

The Mark, the *Gestus*, and the Moment of Witnessing

ROB BAUM

A remembered piece of student theatre returns the writer to an examination of what was staged: a play centring on survival of the Shoah; the actor himself, a survivor; or an old man's self-discovery in the theatre. A shocking gestus in this production broke the boundaries of theatre and (while the fourth wall remained intact) transformed the audience into witnesses, and theatre into testimony. The article theorizes traumatic memory and its manifestations in the body, trauma's staging and the shape of narrative, and the difference between history, its performance and its mark.

In the context of ritual embodiments, ethnographic observations and cultural absences I have explored collective memory and pseudo-witnessing, traumatic performances and testimony in writings from the Shoah¹ and contemporary novels about that dread period. I have questioned in what ways memory is kept, and what ramifications memory has for the individual, as it seems to maintain a fascist claim upon the psyche. I have examined the use of collective memory as a means of creating and isolating identity and culture. I have explored the Holocaust memoir as a document simultaneously of the past and the present.² Departing from the personification and subject of traumatic memory, here my focus is on the shape testimony and witnessing assume in the body and in society, their cultural contexts and manifestations. I am particularly concerned with how the body performs *as* testimony, and the conduit (social, ethical) from testimonial body to witnessing body. While it might appear I am guided by Merleau-Ponty (whose philosophy of a lived experience or embodiment circumscribes much theatre scholarship),³ my version of the testifying body is one of *disembodiment*, of a body deconstructed by torture, pain and memory⁴ – in short, of actual bodies in the theatre, bodies which not only represent but also present testimony. In discussing the body as literally, indelibly marked, I invoke Derrida's sense of the 'remainder' which is also a 'reminder';⁵ that is, of a survivor as one who remains to remind, precisely because his body is still present and not consigned, with the many dead, to ash and metaphor.

In the novel *Eve's Tattoo*, for instance, when Eve decides to be 'reborn' at forty through acquisition of a Nazi *Ka-Tzetnick* (KZ) number,⁶ Eve discovers fundamental differences between the sacred dead and pornographic memory, between intelligibly mourning the Shoah and fetishizing its victims – between testimony and 'testimony'. Unwitting audiences 'read' Eve's body as she moves from dinner party to social extravaganza, and are thus unwittingly cast as witnesses to her performances. But unlike

those of the numbered dead, Eve's tattoo is only skin deep and she is able to escape 'Eva's' destiny, to 'unwrite' her experience of the Shoah. In the rupture between the 'writing' and the 'reading' of this mark, there is relevance to the disparity between testifying and witnessing. Victor Turner has spoken of a symbol as 'a blaze or landmark, something that connects the known with the unknown'.⁷ The tattoo connects Eve to that part of self already marked by a hatred the tattoo only symbolizes. At the end of her journey Eve will replace the tattoo with the knowledge of what it was, acknowledging how the mark testified through (perhaps despite) her own body, and how her performance of the tattoo marked her audiences, imbuing them with the residue, the resonance, of her testimony.

Bodies perform as containers and signs, serving to mark and enliven trauma and its memory, and their production.⁸ Where testimony is theorized apart from trauma (which, like a primary source, is inevitably quoted in the secondary version), the operations of testifying and witnessing have their own bodies and their own lives. Put another way, as one observes and hears testimony (in the ontological presence of one who testifies), the testimony is transferred, in this way constructing its own witness; this occurs with or without the volition of the observer. Thus trauma and its memory, this memory that issues from living bodies as if landscapes,⁹ becomes secondary to testimony and its action: witnessing. In that distance between testimony and witness (where the artefact of trauma may never actually venture) lies a chasm into which notions of faith, belief, recognition and transference tumble. But I have got ahead of myself. In theorizing this aporia between testimony and witness, I have (like the tattooed Eve) taken a journey. It begins with the memory of a performance, deliberates over the concept of *gestus*, and ends in recognition of testimony and its reception.

