

HYPERION

On the future of aesthetics

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Letters to the editors are welcome and should be emailed to hyperion-future@nietzschecircle.com.

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This issue of Hyperion is dedicated to the memory of James Rossant.

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***Hyperion* is published by the Nietzsche Circle and**

edited by Rainer J. Hanshe and Mark Daniel Cohen.

**James Rossant, *Floating City*,
pen and ink on Japanese handmade paper**



**James Rossant, *The Bridge*,
watercolor**



James Rossant

1928 – 2009

This issue of *Hyperion* is dedicated to the memory of James Rossant.

Rossant was an architect, city planner, artist, and professor of architecture. A long-time Fellow of the American Institute of Architects, Rossant was a partner of the architectural firm Conklin & Rossant and principal of James Rossant Architects. Among a life-time of architectural accomplishments, Rossant is best recognized for his master plan of Reston, Virginia, the Lower Manhattan Plan, and the UN-sponsored master plan for Dodoma, Tanzania.

His paintings and drawings have been exhibited in galleries in various parts of the world, and have entered a variety of collections, including those of George Mason University, Columbia University, and Centre D'Architecture in Paris. In addition, he has illustrated a number of books, among them children's books and cookbooks written by Colette Rossant, his wife.

James Rossant's name will be new to many reading this journal. However, his reputation has been significant and is widely recognized, well known by those in his own field. Despite his achievements, and one would like to think more because of them, he was not the subject of a general popularity. He did not have to suffer the indignity of a broad assent founded on the shifting and quivering tides of mass sentiment, but rather had the respect of those whose acknowledgement is rooted in the understanding that comes of and is expressed in clear and formulated ideas. Like those who always are known only to those who know much, he had the respect of those whose opinions count.

It can be argued that freedom is only to be found in capability, in the free flow of thought that is unencumbered by clumsiness and an absent readiness to formulate itself at the moment of its own impulse. It is clear from his work in his various media that his mind invented in the way that native speakers talk—without having to think how to do what it feels the impulse to do, without having to think how to say what it wants to say. Rossant was one among

those minds in this time—as they must exist in every time, in every place—not so much respected as respectable, one of those minds who are free by their acquired, developed capacity to do as they wish immediately, with the quickness of thought, Such minds are often invisible to all but those how know how to recognize them, to all but those of their own kind. One can see it in his work, in his architecture, his paintings, his drawings. And one can read it in his texts, in the rigor and precision of his words, which can be found, in one example, in this issue.

It is appropriate to complete these thoughts with a portion of a text written to her father by Cecile Rossant.



All the colors of your brush including the unpredictable trespass of color on color are drawn across borders by your finger's steady stroke. Steady mastery, steady pen and I see a corner, cliff, wall and street of this inexhaustible Atlantis appear: *ciudad, citta, Stadt, cité*—eloquent city—tripping up round-faced typologies in its ever-advancing wake. Steady partner, your imagination: humorist, renegade, rebel and devotee.

Devotion? Unremitting imagination has chosen its faithful host.

Are you then midwife, who cups an infants head ignoring with wisdom a woman's otherworldly screams?

Or are you a river with complex, changeable currents, able to wear the colors of mud bank, bough and sky in silky reflection on your restless surface, or are you a river ready and willing to creep above a child's slender shoulder then slap her bottom, and rush through her hair, or are you a river, waiting, bottled in the barrel of the pen?

Hyperion is proud to publish in this issue James Rossant's review of *Le Corbusier and the Occult*, by J. K. Birksted.

