles during that formative 1950s period. This article and the special issue that preceded it are outcomes of the Arts and Humanities Research Council UK project, 'Pinter Histories & Legacies' (2017–2021), the core of which is a comprehensive production database rooted in archival research, including that of collections held by the BBC.[3]

Correspondence to: Dr William Davies, Samuel Beckett Research Centre, University of Reading, Whiteknights Campus, Reading, RG6 6HA, UK. E-mail: w.davies3@reading.ac.uk

© 2021 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

The documents in Pinter's 'Artist File' at the BBC Written Archives Centre (WAC) in Caversham, UK, are typical of the 'Artist File' holdings broadly, gathering BBC materials related to a particular artist in sequentially numbered and dated folders. Materials include originals and copies of scripts, administrative documents such as contracts and production schedules, correspondence between an artist and BBC staff, audience response surveys, internal memos among BBC staff, and other similar items. In Pinter's case, these files cover his entire career working with the BBC, from early roles through to commissioned works, interviews and special interest pieces.

Files from the 1950s provide a compelling picture of the playwright as a young actor. They reveal what Billington terms the 'letter-writing campaign' Pinter undertook in July 1950 to BBC radio staff requesting introductions and interviews, for example, showing his determination to perform professionally.[4] The responses Pinter was sent, when he received them at all, demonstrate the difficulties new actors faced. Frank Hauser's reply, addressed to 'Mr Puiter', is representative of many more: 'I am afraid that at the moment I have so many artists on my books for whom I have been unable to find parts that there would really not be much use your coming to see me'.[5] Pinter did secure a few roles, though, including Abergavenny in R. D. Smith's version of *Henry VIII*, broadcast on the Third Programme on 14 January 1951, and voice work for 'Focus on Football Pools'. He also attended a features audition on 26 January 1951 in which staff judged him 'produceble' and 'fair' but 'not attractive' and with 'not much attack'.[6] Despite this unsteady start, however, Pinter gradually gained more work and obtained contacts at the BBC that would prove invaluable in his career.[7]

So far, accounts of Pinter's early BBC acting have drawn from the career-spanning records in Pinter's 'Artist File' held in the BBC WAC's radio collection (RCONT). Alongside his creative work and interviews with the BBC, these files document Pinter's roles for the radio features and drama departments. However, some radio roles evidenced by these files have not been accounted for in previous scholarship. More importantly, a separate, previously undocumented artist file dedicated to Pinter's BBC television work (TVART) shows that he also secured minor television roles through the 1950s.[8] The following article fills the gaps in Pinter's history with the BBC by detailing these archival records. It also examines the reception of the productions discussed here and situates them both in Pinter's career and the history of the BBC. Along the way, this article argues that Pinter's BBC work provides a way in to exploring the different evolutionary histories of BBC radio and television as they competed with one another for audience attention and management support.

First BBC audition, 1949–50

The numerous letters Pinter wrote to BBC drama staffers cited in previous accounts of his early acting career all come from July 1950 and are the earliest entries in the RCONT file.[9] The assumption has therefore been that these mark the start of his relationship with the BBC. However, the TVART file contains a

letter from 12 December 1949, sent to BBC Television by Pinter from his family home on Thistlewaite Road in Hackney. Headed 'Dear Sir', the letter is formal and functional: he notes his Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (RADA) training, gives his height, notes the inclusion of a rather pale photograph, and asks for an audition.

He did not have to wait long. On 22 December, Pinter received the following:

> Dear Mr. Pinter,
>
> TELEVISION
>
> We thank you for your letter of the 12th instant but regret that owing to the large number of applications received we are unable to offer you an interview with Miss Doreen Dixon at present.
>
> We have, however, added your name to our waiting list and shall hope to contact you by telegram as soon as possible in the New Year.
>
> Yours faithfully,
>
> Mary C. Forbes.
>
> Television Auditions.

This letter is a reply format Pinter soon became familiar with. However, while it took six months to secure an audition in front of radio staff after he wrote to them, the television department were true to their word: he received confirmation for 'a telephone conversation and appointment for interview with Miss Doreen Dixon, at 11.40 am on Tuesday 24th January, 1950'. An audition followed on 7 February. The report was mixed:

> HAROLD PINTER JUVENILE CHARACTER
>
> Height: 5ft. 11ins.
> Build: Broad.
> Colourings: Dark.
> Age range: 20–24 (19)
>
> Accents & Dialects
> Irish.
>
> EXPERIENCE
>
> Stage
>
> R.A.D.A 1 year
> Boston $2^{1/2}$ months. Frank Deniss.
> Chesterfield 4 months. Hubert Prentice.
> "Q" – Much Ado – Claudio.
>
> AUDITION. 7TH FEBRUARY, 1950.

Much Ado.	Awkward Gestures. Obviously very inexperienced.
	Deep voice. Very nervous.
Playboy of the Western World	Irish good. With plenty of attack & variety of pace.
Family Reunion.	Not a straight juvenile.

Pinter received a follow-up letter on 8 February, thanking him for his audition and confirming that he passed: 'your name and particulars have been carefully noted in our casting files to which we constantly refer when artists are required for Television Drama Productions.' Though he was added to the casting pool, it is clear the auditioning panel were unsure of Pinter. The report emphasises his inexperience and that he was most comfortable, or at least best received, performing Synge.[10] The most significant sign of Pinter's inexperience is the inconsistency between his television audition performance and his radio audition later in the year. For television, he had 'plenty of attack' – for radio, not enough. Pinter's physicality likely helped with his television audition, while for radio, he had just his voice to offer. Only time and experience would help him learn what each medium required of an actor, just as he would discover in his creative writing.[11]

After the audition, Pinter wrote a 'thank you' note to Forbes and Dixon. He then followed up on 25 February with another 'Dear Sir' letter to the BBC television department referencing Dixon and his audition. No response is recorded. Pinter tried writing to the producer Ian Atkins directly on 1 March, to which he received another secretarial reply regretting the lack of available opportunities in television. He did not try again with the BBC for three months. It is at this point that he turned his attention to radio.