The mark

While riding a suburban train in Melbourne, I thought I saw Tali, a former student whose honours thesis included writing and performing a cabaret-style play about the Shoah. While conducting research for this project at Melbourne's Holocaust Museum, Tali met an aged survivor, Lazlo, conducting tours of the museum. Germany has created a special name for survivors who volunteer their experiences of the Shoah, or the Resistance, in order to educate others: they are called 'people of living testimony'. Before too much time had elapsed, Lazlo had insisted upon being part of the play Tali was writing. In the performance a brown upright piano dominated the small stage, its keys tinnily out of tune; the theatre, a black box, was kept purposefully dim as Tali spoke, sang and danced for most of the forty-five-minute performance.¹⁰ To enhance the atmosphere of a bistro, in which the audience were treated as Weimar partygoers, Tali spoke directly to the audience, inviting them to share her false gaiety. For Lazlo, this living testimonial, she had created a role through which he would tell a story from those terrible times. But the story he would tell would be true, his own, abstracted from his testimony to the Shoah Foundation. That is, in the body of the fiction there would be a 'perfect' truth, an unassailable reality. This presents, of course, a problem.

Theatre thrives on contradictions – the notion of appearing 'spontaneous', for example, in a medium for which one has liberally rehearsed, or the act of pretending to

be someone else, a shallow but rather accurate definition of character. When a female character speaks through the body of a male, the audience is expected to see a reversal of traditional gender prescriptions. When a dead person speaks through the body of a living actor, the audience is meant to accept the transgression of this final boundary: from classical times, ghosts have been a staple of the stage. For a character these negotiations are entirely possible, both because a character is not a person and because a character lives in the illusion of the theatre, a place of possibility by its nature. Theatre's success lies in its adherence to metaphor, its participation in a symbolic world, not in resemblances of reality with its problematic material transactions. The relationship between the human being and a character is a process of simplification, not complexity. In the 'shrunk' semiotic of the stage in which the human being is 'reduced to a *gestus* of his former self',¹¹ the transition from (real) man to (stage) object constitutes a radical gesture. The stage, that is, has no resemblance to 'bare life' in Agamben's sense of base human matter,¹² because it is always at once more and less – layered and yet architectural, more than human and never human at all.

Given this construction of theatre, any onstage device or appearance becomes a semiotic, a stage-thing rather than a real thing. This proves especially significant when considering what to place onstage, in the knowledge that its mere placement onstage reconstitutes it as more than itself, both a sign of itself and a sign of something else, something not onstage, possibly 'real' (and therefore impossible to show onstage), possibly not real (and therefore quite possible to integrate onstage, in the context of everything else that contributes to the theatrical event, which is illusion). But in appearing onstage, the 'real' instantly becomes, like every other stage-thing, illusory. Thus Lazlo himself, striding onto the stage, seems to waver a bit (not only because he is an old man, and tired); he seems to blur, become a stage-thing, a character such as the one Tali is in the act of creating through Lazlo's own memories;¹³ Lazlo is a rehearsal of himself, a demonstration or exhibition of living testimony. Through the symbolism projected upon him (apart from the symbol-artefact – the imprint I shall discuss), he has become symbolic, as if wearing the metaphor he will become. In this wise he is like a curation rather than testimony itself, a museum in which the viewer gazes upon the past as in a 'charnel house', eyeing the relic which still contains the 'life force' of the exhibited object,¹⁴ enjoying the event of the past in motion. And this is because he is *he*, yet he is onstage.