Thought . . . to the Purpose

The vocation of a journal is to proclaim the spirit of its age. Relevance to the present is more important even than unity or clarity, and a journal would be doomed—like the newspapers—to insubstantiality if it did not give voice to a vitality powerful enough to salvage even its more dubious components by validating them. In fact, a journal whose relevance for the present has no historical justification should not exist at all. The Romantic *Athenäum* is still a model today precisely because its claim to historical relevance was unique. At the same time it proves—if proof were needed—that we should not look to the public to supply the yardstick by which true relevance to the present is to be measured. Every journal ought to follow the example of the *Athenäum*. It should be rigorous in its thought and unwavering in its readiness to say what it believes, without any concessions to its public, particularly where it is a matter of distilling what is truly relevant from the sterile pageant of new and fashionable events, the exploitation of which can be left to the newspapers.

Moreover, for any journal that conceives itself in this way, criticism remains the guardian of the house. If in its infancy criticism was forced to combat commonplace viciousness, the situation nowadays is different . . . Both critical discourse and the habit of judgment stand in need of renewal. Only a terrorist campaign will suffice to overcome that imitation of great painting that goes by the name of literary Expressionism. If in such annihilating criticism it is essential to fill in the larger context—and how else could it succeed?—the task of positive criticism, even more than before and even more than for the Romantics, must be to concentrate on the individual work of art. For the function of great criticism is not, as is often thought, to instruct by means of historical descriptions or to educate through comparisons, but to cognize by immersing itself in the object. Criticism must account for the truth of works, a task just as essential for literature as for philosophy.

—Walter Benjamin, “Announcement of the Journal *Angelus Novus*”

HYPERION

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S P E C I A L S E C T I O N

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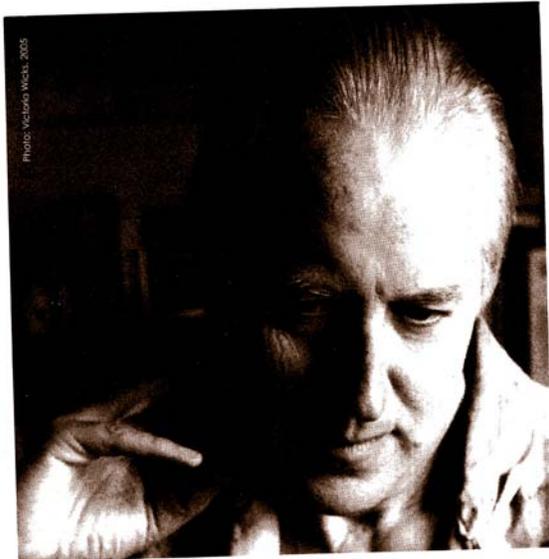
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theatre minima and the Martin E. Segal Theatre Center
celebrate

Howard Barker

with the Playwright in Attendance!



screenings • readings •
panel discussion • and
'A Conversation with
Howard Barker'

On Monday, 10 May 2010, theatre minima and the Martin E. Segal Theatre Center at the CUNY Graduate Center will welcome legendary British dramatist, theorist, director, and poet Howard Barker in a rare visit to New York. Join Mr. Barker, actress and frequent collaborator Victoria Wicks, and critical champion David Ian Rabey of the University of Aberystwyth for a day of screenings, discussions, and readings, including Barker himself reading from his recent poetry.

The all-day event is free. More information about the program is available at the Segal Center Web page for the event (<http://web.gc.cuny.edu/MESTC/events/s10/howard-barker.html>), or email curator George Hunka at geh@panix.com.

Monday, May 10, 2010

1 PM – 8:30 PM

The CUNY Graduate Center

365 5th AVE, NYC

INTRODUCTION: CRUELTY, BEAUTY, AND THE TRAGIC ART OF HOWARD BARKER

RAINER J. HANSHE



What shocks the virtuous philosopher, delights the camelion Poet. It does no harm from its relish of the dark side of things any more than from its taste for the bright one; because they both end in speculation. A Poet is the most unpoetical of any thing in existence; because he has no Identity—he is continually [informing] and filling some other Body . . .
—Keats

Even though Howard Barker is not well known in America and although he himself acidly professes to be little more than a rumor in his own country, after Beckett, he may be one of our most significant as well as profound writers. In fact, his very refusal of his standing, or the silence that largely surrounds him, indicates that his vocation is truly that of writer, and as did Beckett, he disdains the prizes most covet and take as signs of value. What is vital to him is “to desire tragedy, to experience tragedy as a need,” and his works bears this mark as well as the silence of a resisting solitude.

