

**Chapter 1 : Howard Barker - Exeunt Magazine**

*Appendix: Interview with Howard Barker 'Art is a problem. The man or woman who exposes himself to art exposes himself to another problem.'*<sup>1</sup> With Majeed Mohammed Midhin.

I was born in I came from a family of laundresses, policemen, soldiers, barmaids and tram drivers. I did not visit the theatre. None of us did. I had no prejudice against it, I knew nothing of it. When I came to the theatre I found it a difficult and hostile place. For all its socialist rhetoric it was and remains narcissistic and snobbish. Perhaps it always was. How would you describe your work? What have you tried to say in your plays? I invent a world. Nor do I claim to tell the truth or enlighten people. We are suffocated by writers who want to enlighten us with their truths. For me, the theatre is beautiful because it is a secret, and secrets seduce us, we all want to share secrets. That is also its politics, if it has any politics at all. And modern democracies hate secrets, they want everything transparent. Obviously the critics collaborate in this desire to expose everything to the light of day, they are the police force, after all. My work is characterized by one thing above all invention. In theatre we imagine the world, we do not record it, we are not documentary makers. I hold all social realism and journalistic theatre in contempt. It is a sordid habit. But serious artists make their own voice, and here too I affirm the value of invention - I do not pretend my characters speak the language of the street - a peculiar ambition of naturalistic writers - their discourse is a mixture of high literary tone and the sort of slang I learned in South London in my childhood, a rich metaphorical voice that reached back to the middle ages. I knew this when my mother swore at me, there were rhythms and words in her mouth that were atavistic, and beautiful too. So from different sources I made a language specially fitted for theatre. In more recent works, this is yet further developed. Why do you write about the things you do? Certainly I never write for utilitarian reasons - to help others understand issues, to improve society and so on. I regard those as fatuous pretexts. Let us keep social work out of the theatre. I write because I feel must. You describe your work as Theatre of Catastrophe. Can you talk about that? Tragedy is the greatest art form of all. It gives us the courage to continue with our life by exposing us to the pain of life. It is unsentimental, it takes us seriously as human beings, it is not condescending. Paradoxically, by seeing pain we are made greater, it becomes a need. My own tragedies have no moral meaning whatsoever. They are called catastrophic because a breakdown of order - social or personal - is always the starting point, and the protagonist must invent himself out of the ruins of a life. Often this journey leads to a bitter solitude. We ask it to take us seriously. Your work is perhaps more successful in Europe than at home. Why do you think that is? My work is vastly more successful in Europe, America or Australia than it is here. The reason is simple enough - the English I cannot speak of the Scots are moralistic, and have made moralising their discipline since the reformation. They like to be told what to think, and their literary heroes are moralists. This civil kindness is in my opinion, a false note in his work, a compromise and essentially, a deceit. It is painful to be to a large extent, an internal exile. But there are compensations. The success of my work abroad has made me an international writer, and I have a small and dedicated company, The Wrestling School, with whom I develop my theatre practice. We have a distinct style, we live on the margins, but it is the margins where the most interesting things happen, obviously. There is a law of aesthetics that prevents interesting things occurring at the centre, it stands to reason. Do you have very strong political views? Can you explain what they are and how they inform your work? I have plenty of political views and plenty of social and personal prejudices. I do not however, value them. The great beauty of art is its ability to break down the views of the artist. Why should we believe a dramatist? What is his opinion worth? What we do trust is the power of his imagination, which has its own truths. When I write, I am not giving a lecture, I am speculating on behaviour. Sometimes this is dangerous, but it should be. As I say often, theatre is a dark place and we should keep the light out of it. And you are known for having very strong views on art and culture. Can you explain these? It is extraordinary to me how such diverse passions originate in the same culture - take Bosch and Rembrandt, or in literature Celine and Thomas Mann. You are famous for your quote about sending all your plays to the National Theatre for rejection. Can you expand a little on why you said that? I was trying to prove a thesis, and the National Theatre obliged me. Listen, a National Theatre is an

ideological construct, it is not a benign provider of facilities to serious artists. Hall, Eyre, Nunn, Hytner, all knew of my work and its reputation, internationally as well as locally. Yet they have all resolutely declined to stage it. One might argue this neglect runs counter to their remit, which is to offer the best work in the English language. They are there to cultivate the national ideology, which might have been at one time, patriotic royalism, but is now liberal humanism. Still, it is an ideological function. Quality is not the first consideration, the first consideration is whether the text is compatible with the prejudices of the age, as interpreted by these carefully chosen individuals. At the same time I think there should not be a national theatre, the huge resources wasted here should be bestowed on a dozen vigorous independent companies. Dates are of production opening nights. Dates in brackets indicate openings at particular venues.