The moment

As I remember it, there was a decisive moment in the cabaret play when Lazlo bared his left arm. At this juncture, the *Ka-Tzetnick* tattoo was seen by the audience. I think of this moment as a sort of shout, like the sacrificial crises René Girard describes throughout *Violence and the Sacred*,¹⁵ in which symbol, meaning and manifestation come together. It was undoubtedly perceived as the most dramatic moment in Tali's performance. But it was actually an event of non-theatre. Up to this point, Tali's work had relied upon theatrical conventions – illusion, mimesis, character, fourth wall.¹⁶ This moment, however, destroyed the work of her own play, by taking the audience beyond theatre. This is also a theatre problem, one Friedrich Dürrenmatt addresses:

theater can never take the man and language in abstraction, for language is abstract and concrete at the same time, and because the stage-setting must indeed always depict something concrete, however abstractly it may still posture, if it wants to have a meaning; nevertheless there has been a return to the green curtain behind which the audience has to assume is the royal room. The fact was recalled that the place of the action is not the stage, however detailed and deceptive the stage-setting might be, but that it has to come into existence by means of the acting.¹⁷

We are accustomed to this convention, around at least as long as ancient Greek tragedy. The theatrical convention pre-dates the term and notion of 'theatre'. Conventions hold the theatre to being itself, they maintain the space of the stage *as* a stage and of the character *as* a character. We do not expect the departure of the visible, or the audible, the ruin of the very thing we are watching, until the curtain falls. Only when the actor steps forward from the curtain after the conclusion of the drama do we accept him as a person. This is when he dematerializes, along with the space of the stage, the setting becoming a picture painted onto a flat piece of canvas, joists showing, the absence of the real now visible, and agreeably so. The lights, the paint, the people, the speech, all have contributed to the design of a lie, the story we have seen. Commenting on the theatre's transformation of the spatial, Dürrenmatt notices how easily the spectator is relocated through dialogue:

A phrase, we are in Venice, a phrase, we are in the Tower. The spectator's imagination needs only a slight support. The stage-setting endeavours to hint at, to signify, to concentrate, not to describe. It has become transparent, dematerialized. However, the space of the action which the stage is meant to represent can also become dematerialized.¹⁸

Dürrenmatt suggests that the theatrical can also be undone.

I am discussing such a moment of ruin, of dematerialization, when the actor ceases to exist. Lazlo bares his arm. Suddenly it appears he is a dramatic fraud: he is no actor, but the real thing. He is a man in the theatre, where a moment before there was a character and an actor doggedly pretending to be someone else. The audience has suddenly remembered itself: we are in a theatre, being duped.¹⁹ We see everything for what it is. The illusion vanishes, *kaput*. The audience suddenly finds *itself* exposed – thrust out of a work of art and into history. This is the exposure Eugene Ionesco decries in 1955, noting that while his plays are known to be political, he himself is said to be apathetic.²⁰ We cannot have it both ways.

Even one of the most accepted, or acceptable, definitions of 'Holocaust theatre' (a play written by a Jew about the Shoah) is violated by this gesture. One could almost say that it stays within the sense of Shoah genre even as the performance radically and violently transforms from one category to another, from cabaret entertainment to survivor play.²¹ But this is not where the transformation stops. The survivor play, momentarily generated by the showing of the *Ka-Tzetnick*, is also destroyed, as the play crumbles around the character of the 'storyteller', who becomes the 'survivor' of the play, and then as suddenly a dramatic nonentity. It is the opposite of the phenomenon

described by Elaine Scarry, in which torture produces an absence, a disembodiment.²² Here the actor is re-embodied by testimony. But that is not why we come to the theatre.

According to Dürrenmatt, the stage is accepted as a shape, an abstraction.²³ In this moment, the moment of Lazlo's scar or its revelation, the stage is forced to be real; or rather, the stage remains an abstraction and the actor ceases to be an actor, as his life becomes real. So this character, which was always an abstraction (whether or not it was perceived as such), is shown to be a fake. Because if what this man is doing is not acting, but living – that is, he is merely reproducing his life for another to see – then the theatre as a space of illusion has dissolved. This is not what we expect of the theatre.²⁴ It is one of those signal moments in theatre when we suddenly recollect ourselves as individuals (as Shlovisky, Piscator and Brecht repeatedly ask us to do) and find ourselves staring collectively at a spectacle (which may be no more interesting than what is going on in our own lives). The action playing out before us is a spectacle, in other words, because we are watching it. (It is true that we are watching it, in large part, because it occupies the space of abstraction, but if we turn to speak with a neighbour the space does not disappear. It remains apparent and 'abstract-able', a shape for playing, regardless of whether anyone stands on or in it. This may be a long way of going about reaching what Shakespeare aptly addressed in a single line: 'Give me two boards and an empty space'.)