Since the production of Barker’s first play in 1970, he has remained a prolific writer, producing a daunting body of work that includes stage plays, radio plays, television plays, marionettes, opera libretti, poetry, and theoretical tracts. He is also a visual artist and his work, which is held in national collections in England and in Europe, evokes a mood of violence, death, and eroticism. Despite this prodigious body of work and writing for a period of over 40 years, he is hardly as well known as Beckett and, lamentably, even in the finer independent bookstores here in New York City, none of his books is available. If the reasons for this may be manifold, it in part seems due to the ferocity of Barker’s artistic vision. As the founder of what he calls the Theatre of Catastrophe, which “takes as its first principle the idea that art is not digestible” but is instead “an irritant in consciousness, like a grain of sand in the oyster’s gut,” Barker actively cultivates cruelty, a quality all too few are ready to endure. But this is a cruelty that produces a lasting beauty and which, free of mawkish sentiment and humanistic delusions, recognizes that some form of cruelty underlies all significant human endeavors. There is no knowledge without it, nor without it is there any art. This lucid, fearless knowledge is evident in Barker’s *Arguments for a Theatre*, which, even if one

remains opposed to the views espoused in the book, is an indispensable tract for any theater practitioner for it raises crucial questions that demand meditation—not to engage with the polemic is not to think, to refuse an exigent confrontation that gives rise to necessary uncertainties, to a skepticism that brings one face to face with the darkness that many seek to evade or neutralize with a numbing pharmakon so as to remain happy, affirmative, and optimistic, like the enslaved children of talk shows and sitcoms or the uplifting products of the industry of commerce that masquerade as art. But the tragic prevails; it is the inevitable crucible; the dark matter that continues to surface and reveal to us the profundity of a surface that is as enigmatic as any depth. For art is not meant to comfort. If one goes to it for comfort, one is seeking but the same consolations once offered by metaphysics, and that is to reduce art, to make it into a diversion, a mere palliative. It is to quiet the tremors. If Nietzsche first said in *The Birth of Tragedy* that it is “only as an *aesthetic phenomenon* that existence is eternally justified”—and this is perhaps one of the most abused quotes in his corpus—he soon abandoned such a consoling view. In *Human, All Too Human*, where Nietzsche is more scientifically minded and extremely critical of art, he focuses on perception itself and states that art is what “makes the sight of life bearable by laying over it the veil of unclear thinking.” In *The Gay Science*, art’s role as a mechanism for helping us to endure existence will receive yet another transformation; there, it enables us to turn ourselves into phenomenon, but this *morphosis* is done with a good conscience as opposed to imprecise thinking. In shattering the youthful naiveté that to pierce through a shroud is to discover truth, surfaces and veils are praised by Nietzsche as necessary and profound. There is nothing behind the mask but yet another mask—surface, depth, layer, chasm, these are all entwined. Similarly, as Deane Juhan notes in *Job’s Body*, “Skin and brain develop from exactly the same primitive cells. Depending upon how you look at it, the skin is the outer surface of the brain, or the brain is the deepest layer of the skin. [...] The skin is no more separated from the brain than the surface of a lake is separate from its depths. [...] The brain is a single functional unit, from cortex to fingertips to toes. To touch the surface is to stir the depths.” In *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche achieves the ultimate tragic height and having long left behind or transfigured the oft-quoted pronouncement on the eternal justification of existence, he proclaims that it is *only reality* that “justifies” the human—*there is no catharsis*. To Nietzsche, that is Aristotle’s fallacy, a distortion of the tragic sensibility. Instead, “beyond ruth and terror,” what the tragic entails is “[*realizing*] *in oneself* the eternal joy of becoming—that joy which also encompasses *joy in destruction*.” The ethicists will balk at this, but it is the hard and tragic truth that has been imparted to us from Pindar to Nietzsche and Barker: joy and suffering are inextricably interwoven. That is the reality that ‘justifies’ or better, to confront the exacting thought of the eternal return, which is the only thought that honors existence in its absolute sense, that is the reality that one must learn to love, and this is ultimately an erotic