Expanding the CV, 1951–1959

Pinter secured his first roles with the BBC through R. D. Smith, who gave him names to contact.[12] Accounts of Pinter's early roles include his voiceovers on 'Focus on Football Pools' (19 September 1950) and 'Focus on Libraries' (1 October 1950) for Smith and 'Dickens Goes to Yorkshire' (14 March 1951, BBC North Service, about Dickens' experiences among the working class in Yorkshire) and 'Mr Punch Passes By' (25 April 1951, described as a 'feature on history and manners of Mr Punch') for Dennis Mitchell on the Northern Service.[13] The radio artist files on Pinter at the BBC WAC show that he was also cast for an unspecified role in R. C. Scriven's radio play 'One Man's City – Leeds',[14] produced by Frederick Bradnum for the Northern Service on 28 March 1951.[15] Three years went by before Pinter took up more roles with the BBC, by which point he had taken the stage name David Baron.[16] In March 1954, he was part of the radio production *Operation Leopard*. The following month, he moved into television, as he had hoped for back in 1949.

Operation Leopard, March 1954

Pinter began January 1954 with another letter campaign, writing to various radio and television drama department staff including Harold Clayton, Peter Watts, Dennis Vance, Kevin Sheldon, Alvin Rakoff and Julian Amyes. He also continued his correspondence with R. D. Smith. Peter Watts saw him for an interview, though it did not lead to immediate work.[17] In February 1954, however, Pinter was cast for three parts in the *Wednesday Matinée* radio production of Leslie Harcourt's *Operation Leopard*, to be broadcast the following month. Bradnum, who worked with Pinter on the Scriven script, was attached as producer. Pinter was given the roles of Harry, Member of Parliament and Orderly Room Clerk – doubling was common in the Wednesday plays due to financial restraints on the programming.[18] The play is a satirical comedy that sees one Hans Müller trying to arrange for two leopards to join his travelling menagerie. He orders them from Jenkins Animal Supplies, run by the somewhat bewildered Harry and Jack, played by Pinter and Michael Bates respectively. Müller soon complains that he has not received the animals in time for his trip to South America, so they are promptly redirected to Birkenhead RAF station to meet him before he leaves. Müller misses the leopards again, so the RAF staff decide to house them. The leopards overwhelm the RAF, breeding non-stop for twelve years until they occupy every RAF station in Britain. A debate involving Pinter's Member of Parliament sees disgruntled ministers confront the air force over meat rationing as the country tries to feed both the leopards and the public. Eventually, the leopards are shipped to West Africa, supposedly to return them to their native habitat. Two are left behind, though, threatening to begin the whole farce again.[19]

Harcourt was a regular writer for the BBC in the mid-century and enjoyed a productive working relationship with various drama department staff members including Barbara Bray, who would later work with Pinter in various capacities.[20] Harcourt wrote *Operation Leopard* in 1952 and submitted it to the BBC in the autumn. He did not receive reader reports until March 1953, but they were positive, and he was accommodating with edits. Cynthia Pughe deemed the play 'a wild piece of nonsense' and recommended it for broadcast, though a year went by before Bradnum was attached to the production.[21] The play was broadcast on the Home Service on 10 March 1954. According to the BBC's fee and schedule form, Pinter received six guineas for his work plus payments for repeats. On 20 March, Harcourt wrote Bray to say he was pleased with the broadcast, calling the acting and production 'just right'.[22] Audience reactions were positive too, as confirmed in a letter to Harcourt (mistakenly sent to 'Mrs Leslie Harcourt') from Anthony Brown's secretary which cited 'the many letters received' from 'listeners who had enjoyed' the play.[23]

Caesar's Friend, April 1954

Pinter's mass correspondence to the BBC also paid off when Julian Amyes hired him as an uncredited extra to head-up crowd scenes for a television production of *Caesar's Friend* in the *Sunday Night Theatre* series, broadcast live on 11 April and rebroadcast

four days later.[24] A play by Campbell Dixon and Dermot Morrah first staged in Westminster in 1933, *Caesar's Friend* is a modern language retelling of the Passion from Pontius Pilate's perspective. Amyes' version was a live studio production in the mould of those made for the BBC by George More O'Farralin in 1939 and 1947 and by Owen Reed in 1950 and 1951, which all shared various cast members.[25] Amyes's 1954 production involved a new cast, including Donald Pleasence, as the character Gamaliel, with whom Pinter's career would 'decisively [. . .] intersect'.[26] Pleasence's breakout role was in Pinter's *The Caretaker* as Davies in the play's first performances in 1960, directed by the BBC's Donald McWhinnie. Pleasence reprised the role in Clive Donner's 1963 film adaptation of the play.

A tried-and-tested favourite of BBC television, *Caesar's Friend*'s popularity – or at least its repeatability – likely came from its modern twist on the Christian tale.[27] As Peter Black wrote in his 'Teleview' review for *The Daily Mail*, the play was a conventional choice for the 'strong tradition' of an Easter teleplay which featured 'a narration of the events leading up to the Crucifixion told in modern language but in the dress of the period.' Though he queried the dramatic effects of modern diction for the narrative, Black called the play 'very well handled' by Amyes and producer Ian Atkins. He also commended the 'especially vivid crowd scenes' – the closest Pinter would get to a namecheck for his BBC work for some time.[28]

The familiarity of the play (and the convention of a Passion play at Easter) likely appealed to BBC management figures at the time, chief among them Val Gielgud. Gielgud championed television as a medium worth experimenting with technically but held predominantly conservative tastes when it came to content – he preferred classic texts and historical dramas, and broadly saw television as a format that should be closer to radio than to film.[29] Gielgud would later clash with Martin Esslin over the popularity of playwrights like Pinter and Samuel Beckett once Esslin was in post as Head of Radio Drama. Gielgud saw radio as the space for artistic experimentation, not television. He declared he hated the style of theatre Pinter and Beckett represented and thought the majority of the BBC's audience felt the same.[30] Such tensions illuminate the wider context in which Pinter was trying to find work. While Pinter's tastes and, later, his own texts were most suited to the Third Programme's avant-garde leanings, the Home and Light Service's more traditional theatrical programming provided the roles. Pinter's work as an extra in crowd scenes indicates the scale these productions operated on compared to the sparse dramas and small casts that writers like Pinter and Beckett favoured.