The unveiling of the tattoo is a signature moment in a Holocaust play, a political event reducing character and actor to bare life.²⁵ In the theatre it is a special kind of statement, not theatrical in the sense of playcraft but theatrical in the sense of the performative. It is, above all, spectacular, a moment of unmaking, unmasking, the scar becoming real, flesh gathering more substance than it really can have onstage. The performer steps forth as from behind a curtain, denouncing himself. It may be tantamount to the final moment in drag shows, when the male performer tears off his wig, revealing himself as a male (as the audience knew, but hoped to forget: the audience purchased this illusion). Suddenly one *sees* a male despite the dress, the heels, the long lashes. In the drag show there is a recognition that one can go no further after this moment, the stripping away of the last illusion; the revelation of gender ends the show. Even television and film abide by this most theatrical of conventions.²⁶

The moment of seeing the scar is also a defining one. The KZ tattoo is a marker for evil, theft, murder and power.²⁷ It invokes what Pierre Clastres has said of power, an active force and a presence, leaving a visible mark of its presence on the people it subsumes, something which marks their bodies, speaks through their bodies, and yet disinherits them from their bodies.²⁸ It is a symbol of humanity, but also inhumanity: the Nazi's modernist design of mass extermination. Critically, the testimony of the KZ mark reinscribes the performance as a memoir, and reconstitutes the audience as witnesses.²⁹

Another example of how the KZ mark is made to signify in the theatre can be found in *Arbeit macht frei vom Totland Europa*. In one room of the Israeli event, one of the principals is caught on film, tattooing the KZ number onto her arm in preparation for the performance. Rokem comments,

it is a real tattoo, just like those which can still be seen on the arms of the survivors from the death-camps . . . The inscription on her body constitutes the paradoxical dialectics

of life and death . . . But at the same time this is no doubt also a theatrical sign, not just temporary theatrical makeup, but a permanent inscription . . . for the rest of her life.³⁰

The assumption of such a mark (by a nonsurvivor) presents a complex problem, one I have written about elsewhere in connection with the aforementioned *Eve's Tattoo*.³¹ In an interesting difference, the fictitious Eve – unlike the ‘real’ Israeli actress – is tattooed with an actual KZ number, from a woman murdered in Auschwitz. Nonetheless, both performative gestures (fictive and ‘real’), as well as their performative artefacts (the tattoos), are what Plato would call an ‘imitation’.³² They are, moreover, disturbing imitations, ‘treatments’ (using Langer’s term) which call into question the original. For if a body may be so inscribed as a theatrical product, for an event *about* rather than *from* the Shoah, then might not the survivors also produce imitations, inscriptions assumed after the fact, and in memoriam? As Rokem continues, ‘By making this tattoo on her arm the actress Semadar Yaron-Ma’ayan is in a way undermining what has been considered a kind of ultimate form of testimony of the Shoah, appropriating the numbers as her own.’³³

The *Ka-Tzetnick* tattoo is a symbol placed upon a symbol, an imprint on an already imprinted surface, or a body being made to be itself as well as something else. But the *Ka-Tzetnick* number that only appears to be one, despite its painful making (and pained remembrance), does not bear witness, and is therefore only – *not* also – mimetic, a theatrical sign. (This does not mean that its presentation is any the less striking; however, it means something else.)