question, the predicament of *amor fati*. Thus, true joy cannot exist for those who refuse suffering—joy is *infused* with suffering, and suffering with joy, just as creation is infused with destruction, and destruction with creation. *La petite mort*. The joy that is devoid of suffering is but a facile happiness and Barker is painfully aware of what, from our anthropomorphic perspective, is the terrible and questionable aspect of existence. Both his poetry and his plays convey this sting. Tragedy sensitizes us to it; our task is to remain sensitive to it. And it is not since Artaud's *Theater and its Double* that we have had a critical manifesto as incisive and challenging. In it, the sting of the tragic resonates and echoes in our flesh as we incorporate its questions. Barker's Theatre of Catastrophe has its lineage in Artaud's Theater of Cruelty and in the future, Barker's theoretical works will come to be as important and as influential as those of Artaud. If he has remained and will remain largely untimely, to those serious-minded artists and practitioners of the body, there is something posthumous here, something future-minded that must now be confronted in order to be of the very future that we are.

Barker has essentially etched out a niche of his own and in 1988 he formed The Wrestling School, a company designed to produce his own seldom-performed plays, works which, it seems, escaped even the finely tuned radar of Susan Sontag. While there have been other seminars on Barker's work, to speak of some recent events, in 2008, 20 years subsequent to the founding of his Wrestling School, the RSAMD in Glasgow held a symposium on his work and in the following year, there was an international conference on his theater work at Aberystwyth University of Wales. Months later, 21 for 21, a global celebration of the 21st birthday of his theatre company that spanned four continents and 18 countries, honored Barker through performing his plays and reciting his poetry in seven different languages. Currently, London's Riverside Studios is producing two of his plays, *Hurts Given and Received*, and *Slowly*, while they are also presenting *Wonder And Worship In The Dying Ward*, a rehearsed reading of his latest work, directed by Barker himself.

If largely inaudible and invisible to many, if even absent in St. Mark's Bookshop and Book Culture if not other similar bookstores in the cultural bastions of Europe, Asia, and elsewhere, clearly, Barker has remained an indelible presence in the world and his work is a testament of his devotion to writing and of an ever-questioning mind fearlessly in pursuit of the catastrophic. Now, in cooperation with George Hunka's theatre minima, the Martin E. Segal Theatre (CUNY Graduate Center) is presenting a daylong series of events including screenings, readings, panel discussions, and a one-on-one conversation with the dramatist, who will be making a rare visit to New York. It is rumored that, like Paul Bowles, Barker only travels by boat, thus, in an epoch of instantaneity and immediate gratification, Barker's presence in the city is indeed a special occasion bespeaking a different temporality altogether, a sensibility alien to the very tempers of our time, to the convenient fallacy of

identity politics, to the still pervasive ethical and moral laws espoused by those caught in a 19th century time warp as the real purveyors of the future wrestle with the darkness of what is beyond good and evil and the easy panacea of hope and change is fiercely refused. This tragic sensibility is concentrated in the following aphorism from Barker's forthcoming *These Sad Places*:

¹ Not surprisingly, this is not yet available in English but was first published in a French translation.

