



Barker: Plays Two (Oberon Modern Playwrights)

Howard Barker

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Includes the plays *The Castle*, *Gertrude - The Cry*, *Animals in Paradise* and *13 Objects*.

Howard Barker is one of the most significant and controversial dramatists of his time. His plays challenge, unsettle and expose. The plays in this volume examine collisions of culture, gender and creed at moments of turmoil, developing the tragic form Barker defines as Theatre of Catastrophe.

The Castle is set at the end of Crusades and describes the clashes that occur when returning soldiers bring an Arab architect home with them as a prisoner.

Barker's abiding interest in interrogating the great classics for their 'silences' is shown in *Gertrude - The Cry*, his re-writing of the Hamlet story. Scarcely examined in Shakespeare, the passion of Gertrude for Claudius is made the centre of this harrowing tragedy, casting new light on the personality of Hamlet himself.

Animals in Paradise was commissioned by the Swedish and Danish governments to celebrate their connection by bridge, a symbolic finish to centuries of antagonism. Barker's unexpected treatment of the theme provoked unrest on its first showing.

13 Objects movingly reveals the investment we make in inanimate things, their power to unsettle us, and how their talismanic qualities license new ways of seeing the world.

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