Pinter referenced his part in *Caesar's Friend* in a series of letters he wrote to BBC staff in May and June 1954, including Amyes, who required several letters before replying. Amyes wrote a brief note to Pinter on 9 September, a month after Pinter's last letter, with the promise of further help: 'I remember you very well from "Caesar's Friend", and I won't forget you if a suitable part turns up'.

Ninety Sail, October 1954

Pinter did not have to wait long for another role after writing to Amyes. In October 1954, he was given the part of First Official in Harold Clayton's *Ninety*

Sail television production and hired to double 'if required'. The contract and rehearsal schedule show that Pinter was paid twenty-six guineas for the role with rehearsals between 11 and 16 October and live broadcasts on 17 and 21 October. Whether Amyes helped Pinter with the role or Clayton had followed up on Pinter's letter from 8 January 1954 is unclear. Importantly, though, it was his first credited television role.

Another historical retelling for the *Sunday Night Theatre* series, *Ninety Sail* is W. P. Lipscomb's adaptation of Arthur Bryant's three-volume life of Samuel Pepys (1933). The *Radio Times* advertised the production as a relatively straightforward historical drama: 'The action of the play takes place in the Palace of Charles II; a wharf-side; the Navy Office; the Tower of London; the House of Commons; and the deck of the Royal Charles Time, 1670.'[31] The *Radio Times* also featured a short article by Lipscomb detailing how Bryant's book, and so his play, attempted to give more rounded pictures of King Charles II and Pepys beyond the familiar 'spaniels, women, or diaries'.[32] Like *Caesar's Friend*, *Ninety Sail* was traditional period-drama theatre programming that suited more conservative television tastes. It was also tried-and-tested material – a previous version, titled *Thank You, Mr Pepys*, had been successfully broadcast in 1938 with Lipscombe in the role of King Charles.[33] The new production was reasonably well-received. *The Manchester Guardian*'s Radio Critic commended the choice of source material – '[the production] was based upon Arthur Bryant's life of Pepys and so we were spared the arch (and boring) Pepys of popular comedy' – and deemed the piece 'rousing', 'good, straight stuff' that was 'well acted'.[34] Kenneth Harris at *The Observer* called it 'good value' and complimented Reginald Tate's depiction of Charles II. *Ninety Sail* was also a contender for 'Best Play' in *The Daily Mail*'s 'National Radio and Television Awards',[35]

Pinter once again diligently followed up the production with a 'thank you' letter. He wrote to Clayton that it was both pleasant and instructive to work with him and asked that he be remembered for future roles. Pinter was juggling theatre rep work and other menial jobs to make a living while he solicited BBC staff for parts, but he always made time to thank those who gave him parts, often noting that he valued the technical experience.[36] The BBC files show that he made a handful of phone appointments at the end of the year, but his rep commitments took him away from London regularly, limiting his availability for face-to-face meetings if they did arise. A month after his *Ninety Sail* appearance, though, Pinter secured another job as an extra, this time in *The Three Musketeers*, directed by Rex Tucker, later famed for his role in the genesis of *Doctor Who*.[37]

The Three Musketeers, November 1954

Tucker's *The Three Musketeers* was a six-part television adaptation by Felix Felton and Susan Ashman of Alexandre Dumas' 1844 classic novel, broadcast weekly from 24 November to 29 December, twice a day, first in the 5 pm 'Children's Hour' slot and then again at 7.45 pm. Pinter was paid £3 'to take part in filming as requested by producer' in 'sequences to be used as an integral part' of the

production, as the fee and rehearsal form puts it. These sequences were made by the BBC Television Film Unit and incorporated into the live productions. How much Pinter appeared on screen is unknown since the episodes are lost – a letter from Pinter to Tucker suggests he took part in only one episode. He asked to be remembered for the other episodes, but his rep work in Huddersfield kept him busy until 20 December, limiting his availability.

Reviews of the production were middling. *The Times* praised Tucker's use of the source material.[38] *The Daily Telegraph* thought it captured 'the spirit of Dumas' but was one of those 'difficult productions that combine film and studio scenes.'[39] *The Manchester Guardian*'s Radio Critic called it 'innocuous' with 'no suspicion that the BBC could be trying to educate, harm, or alarm us.'[40] Peter Black was more scathing, chiefly about the choice to pitch the series to both children and adults. He also thought the film sequences, which Pinter participated in, 'wasted', though the 'sword fights were good' overall.[41] The play was received in a similar vein as *Caesar's Friend* and *Ninety Sail*: reliable, fairly harmless conservative programming favoured by Gielgud and other BBC managers, though it clearly missed the mark in its attempt to blend live and filmed footage, a still evolving innovation.

It seems Pinter's luck with the BBC ran out at the end of 1954. In 1955 he wrote to Smith, Amyes and others he worked or met with before, but to no avail. It was a difficult period for the BBC itself at the time, with ongoing debates over the license fee and the launch of ITV following the Television Act in 1954. The pressure was indirect at first. ITV's initial programming focussed on broadcasts that could bring in advertising revenue, particularly American-made action series and British game shows.[42] With ITV perceived as down-market, the BBC fulfilled its remit as the nation's license fee funded broadcaster with more 'serious' programming, particularly historical and classical texts. In his run of *Ninety Sail*, *Caesar's Friend* and *The Three Musketeers* in 1954, Pinter benefitted from the perception that the BBC had near enough a duty to broadcast historical dramas. As Jonathan Bignell and I have documented, Pinter would later become integral to ITV's attempt to upscale its cultural standing following criticism of its 'low-brow' programming in the government's Pilkington Report in 1962.[43] While the BBC went on to become Pinter's partner in radio productions of his work, ITV was the first to broadcast television versions of his plays in its *Play of the Week* series, starting with *The Birthday Party* in 1960. Though the BBC retained the monopoly on radio drama, ITV could compete with the Corporation through its teleplays, mixing classic plays and challenging new dramas with the so-called 'low-brow' programmes the Pilkington Report critiqued. Rather than move entirely 'upmarket', ITV's response was to blend its programming to broaden its appeal, keeping its shareholders happy while also fulfilling its own remit as a public service broadcaster that was to cater to all tastes.[44]

Both the RCONT and TVART files suggest a gap of correspondence and BBC work for Pinter between February 1955 and February 1958. The intervening years were busy professionally and personally for Pinter, however: monthly stage work in 1955 and regular performances in the following years; his marriage to Vivien Merchant and writing of *The Room* in 1956; *The Room*'s staging in Bristol and the composition of *The Birthday Party* and *The Dumb Waiter* in 1957.[45] In January 1958,

Merchant gave birth to the couple's son, Daniel, and the family moved to Chiswick High Road in London.