“

The tragic character's visceral contempt for the law. His self-willed repudiation of all obligation. His euphoric rupture of the disciplines of cohabitation and compatibility, as if he sliced through his own artery and watched wild-eyed as the blood burst out of darkness, ecstatic, fatal, half-divine. If there is pity in this excess of wounding, it is pity only for himself. Yet this is self-pity which the chorus—uncompromising in extracting its revenge—cannot disdain, for the tragic character is first and foremost a sacrifice whose destruction is proof—a proof perpetually required—of the inexorable fact of limitation, a fact so disabling and humiliating it enables us also to let go of life.¹

It is upon the unique event of Barker journeying to New York by ship, upon a moment that is truly decisive—and it is fitting that this comes after our own long convalescence—that *Hyperion* is publishing a series of writings on Howard Barker that include George Hunka's "Access to the Body: The Theatre of Revelation in Beckett, Foreman, and Barker," excerpts from Barker's *DEATH, THE ONE, AND THE ART OF THEATRE*, which features an introduction written expressly for this occasion by Barker scholar Karoline Gritzner, and "The Sunless Garden," a new essay of Barker's that was presented in public for the first time at the conference in his honor in Wales. Here, David Kilpatrick, who has written on Hermann Nitsch, Mishima, and Bataille amongst others, prefaces it. What we wish to consecrate with this selection of material is the work of a serious tragic writer of the 20th and now 21st century who recognizes along with Genet that beauty resides in the wound and that, hence, there is no reconciliation, only the anguish and the ecstasy of living with one's fate, a fate that one must encounter erotically and to which one must sacrifice oneself, for our worst transgression is the one we commit against ourselves, the transgression of leaving our conscience in the lurch and seeking a forgiveness we can never achieve and that, ultimately, is a crime against the body, of the secret knowledge of the relationship between beauty and cruelty, of a sacrificing solitude.

Access to the Body

**The Theatre of Revelation in
Beckett, Foreman, and Barker¹**



by George Hunka

The speaking body on stage as the irreducible condition of theatrical experience is a trope so general as to verge on the meaningless. It is applicable to any theatrical event from a play by Neil Simon or Alan Ayckbourn to the farthest reaches of the work of the Complicite company, Jan Fabre, or Romeo Castellucci. In some theatre of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, however, it is this condition which itself becomes the focus for dramatic exploration. The speaking body's status as both subject and object, as both autonomous consciousness and as a spiritual artifact for the spectator's meditation and contemplation, becomes the basis for imaginative possibility. Schopenhauer's concept of the individual body as the "immediate object," the source for all that can know and is known for the subject, acquires new significance with the threat by politics and culture to its autonomy.² Especially after the catastrophes of the two world wars, the decline of the nation-state in the years following and the rise of a corporatized post-capitalist ideology, the speaking body becomes a special issue of theatre as an art. As individuals themselves have been subjected to a catastrophic fracture of their autonomy in the community, the theatre has now become a self-conscious locus of individual redefinition.

This theatre represents an alternative post-World-War-II theatre tradition, a tradition that exists parallel to both the social realism that arose on English-language stages in the wake of that war and the collectively conceived and politically progressive work exemplified in the United States by the Becks, in the United Kingdom by Peter Brook and Joan Littlewood, and in continental Europe by Artaud and Grotowski. Beginning with Beckett's mature theatrical theory and practice, this theatre posits a unique triangulation of theatrical experience, from character to character to spectator, as the lyrical depiction of suffering, desire, and love become, through the fracture of both social realism and collectivity, a means of poetic compassion. As this tradition develops through the work of the British dramatist Howard Barker and the American dramatist Richard Foreman, contemporaries in the English-language theatre, the body as autonomous perceptual and erotic object, known inwardly by the performer and outwardly by the spectator, is celebrated as the site of imagination. In the wake of the catastrophic twentieth century, the individual is encouraged to seize once again his or her body for him or herself, a body that has become a possession of the state under both totalitarianism and the post-capitalist culture industry.

¹ Originally written for the conference "Howard Barker's Art of the Theatre," University of Aberystwyth, Wales 10-12 July 2009.