In the theatre, as in life, the revealing of the KZ tattoo is a show-stopper. In fact (to return to Tali’s play), I have little recollection of the theatrical performance after this point. I do remember that Lazlo looked grey, and shattered after this, as if confused by how he came to be in such a place as the theatre. I do not believe this was acting. I think that he, too, was affected and affronted by the witnessing of the scar. Well, of course, you might say, he had this mark all the time, he had worn it for years, it was a part of his body. Sometimes he would be conscious of it but sometimes not; he might look at it, for instance, without thinking about the *scar*, seeing only his arm while rubbing a mosquito bite, or cleaning a cat scratch, as accustomed to the dark blue numbers as another is to freckles. But in this moment Lazlo, too, would have looked at the scar, this testimony, as a witness, transformed doubly by the audience’s shock: *this testimony is mine*. And: this is I; *I witness it*. This *Ka-Tzetnick* shows where I was, shows *who* I was. Who I am. Or only: this shows who you think I am. Because in seeing this mark you cannot possibly see me. Clastres offers a similar notion of the body. Marked by power, by torture, the body ceases to be its own, becomes the mark of the other, the master. The body marked by trauma undergoes an operation to salvage its existence, in which it seems or feels disembodied; dis-embodiment produces the necessary distance for the body to continue its functioning as a thinking being.

It was almost as though Lazlo, too, were noticing the scar for the first time, and his soul shrank. Perhaps he really was an actor after all, replaying for the audience the seminal image of his own deconstruction at the hand of the Nazis. Or it could be that this moment, *gestus* and testimonial demonstrated the efficacy of witnessing for oneself:³⁴ of

developing an external auditor and observer, a part of the self which, in witnessing for oneself, also protects and cares for one's own psychological well-being. I realized then that Lazlo was ill, and that our frantic request for ethics approval (granted days before the showing) had failed to elucidate how critical Lazlo's appearance would be in this play, that Lazlo would himself be the *gestus*, Brecht's word for the central signifier that encapsulates the meaning of the work, epitomized by Mother Courage's 'silent scream'. Now I imagine Lazlo's adult daughter in the audience, desperately watching, willing away this moment, both for her father and for herself. A moment which he must surely have told her about, in order to prepare her – no, in order to prepare *himself* for *her* watching.

In that moment, the dead entered the theatre.

How is it that this moment of non-theatre, of living testimony, engenders a *gestus*? How is it that a moment of non-theatre can overtake a theatrical experience?³⁵ Perhaps, despite what Brecht told us, *gestus* is not theatre but a moment of metaphor: *gestus* is not scene but symbolism, not gesture but suggestion.³⁶ Is *gestus* tangible? The question brings us closer to the truth of this operation: *gestus* exists because we feel it; in the sensory recognition of an event, the *gestus* is born. In this regard at least, *gestus* is non-theatre. *Gestus* is testimony.

Testimony

Theatre vows to show how interesting life is, if done through illusion. That is, theatre does not show life as lived but life constructed to be lived in this space (the space of the stage and the space of the play, or time). The most genuine theatre thus does not attempt to demonstrate life but prefers to indicate it, to refer to it through the stage semiotics: these cheap ply walls constitute a picture of a house, but not a house; this table marks the place where furniture is meant to receive weight, not to provide appropriate or practical décor. Theatre pretends, attempts to open a window on life, but is locked in resemblance, like the window of Magritte that opens on a closed curtain. Each view is mediated; there is always something in the way of our simply seeing. Even the expectations we bring delay us from seeing what is there. The 'slice-of-life' drama of the stage lacks everything beyond the slice: the rich details of life, its mess and banality. Which is not to say that 'slice-of-life' is uninteresting – there is plenty of story, enough language, the right characters have come from backstage. But there is so little, comparatively, that we will learn. Offstage we collapse under a torment of information, news events, fashion codes, falling aeroplanes, rising investment rates, weight gain and hair loss; but onstage characters are protected by their fictitiousness: we only see and hear that which has or will have relevance to the action. Everything else falls out of the script, becoming subtext, which onstage belongs to actors, not characters, to give them a purpose for all the lying they do. There is a great comfort, by the way, in the knowledge – developed over the centuries during which theatre built its conventions – that the actors in a theatre will not actually beat, rape or kill each other, but will only seem to, demonstrating, in a fight at least, how very difficult it is to not hurt someone else while claiming to do so.

