



Introduction

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Agregation oblige, this year will be a Pinter one for many students in the English departments of our Universities. But did we really need that particular circumstance for interest in Pinter to be alive? Pinter has now become a figurehead whose place in British drama need not be established. Although it does take some time for French audiences to come to contemporary British theatre, Pinter's plays have been regularly performed in France — Stuart Seide's latest *Birthday Party* which opened in Poitiers last March was one brilliant example.

But still more motivating for this particular issue has been Pinter's come back on the British stage with *Ashes to Ashes*, and Michael Billington's newly published and most complete biography. The extreme coherence of Pinter's work, which the biography makes obvious, is probably what the articles collected here all tend to show in their various approaches to the various forms of Pinter's art

For the 'comfort of strangers', the articles have been arranged according to genre and chronology of the works analysed — plays, novel and scripts. Yet, one will find that several of these approaches to Pinter's work may be related. Thus, David Saltz's Pinteresque introduction meets with John Somers' conclusions on the relevance of *The Birthday Party* today. His analysis of one of Pinter's first plays' genesis, themes and reception is a useful framework for the understanding of any Pinter piece of work. Significantly, the tone of his paper is very close to that of Francis Gillen analysing Pinter's latest play as the reenactment of human history in one act. Sheila Rabillard, Richard Hansen and Martin Regal are concerned with structural matters: dialogue, analysed in the light of Quine's theories on meaning and understanding; stage directions and their role in the characterisation and dramatic tension of *The Caretaker*; time and its distortions in *Ashes to Ashes* — in 1995, Martin Regal has published a book on time in Pinter's plays, of which only this last one was missing. To his analysis may be related Prapassaree Kramer's on the shifts from realism in *No Man's Land*. As Hanna Scolnicov and Kathleen McGeever point out familiar themes — betrayal, exile — they come across the shaping elements of Pinter's works. Lois Gordon looking at *The Caretaker* and Elizabeth Gennarelli at *Old Times* relate Pinter's work to occidental mythology and fundamental components of western culture, while Natalie Schmitt and Toby Zinman explore intertextualities and shifts in genre — Pinter and Eliot, Pinter and Joyce. Christopher Hudgins, Steven Gale, Leslie Kane and Steven Price analyse Pinter's strategies as a scriptwriter for *The Go Between*, *The Caretaker* and *The Trial* and as a director for Rose's *Twelve Angry Men*, necessitated and revealed by the game of shared work such exercises imply.