² I cite Schopenhauer here with quite deliberate intent. The three dramatists under consideration in this paper are frequently discussed in connection with contemporary continental philosophies such as those of Adorno, Lacan, Bataille, and Badiou, but it seems to me that their work clearly emerges not from the Hegelian strain of post-Cartesian and especially post-Kantian thought, but from the alternative strain that leads from Schopenhauer to Nietzsche (despite Adorno's dismissive comments on Schopenhauer). Most contemporary continental philosophy, such as Zizek's, emerges from a closer emphasis on the Hegelian rather than the Schopenhauerian stream of influence. In the avoidance of a discussion of Schopenhauer's metaphysics, these critics it seems to me offer an incomplete—and occasionally blinkered and narrow—consideration of the European aesthetic tradition that lies beneath these plays. (I also urge that, apart from Beckett, Foreman and Barker may or may not agree with this assessment of a Schopenhauerian

Front image:
Howard Barker,
Winter landscape : gynaeocologists dining off an actress
oil on board

Below:
Howard Barker,
Study of an actress with an unloved child
oil on board

Neither Foreman nor Barker, in their theoretical writings, explicitly point to Samuel Beckett's plays as a pervasive influence. Foreman's early work was based in an aesthetic borrowed from Gertrude Stein and Bertolt Brecht;³ discussing the literature and music that informs his own practice, Barker cites Shakespeare and the Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists, and as more contemporary influences he names the composers Bela Bartok and Karlheinz Stockhausen, as well as the writers Paul Celan, George Oppen, and especially Louis-Ferdinand Celine.⁴ And indeed, Foreman and Barker's work little resemble Beckett's pre-1962 dramatic writings. But they share with Beckett's post-1962 work a codification of the body as physicalized language, an explicit concern with the physical body in metaphysical space. It is not *Waiting for Godot*, *Krapp's Last Tape*, or *Endgame* to which the plays of Foreman and Barker look back, but to *Play*, *Come and Go*, *Not I*, and radio plays such as *Cascando* and *Words and Music*—works that owe both form and content to a specific acknowledgement of theatrical metaphysics.

The body in Beckett's late work is not, at first, presented full-blown but as a series of fragments. The bodies in his early plays, as innovative as these

plays were, still existed in a recognizably quotidian world: the two tramps on the road, four figures in a post-apocalyptic landscape. *Happy Days* of 1961 ends with Winnie buried to her neck in sand, only her head visible. *Play* of 1962 begins with these speaking heads, disembodied, rehearsing the memory of an extramarital affair. It is only with *Play* that Beckett's dramatic and theatrical practice seizes upon the innovations of his fiction. The man and two women of *Play* are wrested from any recognizable realistic



context and trapped now in urns, in some non-realistic, unspecified locale.

What draws the spectator's attention, more radically than before, is the condition of the body and the speed, inflection, and vocabulary of the expressed spoken word. Language, like the body, is a series of disconnections, fragments that remain to be experienced and reassembled by an individual auditor. *Play's* spotlight, a self-consciously theatrical technology, becomes a fourth character in the performance, the object through which the suffering of the characters is brought forth to consciousness. If the light is a ray of recognition, of consciousness, what then lies within the darkness that surrounds both the figures and the shaft of illumination?

Light sculpts the disembodied heads in *Play*, as well as the hands of *Come and Go*, the mouth of *Not I*. But it also sculpts the negative space of the darkness that surrounds these speaking heads. In his later plays like *Footfalls* and *That Time*, words emerge from this darkness as well, rendering the body on the stage itself an auditor. The space in which these plays transpire is not a crossroads, or an underground bunker, or a searing desert, but the theatre auditorium itself. The second half of the theatrical subject/object equation, the spectator, is now consciously assumed in the theatrical experience. The fourth wall is not so much broken as moved to a place behind the spectator as well.

Bodies in a darkened space, perhaps conceived as an unconscious. But not, it is important to note, as a collective unconscious. As extraordinary as *Waiting for Godot*, *Krapp's Last Tape*, and *Endgame* were, the notion of audience as collective was still an element of Beckett's dramaturgical practice, and elements of popular entertainment such as the music hall and the silent film shaped the structure and performance of these plays. As Beckett explored the more profound implications of the speaking body as primary element in theatre, however, these popular cultural accretions were shorn away from his practice, leaving mere presence and physicality as the severely restricted palette for his theatrical explorations.