Life is largely unrehearsed, and so its passage does not suit the stage, where actors must collaborate to fight, make up, or simply have a conversation. Outside the theatre

there is no surety that a conversation will occur, but in the theatre the character will say something, make response even if not germane, because the convention is such that onstage people can hear each other, and use dialogue to indicate their relationship. Even Samuel Beckett, who is said to have written that 'speech is a desecration of silence', strived towards absolute silence (harrowed silence, his particular goad or genius), but again and again produced plays in which characters use language to communicate; they do not dance, and often do not move, but language encases them like a body, a shell, forcing them to speak through and past it.

The best, truest and most compelling thing about theatre – that resemblance to life – is also its downfall. When faced with life dramas, particularly in this century of immediate vision and revision, theatre takes a back seat. Theatre is pledged to remind the audience of reality, and must not, *dast not* (as Arthur Williams might have said) compete with what is real, particularly testimony or its witnessing, which intrinsically recalls a real body, or even a body of trauma.

The moment of *gestus* is, then, an act of insertion, a glimpse behind the curtain and (to use Barthes's analogy) into the parting.³⁷ This theatre cannot contain: people going about their daily tasks unwatched, as if in the dark. The effect of framing them (in a theatrical context), of placing them onstage, ineradicably alters the actions, turns them to events, beats, scenes. It does not show us the ordinary but makes the ordinary a spectacle. To see Lazlo's arm outside the performance picture is sadly ordinary for those of us who have grown up in the shadow of those numbers. For those audience members who have not already witnessed this fascist engraving it is, sadly, spectacle. And in the context of the theatre space, it is both – a veritable 'slice of life' in a milieu that claims to represent life in its 'naturalness' (the god of Naturalism) and a spectacle within a spectacle. But the *gestus*, this aporia between real and not-real, in this case makes the ordinary testimony, which is only spectacular because of its context of theatre. In itself, testimony is simply another telling, sometimes horrible and sometimes comic. Not all testimony derives from trauma; testimony arises from the concomitant, simultaneous need to *tell the story* and to *be heard*. That's all. The presence of the witness is that which grants testimony its power. The hearing of the story is critically important, the moment of communication, translation and transubstantiation.

Writing of the impossibility of being (together) as 'community', in which the experience of birth and death are shared (yet individual), Maurice Blanchot says that

what was most personal could not be kept as the secret of one person alone, as it *broke the boundaries of the person* and demanded to be shared, better, to affirm itself as the very act of sharing. This sharing refers back to the community and is exposed in it; it can be theorized there – that is the risk it runs – becoming a truth or an object that could be owned while the community . . . maintains itself only as the place – the non-place – where nothing is owned, its secret being that it has no secret, working only at the unworking that traverses even writing, or that, in every public or private exchange of words, makes the final silence resound, the silence where, however, it is never certain that everything comes, finally, to an end.³⁸

Western jurisprudence confuses the concepts of testimony and memory, accepting the recitation of (what is presumed to be) memory as testimony. As Judaic religious law, or *halakhah*, is the basis of contemporary law in the West, study of the root concepts in Hebrew is useful. The ancient language demonstrates the gulf between ‘testimony’ (in Hebrew *edut*) and ‘memory’ (*zichron*), with which it shares no linguistic connection. And the word for ‘testimony’ has an immediate relationship to the person or ‘witness’ (in Hebrew *ed*). In English, another instructive difference occurs in the verbs used to describe the actions: one ‘gives’ testimony, but ‘bears’ witness. The weight of the testimony lies with the witness as the one who receives. In this sense, testimony is always exerting itself to the limits, straining against the death of the body or the death of memory (which societies refuse to elide); the secret is unworking itself from the body like a mark that cannot remain hidden, struggling to be admitted. The end of testimony is to be witnessed, and this moment of witnessing does not permit an ending.