Professionally, 1958 was one of the defining years of Pinter's career. Most famously, it saw *The Birthday Party*'s first production in the April at the Arts Theatre, Cambridge, followed by performances in Oxford and Wolverhampton. In May 1958, the play premiered on the West End at the Lyric Hammersmith. Though it would go on to be one of the twentieth century's most influential and beloved plays, it had a difficult opening. While the pre-London productions were reasonably well-received, the London production only lasted a week. Reviews were scathing and audiences left perplexed. Harold Hobson's write-up in the *Sunday Times* was one bright light among it all, for which Pinter was immensely grateful.[46]

Pinter also resumed acting with the BBC in 1958 and, for the first time, began to receive commissions for radio pieces. Radio Drama department staff Donald McWhinnie, Barbara Bray and Michael Bakewell were enthusiastic about Pinter's prospects as an artist, despite *The Birthday Party*'s difficulties, and so suggested that he try writing a radio piece.[47] The play *Something in Common* was the result. Submitted in April 1958, it received praise from Bakewell and McWhinnie, though McWhinnie was unsure of its audience appeal, even on the Third Programme. Though the play was rejected, Bray invited Pinter to resubmit with a new piece and 'on 27 October of the same year Pinter's revised version of *Something in Common*, doubled in length and renamed *A Slight Ache*, was commissioned for a fee of 85 guineas.'[48] At a time when *The Birthday Party*'s dreadful London run had seriously dispirited Pinter, this blossoming relationship with the BBC was a real boost. It also opened up a far larger audience for Pinter than theatre could.[49] Various BBC drama department reviewers praised *A Slight Ache* for its use of the radio medium, particularly its movements between sound and silence (though it garnered the usual mixture of admiration and derision from audiences that new plays on the Third Programme often received).[50] Pinter's work as an actor and voiceover artist for the radio certainly helped him tackle the novel challenge of writing a medium specific text. Undoubtedly, the technical experience of working with sound equipment and production prepared Pinter for writing creatively with these processes in mind. More broadly, the short documentary pieces Pinter voiced required clarity of speech and pacing, both of which underpin the line deliveries in his sometimes sparse, pause-laden dramas, as does the control of pitch and tone, which Pinter learned in part from taking on multiple roles in productions like *Operation Leopard*. That control of the voice is critical to Pinter's early radio work. Silence, too, is key, particularly in *A Slight Ache* with the mute Barnabus and the sinister, thriller-like atmosphere of unanswered questions and veiled threats that pass between Edward and Flora. Notably, the same month he finished and submitted *A Slight Ache*'s predecessor, *Something in Common*, Pinter took up his first piece of BBC acting since 1954 in a six-part radio adaptation of Arthur Conan Doyle's mystery-thriller, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. Building and maintaining tension were crucial to the drama of both productions, and, though quite different texts at source, these intimate encounters with radio in both performative and technical terms gave Pinter vital insights into the affective potential of the medium.

The Hound of the Baskervilles, April 1958

Still under the name David Baron, Pinter played 'Cartwright' in episodes two ('Sir Henry Baskerville') and six ('The Final Ordeal') of the BBC Light Programme's *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, adapted by Felix Felton and produced by Patrick Dromgoole. Recording took place in February in Bristol, for which Pinter was paid eight guineas plus two nights' accommodation and subsistence along with pay for repeats and overseas broadcasts. No further details of the production or correspondence are gathered in the Pinter files. However, it is worth acknowledging that the radio series was somewhat prestigious and tremendously popular. The six-part adaptation was the fourth in the multi-series *Sherlock Holmes* productions which ran from October 1952 to July 1969, starring Carleton Hobbs as Sherlock Holmes and Norman Shelley as Dr Watson. While the first three series of story adaptations aired on 'Children's Hour' for the BBC Home Service, the *Baskervilles* series was the first to move to the Light Programme, where it would stay until 1962.[51] The *Holmes* series were reliably popular productions with requests for Doyle's stories often coming near or at the top of the regular 'Request Week' for 'Children's Hour'.[52]

The Hound of the Baskervilles was lauded for its technical innovations at a time when television represented the more advanced medium. L. Marsland Gander commended Dromgoole's efforts with the hound's audio in particular and thought the production a triumph of medium specific creativity (praise Pinter would enjoy from the BBC for his radio work, including *A Slight Ache*):

> To find an entertainment peculiarly suited to sound in competition with television is becoming more and more of an elusive exercise. Full marks, therefore to the BBC for discovering "The Hound of the Baskervilles" [...]. The opportunities for sound effects are legion [...]. Patrick Dromgoole, the producer, has shown special ingenuity with the hound noises. He says he took a recoded wolfhound noise, pumped it through an echo chamber, cut a piece out of the middle of the tape, then replaced it back to front to get a choking sob, finally playing the whole thing over in slow motion.[53]

The practical nature of audio production on the radio is similarly tangible in Pinter's *Something in Common/A Slight Ache*, too, with sound effects like the garden path gravel and wasp buzzing requiring a mixture of innovation and precision. The 2019 *Pinter at the Pinter* staging of *A Slight Ache* by Jamie Lloyd made clear the play's debts to Pinter's radio experiences by using a 1950s radio production studio as the stage setting, complete with Flora (Gemma Whelan) and Edward (John Heffernan) creating the sounds live on stage as if recording for broadcast.[54]

The late 1950s represented a transition period for Pinter as he gained momentum with his writing. How he secured the role in *Baskervilles* is unclear, given the lack of further documentation in the BBC's files. Pinter's connections with the BBC on both the writing and the acting fronts were positive, though, and it may be that he was established enough as a reliable talent for traditional acting parts, particularly after his experience in more substantial stage roles that often required stern and imposing figures.[55] The same is likely true of his final roles for the BBC that decade, this time on television, in *The Infamous John Friend*.