Language, the means by which Beckett's characters tell their stories in the late plays, is no longer an avenue towards intelligibility. Instead, words become experiential, riven by anxiety and catastrophe, fragmented and unable to contain physical experience. Nonetheless, in the theatre, these words are the only means by which his bodies can define themselves, can present themselves to the spectator. The mouths sputter their words out ceaselessly as if driven by a need to define the bodies that express them. One is reminded of his 1937 letter to Axel Kaun:

“

It is indeed becoming more and more difficult, even senseless, for me to write an official English. And more and more my own

dimension in their work; I'm unaware of any specific reference to this philosopher in their theoretical writings.) For more on Schopenhauer's metaphysics and aesthetics, see *Schopenhauer, Philosophy and the Arts*, edited by Dale Jacquette (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), and for Beckett's specific indebtedness to Schopenhauer, see Ulrich Pothast's *The Metaphysical Vision: Arthur Schopenhauer's Philosophy of Art and Life and Samuel Beckett's Own Way to Make Use of It* (London: Peter Lang Publishing, 2008). A dreadful subtitle, and the book unfortunately lacks extended consideration of Beckett's post-1962 drama.

³ Richard Foreman, *Plays and Manifestos* (New York: NYU Press, 1976). See especially editor Kate Davy's introduction.

⁴ Interview with Howard Barker, *Private Passions*, BBC, 11 June 2006. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio3/privatepassions/pip/5591s/>

⁵ Samuel Beckett, *Disjecta: Miscellaneous Writings and a Dramatic Fragment*, ed. by Ruby Cohn (New York: Grove Press, 1984): 171.

⁶ Richard Foreman, "Interview with Ken Jordan" (1990): 6. Accessed 20 June 2009 at <http://www.ontological.com/RF/RFinterviews/ForemanJordan1990.doc>.

language appears to me like a veil that must be torn apart in order to get at the things (or the Nothingness) behind it. [...] To bore one hole after another in it, until what lurks behind it—be it something or nothing—begins to seep through; I cannot imagine a higher goal for a writer today. [...] At first it can only be a matter of somehow finding a method by which we can represent this mocking attitude towards the word, through words. In this dissonance between the means and their use it will perhaps become possible to feel a whisper of that final music or that silence that underlies All.⁵

Ultimately, I suggest, the theatrical body was that means by which, though language, language was undermined to feel the whisper of that silence: a tactile conclusion that assumes a spectator, a bodied consciousness that sees and listens.

The written text serves as origination for Beckett's theatrical work, as it does for that of American dramatist Richard Foreman. In both his written plays and his directorial and design work for his Ontological-Hysterical Theatre founded in 1968, Foreman's explorations of the dynamics between two bodies begin in his work with the word. Most instructive in terms of the body in the theatre and the triangulation of desire is Foreman's description—perhaps better described as an epiphany—that led to his theatrical practice:

“

I saw a particular static moment from my seat in the Circle in the Square where I watched a rather dreadful production of *The Balcony*. And I remember seeing [Shelley] Winters, on one side of the stage, and Lee Grant on the other, and it was just a moment of stasis, and a moment of a kind of tension between them, and I just wanted to make a whole play that had nothing except that unresolved tension between them. And I wrote out of that. I said that's what I want in the theater, just that moment, and it doesn't develop into any of the other awful stuff, the psychological stuff, the narrative stuff, the adventure stuff that it always develops into. But it's just that.⁶

If Beckett fragments and deconstructs the body in post-war Western culture, Foreman attempts to reconstruct it, particularly within the politically progressive culture that surrounded his downtown New York theatre in 1968. Further, Foreman's presentational rather than representational practice—his performers often face squarely towards the audience, their dialogue often