

## 2 PLAYS

In considering *The Birthday Party*, *The Caretaker* and other plays of Pinter's early period, one is immediately struck both by the considerable number of common concerns explored in the plays, and by an evident shift in fundamental emphasis. Pinter here works rather like a painter drawn to specific subject matter whose practice is continually to approach his material from different perspectives, with varied groupings, focuses and lights. It is as if, in *The Caretaker*, Pinter had got to the heart of the matter, in its very simplicity recognising the supererogatory and redundant aspects of earlier work. To resort to an oversimplification, realism triumphed over symbolism. Indeed such concerns as self-delusion, insecurity, domination and menace remain constants, but in *The Caretaker* we find an aesthetic resolution, a confident realisation of intuition and creativity meeting in perfect expression, quite freed from the constraints of mannerism.

This section is accordingly divided into two, looking firstly at *The Birthday Party* and other plays of 1957–59 (*The Room* 1957; *The Dumb Waiter* 1957; *A Slight Ache* 1958; *The Hothouse* 1959), and secondly at *The Caretaker* and other plays of 1959–60 (revue sketches 1959: *A Night Out* 1959). As can be seen from this grouping the revue sketches (particularly 'The Black and White', 'Last to Go' and 'All That') are pivotal in the fullest sense. The plays preceding the revue sketches take particular aspects of that genre as their starting point, whereas the plays that follow embody in developed form what Pinter had learnt in writing such material.

## 3 THE BIRTHDAY PARTY AND OTHER PLAYS 1957–59

*The Birthday Party* was Pinter's first full-length and most comprehensive early play. It is comprehensive in the sense that it includes most fully in a developed dramatic sense situations,