The Infamous John Friend, April–May 1959

Produced by Chloe Gibson and adapted by A. R. Rawlinson as an eight-part miniseries in the Spring of 1959, *The Infamous John Friend* is a spy tale told against the backdrop of the Napoleonic War, based on a 1909 novel of the same name by R. S. Garrett. In an article for the 3 April 1959 edition of the *Radio Times*, Rawlinson recalled that he had considered adapting Garrett's novel in the late 1930s, but such 'costume pictures were under a cloud' at the time.[56] The Second World War had brought about a renewed desire for the familiarity of historical content, however, meaning the 'pendulum swung back again' for costume dramas in the 1950s, as Rawlinson put it, and so he was asked by Michael Barry and Donald Wilson in the BBC drama department to suggest works on the Napoleonic period that might be adapted for television serials.[57] With the spy film genre also growing in popularity in cinema – a movement Pinter participated in as a screenwriter with *The Quiller Memorandum* (1966)[58] – Garrett's historical espionage plot suited tastes at the time.

Pinter played two roles: Lord Combleigh in episodes one and two, for which he was paid thirty-nine guineas and thirty guineas respectively, and Napoleon in episode seven, for which he received thirty-seven guineas. Vivien Merchant also appeared in episode four as Land Lady. The titular role was played by William Lucas with Margaret Tyzack as Mrs North and Barry Foster as William North. Foster and Pinter were good friends who knew each other from their time at the Central School in London and repertory acting in Ireland.[59] Foster later worked professionally in several of Pinter's own plays, from *A Night Out* in 1960 to *Party Time* in 1992. Whether or not Foster had a hand in Pinter being hired is currently unknown but, with Merchant securing a small role as well, it is not out of the question.

The series met with mixed reviews. A 'quaint affair' which 'runs along neatly enough', wrote *The Manchester Guardian*'s Television Critic.[60] Peter Black praised the production's 'naturalness and economy'.[61] P. J. K. in *The Telegraph* called it a 'relaxed viewing' approach to the spy genre 'after the teasing tension of "The Scarf" and the more harrowing thrills of Quartermass' – a 'pure cloak-and-dagger piece balanced between fantasy and drama.'[62] A review in *The Times* titled 'Flat Start to BBC Serial' was less positive, though Pinter seems to have offended the least in his first write-up as a BBC actor:

> [S]cenes took no clear direction, and were equally vague as indications of period and character. Miss Chloe Gibson's production flared briefly into life when the family moved down to Brighthelmston to mingle in high society. Even cramped into Miss Fanny Taylor's cruelly small set there was a certain dash in scenes showing the bucks parading their fancy men and eyeing the passing women as if they were at a cattle market. The bland arrogance of Mr. David Baron's Lord Combleigh and his withering employment of the quizzing glass were dramatically more to the point than Mr. William Lucas's busy, energetic, and uninteresting performance of the preposterous hero.[63]

Though the reception for the production was not ideal, Pinter's roles in *The Infamous John Friend* helped support his family, allowed him to continue working

on his creative writing and kept him on the BBC's books. While the BBC files are limited on the production, a picture of this time emerges from an unexpected place: in 2016, the *Eastbourne Herald* published the following letter from Edward Thomas, a former pupil of Pinter's childhood school, Hackney Downs, in anticipation of an upcoming production of *The Birthday Party*:

> In May 1959, while I was still at Hackney Downs School, the deputy head arranged a meeting between me and an actor called David Baron. I was told that he was an old boy of the school and that his real name was Harold Pinter. So one afternoon I duly walked somewhat nervously along to 373 Chiswick High Road, climbed the long flight of steps up to the front door and rang the bell. I heard the sound of quick footsteps getting louder down the flights of stairs. The door opened and a woman in her twenties said pleasantly that she was Mrs Pinter. In a few years she would become the renowned stage and film actress Vivien Merchant.
>
> She took me up to the top flat into a scene less Pinteresque than could be imagined. She was feeding jelly and cream into the mouth of their toddler Daniel in his high chair. She explained that Mr Pinter would be home soon. He had gone to the BBC's Lime Grove studios to be kitted out for a small part, Napoleon no less, in the serial *The Infamous John Friend*, starring their own good friend Barry Foster.
>
> Not long afterwards the man arrived and Mrs Pinter pointed to a review in a theatre magazine by Harold Hobson of *The Birthday Party*. It was a year since Hobson's first favourable review after the play's failed premiere. Your [the *Eastbourne Herald*'s] previewer of the new production shortly to arrive in Eastbourne [Devonshire Park Theatre, April 11–13] was right about the poor houses at the Lyric Hammersmith. One evening during the short run, Pinter drifted into the circle and was questioned by a seasoned usherette. When he explained that he was the author, her face fell and she said, 'Oh you poor thing'. Mr P sent me on my way with encouraging ideas.
>
> Fast forward four decades. I was settled in Eastbourne and had been asked to write the history of the Devonshire Park Theatre. Initial rummage through the programmes still in store at the theatre found evidence of a production of *A Horse! A Horse!* By L du Garde Peach, presented in May 1954. David Baron was the assistant stage manager and playing a small part. I heard rumblings that it was during that week the seeds of *The Birthday Party* were sown. I wrote to Harold Pinter to check and still have his reply: 'Thanks very much for sending me the 1954 programme. All that you have been told about my stay in Eastbourne is true. I did stay in digs where I met a couple of characters who sparked *The Birthday Party* including a man who said he was an out-of-work concert pianist. I had completely forgotten that the road was Ashford Road. I might pop down and see it again one day.'
>
> He never did.[64]

Until more details about Pinter's role in this production emerge, from BBC files or elsewhere, this letter provides the clearest picture of a family dependent

on the shifting tastes of the critics, managers and audience members of the West End and BBC alike.