## Chapter 2 : results in SearchWorks catalog

*Barker and the British theatre --Postmodernism and the theatre --Seduction --Judith --The castle --The shape of darkness --Notes --Appendix: interview with Howard Barker. Responsibility: Charles Lamb.*

Barker is hardly a man to undervalue his talent; it is all the more surprising, therefore, that these admonishments should be accompanied by such genuine warmth and engaging humour. On closer inspection, however, the anger seems personally and artistically justified. Rather than irate ranting, what emerges is light-hearted though genuine frustration at those who fail to identify that single-mindedness which has allowed Barker to remain faithful to his writing and to his unique voice. Discussing his previous work, he comments on the need for well-trained vocal and intellectual delivery for his plays. Perhaps, its complexity also accounts for it being received less favourably by British audiences, used as they are to the filmic and televisual realism which has been elevated to such primacy by contemporary theatre practice. Prior to the interview, I was given access to a script for *The Dying for Today*. I comment on the noticeable absence of punctuation in the text, and ask whether this textual flow, with its long speeches which sit menacingly on the printed page and apparently freed from the constraint of traditional syntax, gives a certain freedom of expression for the actors. The words are representative of my own voice -- they have a very precise structure. Thucydides tells of the infamous Battle of Amphipolis, when Sparta captured this besieged city by offering that ultimate of capitalist baits, the right to retain all property as long as its citizens surrendered without a fight. Seven years later, the Athenians decided to wreak their revenge on this humiliation, sending a hundred triremes to invade Sicily, its principal city Syracuse under the military command of a Spartan. Unfortunately, the Athenian campaign was a disaster, and rather than escape back to Athens when they could, the Athenian force, commanded by the superstitious Nicias, hesitated, only to be slaughtered or captured en masse. According to the Roman historian Plutarch, the Athenians only learnt news of this massacre after a lone sailor recounted the sorry tale to an Athenian barber as he cut his bedraggled hair. In his defence, of course, it must be remembered that Thucydides was not a favourite of the Renaissance humanists, his matter-of-fact historicism only being truly appreciated by nineteenth-century philosophers like Nietzsche. And it is Nietzsche who neatly brings us back to the particular narrative of *The Dying of Today*. Misreadings of Nietzsche added fuel to the genocidal tendencies of Nazi Germany, and *The Dying of Today* concerns what might be the first historical record of genocide on a systematic scale. The captured Athenians, herded into a rock quarry on Sicily, are forced to live for seven long months without shelter and with little water and food. They starve, they burn in the hot Sicilian sun, their captors watching on as disease, malnutrition and exposure bring death to the young men. It is a news which we all share as part of a collective heritage of guilt and hate. It will also engage with its audience on a far more intellectual, far more cerebral level than we are used to in British theatre. Rather, there is an unwritten contractual agreement to experience the uncomfortable and to think about that experience for ourselves.

## Chapter 3 : Kevin Quarmby - Academic and Writer/Actor

*Howard Barker at home in Brighton Photograph: Graeme Robertson for the Guardian At the bottom of the Brighton street where Howard Barker lives is the seafront house that once belonged to Terence.*

## Chapter 4 : howard\_barker\_politics\_and\_desire\_an\_expository\_study\_of\_his\_drama\_and\_poetry\_\_87

*Howard Barker. Photograph: Eduardo Houth* [â€¢ Subscribe free via iTunes](#) [â€¢ The Guardian Culture feed url](#) [â€¢ Listen to the interview now on your computer \(MP3\).](#)

## Chapter 5 : Howard Barker's Art of Theatre - Paperback - David Rabey; Sarah Goldingay - Oxford University

*Howard Barker's first play was performed at the Royal Court Theatre Upstairs in His plays have been produced by Royal Court, Royal Shakespeare Company, The Open Space Theatre, Sheffield Crucible and the Almeida and his work is frequently performed in Europe and the United States. He founded.*

## Chapter 6 : Project MUSE - Howard Barker's art of theatre

*Memories of paintings in Howard Barker's theatre - Heiner Zimmermann The sunless garden of the unconsolated: some destinations beyond catastrophe - Howard Barker Howard Barker and David Ian Rabey in conversation, New York Appendix: Howard Barker: chronology and bibliography Index.*

## Chapter 7 : Video News - CNN

*Director-dramatist Howard Barker is a restlessly prolific, compulsively controversial and provocative multi-media artist. Beyond his internationally performed and acclaimed theatrical productions, and his award-winning theatre company The Wrestling School, he is also a poet, a painter whose work has.*

## Chapter 8 : Howard Barker's Art of Theatre : Sarah Goldingay :

*APPENDIX Howard Barker: chronology and further reading Dates are of first stagings, broadcasts or publications (not subsequent productions in the same medium).*

## Chapter 9 : Podcast: Howard Barker talks | Stage | The Guardian

*Director-dramatist Howard Barker is a restlessly prolific, compulsively controversial and provocative multi-media artist. Beyond his internationally performed and acclaimed theatrical productions, and his award-winning theatre company The Wrestling School, he is also a poet, a painter whose work has been exhibited internationally, and a philosophical essayist cognisant of the unique power of.*