

Bernard-Marie Koltès – Forms of Confrontation or Agonal Speech

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Abstract. The play of Bernard-Marie Koltès, *In the Solitude of the Cotton Fields*, is intriguing due to the unusual nature of the situation it describes: a contingent encounter, a *deal*, usually expected to last only one or two minutes, unfolds here for more than an hour and a half, throughout the dialogue between a Dealer and a Client. The characters are trapped in a logic of violence: the violence of the Dealer who urges the Client to reveal his desire; and the violence of the Client's speech, who says NO to the Dealer. In this rhetoric of refusal one might see the rejection of a certain way of being in the world: the primacy of the *face*, of the social mask, of the simulacrum, that comes at the detriment of the *visage* – the bare, the stripped, the vulnerable face – the sole vector of our authentic (because ethical) relationship to the Other.

Keywords: argumentative strategy, confrontation, ethos, face, visage.