Conclusion

While these radio and television roles do not amount to much in terms of major acting credits, these parts helped Pinter stay afloat financially, kept him in contact with the BBC and, perhaps most importantly, revealed to him the technical side of acting and producing for radio and television. Such exposure to production mechanics was crucial to his creative development. As Michael Billington writes of Pinter's work in theatre companies, 'the rep experience obviously bled subconsciously into his knowledge of the playwright's craft. Pinter was to become that rare creature: a revolutionary theatrical poet with an intimate knowledge of stage mechanics.'[65] Though Pinter's work in radio and television was more infrequent, he absorbed the techniques and practical elements that went into effective productions. The result was an increasingly keen ear for sound and voice in radio performances, the medium he was first hired for by the BBC. Pinter began the 1950s unsure of radio: 'my voice sounded almost unrecognizable', he wrote to Smith after his performance in *Henry VIII*, 'however, I feel I am beginning to understand what is needed in microphone technique'.[66] By the end of the 1950s, he had written a highly commended radio piece on commission for the BBC that demonstrated a profound understanding of radio as a distinct genre requiring not just 'microphone technique' but a specific attention to the way language, sound and silence interact in the medium to create tension and drama.[67]

When it came to television, Pinter's bit parts gave him familiarity with life on a working set and the technical experience of performing in front of a camera. The emphasis on live broadcasts also demanded theatre's precision in body movement and dialogue memorisation along with the controlled physicality necessitated by the camera: skills which he would deploy in his later acting career and which his plays would require of others. As Richard Hewett notes, Pinter's later career in front of the camera was slight but drew from him powerful and nuanced performances that were sensitive to multi- and fixed-camera productions, from his minor but memorable role as Saul Abrahams in *Rogue Male* (1976) to his performance as Goldberg in the BBC's adaptation of *The Birthday Party* (1987).[68] Pinter's successes in these productions have their roots in his exposure to film and television sets in the 1950s.

Above all, however, these small, early parts show the vital role the BBC played in cultivating Pinter from a young, ambitious but awkward actor and struggling writer into a world-leading playwright and celebrated performer. The BBC was divided between progressives and traditionalists in the 1950s. Yet, it also had a culture of generosity where possible, whether it was Doreen Dixon's willingness to give Pinter his first audition, R. D. Smith's ear for voice talent or Donald McWhinnie's eagerness to see Pinter patronised. The BBC's commitment in the 1950s to broadcasting filmed theatrical productions also made it a vital part of

British theatre's cultural life, allowing even minor actors like Pinter to appear to audiences across the country.

Pinter's correspondence campaigns and habit of courteous, prompt follow-up letters following productions and meetings show that he saw the BBC as crucial to his career as an actor and, subsequently, as a writer. While his writing for theatre struggled to find its audience, despite the support of figures like Harold Hobson, the BBC gave Pinter both acting roles and commissioned writing work, welcoming him first through the extras lists and then through the recognition of talent by a small handful of staffers. His early commissioned work for the BBC baffled and delighted audiences in equal measure, but it was in line with the experimental drama the Third Programme championed. Soon after, Pinter's reputation became intertwined with the fluctuating opinions over the Third Programme's cultural agenda among BBC management and in Britain more broadly.[69] As live theatre broadcasting became a battleground with ITV in the late 1950s and into the 1960s, Pinter's work became a valuable commodity in sustaining cultural legitimacy in Britain. His radio work was a jewel in the BBC's crown through his commissioned dramas and collaborative ventures with figures like McWhinnie, Bray and Esslin. Yet ITV enjoyed for several years a monopoly on television broadcasts of his plays before the BBC followed suit. Just as Pinter had to adapt as a performer and writer, so the BBC had to adapt to shifting tastes, financial obligations and technological innovations as it continued its mission as the nation's broadcaster. While Pinter was at best an extra to the BBC's changing fortunes in the 1950s, from the 1960s onwards, just as the Corporation had enabled him to begin his career, he became integral to the BBC's cultural legitimacy in the second half of the twentieth century.

Acknowledgements

This article draws on research data collected as part of the 'Pinter Histories and Legacies: The Impact of Harold Pinter's Work on the Development of British Stage and Screen Practices (1957–2017)' project, Grant AH/P005039/1. I am grateful to the BBC Written Archives Centre staff for facilitating access to research sources, especially Kate O'Brien.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes

1. *Harold Pinter* (London: Faber & Faber, 2007).
2. 'Harold Pinter's Transmedial Histories', ed. Jonathan Bignell, William Davies and Amanda Wrigley, *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 40, no. 3 (2020), notably Richard Hewett, 'Pinter as Performer', 499–515; and Lucy Jeffery, 'An Old Hullo Out of the Dark': Radio Echoes between Samuel Beckett and Harold Pinter', 516–32.

