

## Sets and costumes for *Primo amore*, from the work of Samuel Beckett, by Carlo Quartucci, 1989

Music by Henning Christiansen, produced by La Zattera di Babele.

Performances: Rome, Teatro Ateneo, 9-21 January 1989.

“The scene, which is understood to be another dramaturgic landscape, rises up from a dialogue with a painter like Giulio Paolini, with whom an exchange has been under way for over fifteen years. The scene consists in a conversation, the outcome of a journey inside Paolini’s visual universe, and inside the words of Beckett and the music of Henning Christiansen. [...] In these last pieces written by Beckett space is understood to be a visionary place where anything can happen. Or where everything has already happened, and the characters (larvae) float along with their objects and their feelings.

I have often been able to narrate a theatrical piece by starting from a drawing. In this case it is a non-drawing: the set explodes as do Beckett’s words. It is an inventory of residual elements: what remains of a scene as compared with what remains of a textual writing. A canvas, the skeleton of a backdrop or of a stage wing, the scaffolding that is still laden with memories, but that has lost its function, without acquiring another one that would instead be out of place; this is all that is left, it is the same as what occurs after our every apocalypse. The objects are mute witnesses, and yet undeniable and univocal ones, of the end to come. The scene is the ghost of a scene, where doubles, specular figures of what once was, move about.

It is a ghost-scene, whose pieces have flown away and are now stuck in the scenic sky, broken up on the ground, some of them still intact, all of them mirror-like, thus amplifying the refraction of the actors’ bodies. [...]

The scene thrives by way of three distinct structural elements, marked by the respective dominant (which are actually “achromatic”, or colourless): a colour as black as the night dotted with lights, pins of light, unveiling preeminent details against the darkness [...]; an auroral, blinding whiteness to gather up, just like cinema, the whole, that is, the ensemble of characters, the chorus as it marks the pace of each of the pieces, but always from different angles, by variations and anxieties that hark back to Beckett’s own design; ash grey, indicating in the semi-darkness, in a sort of fog, the movement of the figures dragging themselves in the background, taking with them the debris left over from the scene. All of these drawings refer back to Paolini’s image.





The three distinct structural elements then flow together into the broken fragments of *Respiro*, accumulated in the movements of the scenic symphony, and now violently lit up: blinded and blinding” (C. Quartucci, 1988, in *La Zattera di Babele 1981-1991. 10 anni di parola, immagine, musica, teatro*, edited by La Zattera di Babele [Florence: Opera Universitaria dell’Università degli Studi di Palermo, 1991], pp. 137, 139).

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