3. The database documents and cross-references all of Pinter's UK theatre productions from the beginning of his career to 2021 (http://pinterlegacies.uk/). The database also includes Pinter's film, radio and television work, as well as his acting and directing roles.
4. Billington, *Pinter*, 30–1.
5. Hauser to Pinter, 17 July 1950, BBC Written Archives Centre (WAC), Harold Pinter, RCONT1, Artist File 1, 1950–62.
6. Hewett, 'Performer', 501. Lacklustre would be the best description: Pinter received a letter on 7 February 1951 which thanked him for his audition but informed him that he had not been selected for use in features. This did not bar him from BBC work, as the letter assured him (Letter to Pinter from Shirley Newham, secretary to Douglas Cleverdon, BBC WAC, Harold Pinter, RCONT1, Artist File 1, 1950–62).
7. For more on Pinter's later work with the BBC, see Jeffery 'Old Hullo'.
8. Harold Pinter, BBC WAC, TVART1 File, 1949–59. Unless noted otherwise, all subsequent BBC letters, reports and memos quoted are from this source.
9. See Billington, *Pinter*, 30–1; Hewett, 'Performer', 501–2.
10. Pinter had the opportunity to develop his love of Irish writing eighteen months later, when he headed to Ireland with Anew McMaster's repertory company for a year as a touring actor. For the impact of Ireland and its literature on Pinter, particularly Yeats and Synge, see Billington, *Pinter*, 41–3.
11. For a survey of Pinter's work across media, see Jonathan Bignell and William Davies, 'Introduction: Harold Pinter's Transmedial Histories', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 40, no. 3 (2020): 481–98.
12. C.f. letters from Pinter to BBC staff that mention Smith passing on their details in BBC WAC Harold Pinter, RCONT1, Artist File 1, 1950–62. Smith provided Pinter with various contacts in radio and theatre, including Douglas Seale at the Birmingham Repertory company. Pinter kept Smith abreast of the roles he landed and wrote frequently asking for advice and further contacts (Billington, *Pinter*, 36). An intriguing figure in the Corporation's history, Smith worked in the BBC's features department under Laurence Gilliam from 1945 to the early 1950s. Smith was then moved to drama following rumours about his Communist Party affiliations which ranged from mere political sympathies to full-blown espionage. He was known for his ambitious productions, deft directorial skills and generous nature. See Jeanette Thomas, 'Smith, Reginald Donald (1914–85), radio producer', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* Online, https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-65435 (accessed January 27, 2021).
13. See Billington, *Pinter*, 30–1 and William Baker, *A Harold Pinter Chronology* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 4–5 (though Baker incorrectly gives 'Passes Out' for 'Passes By'). For 'Dickens Goes to Yorkshire', see Hewett, 'Performer', 501. Production description for 'Mr Punch Passes By' in *Radio Times*, April 20, 1951, Issue 1432, 26.
14. Fee and rehearsal schedule, BBC WAC, Harold Pinter, RCONT1, Artist File 1, 1950–62.

15. Scriven became a celebrated radio writer in the 1960s, notably for his autobiographical verse dramas. He is also famous for the children's poem 'The Marrog'. For a discussion of Scriven's writing, see David Wade, 'British Radio Drama Since 1960', in *British Radio Drama*, ed. John Drakasis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 218–38.
16. He used the name until 1960. Michael Billington suggests the name change was little more than an attempt at a 'fresh start'. As Billington notes, while other BBC staff simply acknowledged the name change, R. D. Smith was more opinionated: 'What a name to call yourself!' (47–8).
17. Letter from Peter Watts to Pinter, BBC WAC, Harold Pinter, RCONT1, Artist File 1, 1950–62.
18. The limit was usually around ten actors. *Operation Leopard* was originally planned for a *Saturday Matinée* slot, which broadcast plays of no more than fifty minutes. The script was edited by Harcourt with both these in mind. See Charles Lefeaux's letter to Harcourt, November 27, 1952, Leslie Harcourt Script Writer File 1, 1939–1962, BBC WAC.
19. *Operation Leopard* script, 1954, Edinburgh University Special Collections, Jacobus Louw Potter Papers, E2015.52, Call No. 1651.
20. Other scripts by Harcourt include *Under Suspicion* (1939), *By Any Other Name* (1952) and *From Information Received* (1954).
21. Cynthia Pughe, Reader Report for *Operation Leopard*, March 4, 1953, Leslie Harcourt Script Writer File 1, 1939–1962, BBC WAC.
22. Letter to Barbara Bray, March 20, 1954, Leslie Harcourt Script Writer File 1, 1939–1962, BBC WAC.
23. Letter to Leslie Harcourt, April 6, 1953, Leslie Harcourt Script Writer File 1, 1939–1962, BBC WAC.
24. *Radio Times*, Issue 1587, April 11, 1954, 14. As with many of the BBC's early live productions, very few plays from the *Sunday Night Theatre* series were recorded: only 27 of the 721 productions broadcast between 1950 and 1959 survive.
25. D. A. Clarke-Smith reprised his role alongside Ralph Truman and Catherine Lacey in the 1950 production. In 1951, Truman returned but Clarke-Smith and Lacey did not. *Radio Times*, Issue 809, March 31, 1939, 14; Issue 1228, April 25, 1947, 23; Issue 1381, March 31, 1950, 14. Reed also co-produced with Bladon Peake a radio broadcast of the play in 1935 (*Radio Times*, Issue 621, August 23, 1935, 22).
26. *Radio Times*, Issue 1587, April 9, 1954, 38; Billington, *Pinter*, 45.
27. For a discussion of Christian values at the BBC in the mid-century, see Asa Briggs' *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom, Volume IV: Sound and Vision* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979) and Erik Tonning's work on Christianity, modernism and the BBC: 'David Jones: Christian Modernism at the BBC', in *Broadcasting in the Modernist Era*, eds. Matthew Feldman, Henry Mead and Erik Tonning (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), 113–34; and 'Mediating Modernism: The Third Programme, Samuel Beckett and Mass Communication', *Samuel Beckett and BBC Radio: A Reassessment*, eds. David Addyman, Matthew Feldman and Erik Tonning (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 59–80.

28. Peter Black, 'Pilate with a 1954 accent: some problems of an Easter play', *The Daily Mail*, Issue 18057, April 12, 1954, 6.
29. Jason Jacobs, *The Intimate Screen: Early British Television Drama* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 90–94.
30. Bignell and Davies, 'Introduction', 484.
31. *Radio Times*, Issue 1614, October 15, 1954, 14.
32. Ibid., 7.
33. *Radio Times*, Issue 749, February 4, 1938, 20.
34. 'Ninety Sail: Raising Play about Pepys', *The Manchester Guardian*, October 18, 1954, 2.
35. 'The Judges Have Had a "round Britain" Quiz', *The Daily Mail*, Friday, Issue 18246, November 19, 1954, 6.
36. Baker, *Chronology*, 6.
37. Paul Scoones, 'Rex Tucker - The Forgotten Producer', *Time Space Visualiser* 49, November 1996.
38. 'D'Artagan On Television', *The Times*, Issue 53098, Thursday, April 25, 1954, 5.
39. L. Marsland Gander, 'Spirit of Dumas Captured', *The Daily Telegraph*, Issue 31008, November 25, 1954, 8.
40. 'Christmas Affects Lime Grove', *The Manchester Guardian*, December 23, 1954, 10.
41. Peter Black, 'Teleview', *Daily Mail*, Issue Number 18251, November 25, 1954, n.p.
42. Catherine Johnson and Rob Turnock, 'Introduction: approaching the histories of ITV', in *ITV Cultures: Independent Television Over Fifty Years*, ed. Catherine Johnson and Rob Turnock, (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2005), 1–12.
43. Bignell and Davies, 'Introduction', 485.
44. Ibid., 485–7.
45. Baker, *Chronology*, 6–8. Prior to these first plays, Pinter's creative energies had focused on poetry and the occasional short story (his poetry was reasonably successful, appearing in *Poetry London* and *Poetry Quarterly*). Notably, the second performance of *The Room* was for the *Sunday Times* student drama competition, for which the drama critic Harold Hobson was a judge. Hobson became one of Pinter's early champions (Baker, *Chronology*, 8).
46. Billington, *Pinter*, 74; 85.
47. Pinter had begun corresponding with Bray after she invited though ultimately rejected a radio adaptation of *The Room* (Ann C. Hall, 'Harold Pinter, Sound, Media, and Other Transmissions', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 40, no. 3 (2020): 569). McWhinnie saw *The Birthday Party* and argued that Pinter represented the kind of up-and-coming artists the BBC should be supporting. Letter from Donald McWhinnie to John Morris, Assistant Director of Sound Broadcasting, 8 July 1958, BBC WAC Harold Pinter, RCONT1, Scriptwriter File 1, 1957–62.
48. Jeffery, 'Old Hullo', 518.
49. In her memoir, Bray described Pinter in the late 1950s as 'unfamiliar to the general public except for the radio plays we had commissioned from him' (in

Samuel Beckett: A Memoir, qtd. in Marek Kędzierski, 'Barbara Bray: In Her Own Words', *modernism/modernity* 18, no. 4: 887–97 (2011): 887).

50. Hall, 'Sound', 571–5.
51. Series ten was aired as part of the BBC Home Service *Saturday-Night Theatre* series in 1962–3, eleven went back to the Light Programme (1964) and twelve was broadcast on Radio 2 (1966–7).
52. *Radio Times*, Issue 1797, April 18, 1958, 25.
53. L. Marsland Gander, 'Ignoring the Willy-Nilly Viewers', *The Daily Telegraph*, Issue 32017, March 24, 1958, 11.
54. *A Slight Ache*, dir. Jamie Lloyd, Harold Pinter Theatre, 2019.
55. Billington, *Pinter*, 49–50.
56. A. R. Rawlinson, 'The Infamous John Friend', *Radio Times*, Issue 1847, April 3, 1959, 3.
57. Rawlinson, 'Friend', 3. See Anselm Heinrich, 'Theatre in Britain during the Second World War', *New Theatre Quarterly* 26, no. 1 (2010): 61-70.
58. For more on Pinter and *The Quiller Memorandum*, see Jonathan Bignell's 'Pinter, authorship and entrepreneurship in 1960s British cinema: the economics of "The Quiller Memorandum"', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio & Television* 40, no. 3 (2020): 533–50.
59. Billington, *Pinter*, 45; 38.
60. 'A quaint affair', *The Manchester Guardian*, April 14, 1953, 3.
61. Peter Black, 'Teleview', *Daily Mail*, Issue Number 19581, April 7, 1959, 16.
62. P. J. K., 'Spy Who May Save England', *The Daily Telegraph*, Issue 32338, April 7, 1959, 12.
63. 'Flat Start To B.B.C. Serial', *The Times*, Issue Number 54428, April 7, 1959, 14.
64. Edward Thomas, 'LETTER: Pinter play returns to the town that inspired it', *The Eastbourne Herald*, Friday, April 8, 2016. https://www.eastbourneherald.co.uk/news/opinion/letter-pinter-play-returns-town-inspired-it-1251200. For Pinter's role in *A Horse! A Horse!*, see Billington, *Pinter*, 49.
65. Billington, *Pinter*, 49.
66. Letter to R. D. Smith, January 24, 1951, BBC WAC Harold Pinter, RCONT1, Artists File 1, 1950–62.
67. See Bignell and Davies, 'Introduction', Hall, 'Sound', and Jeffery, 'Old Hullo'.
68. Hewett, 'Performer', 500. Hewett's study shows that Pinter was not just aware of the specific demands of acting in front of a camera but was attuned to the needs of both single and multi-camera productions and the different techniques they require.
69. See Bignell and Davies, 'Introduction', 488, for a discussion of the Audience reports Pinter's early BBC plays generated. The internal pressures from figures like Val Gielgud are discussed earlier. Externally, the BBC faced cuts to its *Third Programme* funding in 1957. Though it survived with the support of figures like Laurence Olivier and T. S. Eliot, the *Third Programme*'s perceived elitism meant it was consistently under scrutiny over its financial value and adherence to the BBC's founding principles of speaking to the nation rather than the few. For a history of the *Third Programme*, see Humphrey Carpenter, *The Envy of the World:*

Fifty Years of the Third Programme and Radio Three (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1996).

Notes on contributor

William Davies is a research fellow at the University of Reading. His research interests include twentieth-century war writing, modern British and Irish poetry and the legacy of modernism. His publications include articles in *Review of English Studies*, *Twentieth-Century Literature*, and the *Journal of War and Culture Studies*, edited special issues for the *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* (40.3, co-edited with Jonathan Bignell and Amanda Wrigley) and the *Journal of Beckett Studies* (30.1), the monograph *Samuel Beckett and the Second World War* (2020, Bloomsbury) and the edited volumes *Beckett and Politics* (2021, Palgrave, co-edited with Helen Bailey) and *Samuel Beckett's Poetry* (2022, Cambridge University Press, co-edited with James Brophy).