The moment of witnessing has been largely lost to audiences, just as testimony has been turned to public advantage, pay-for-view. The theatre is not, or is no longer, a place for witnessing. (I believe that it had this function in ancient Greece, and that the playwrights were sensible about the difference between being spectators and being witnesses, and had some of each observance in their tragedies.) But witnessing has become accidental, chance bringing testimony and witness together, as when a young woman swaggers down the corridor of this train on which I am a passenger, climbs onto the woman who has been yelling epithets at her, and gives her a proper pummelling – then hands back to its unfortunate owner a shank of the blonde hair she has just torn out by the roots, the victor handing over an unwanted trophy. I have happened along to witness this spectacle. The second woman is hauled off the train screaming, clutching both her tortured scalp and the blonde remnants, and taken to give testimony (the substitution of a legal requirement for a publicly performed testimony).³⁹ And I ride on, a vision of the mark before me, a witness for whom there is no place in this already mediated system. The landscape rides along beside me, slower than I, a memory losing ground in this version of a race. I can still see the mark, its testimony torn decisively from the body. My moment of witnessing may not even be known to the woman who gave this public declamation, embroiled as she was in the spectacle of her own life. I carry it anyway.

NOTES

- 1 ‘Shoah’ is the Hebrew term for what is commonly called the ‘Holocaust’.
- 2 See especially Rob Baum, ‘Forgetting Women: The Half Li(f)e of Fascist Memory’, *Utah Foreign Language Review*, 10, 1 (March 2000), pp. 27–43; and *idem*, “And Thou Shalt Bind Them as a Sign upon Thy Hand”: *Eve’s Tattoo* and the Holocaust Consumer’, *Shofar* (forthcoming, 2010).
- 3 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (London: Routledge, 1962).
- 4 This body is more akin to (but not synonymous with) Stanton Garner’s notion of the ‘dys-appearance’ in the theatre. See Stanton Garner, *Bodied Spaces: Phenomenology and Performance in Contemporary Drama* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994).
- 5 Jacques Derrida, *Schibboleth: pour Paul Celan* (Paris: Galilée, 1986).
- 6 Emily Prager, *Eve’s Tattoo* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991).
- 7 Victor Turner, *Forest of Symbols* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970), p. 48.

- 8 Not coincidentally, in my work as a movement practitioner and dance therapist, body–mind is
 inseparable, and not the philosophical and political duality proposed by most body discourse.
- 9 Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), p. 26.
- 10 The student’s name has been changed and performance details omitted to protect the privacy of the
 survivor.
- 11 Bert O. States, *The Pleasure of the Play* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), p. 145.
- 12 See Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen
 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).
- 13 Compare John N. Kotre’s journey through memory and its operating symbols in *White Gloves: How We
 Create Ourselves through Memory* (New York: Free Press, 1995).
- 14 Jane Tompkins, ‘At the Buffalo Bill Museum – June 1988’, *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 89, 3 (1992), pp. 525–
 45.
- 15 René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. Patrick Gregory (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University
 Press, 1977).
- 16 I say she incorporated a fourth wall because even though she used direct address, she did not really
 want the audience to respond verbally or physically to the performance; that is, to interrupt her in her
 performance or to share the space of the performing survivor.
- 17 Friedrich Dürrenmatt, *Writings on Theatre and Drama*, trans. H. M. Waidson (London: Johnathan
 Cape, 1976), p. 69.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Compare Anne Ubersfeld’s discussion of the spectator’s role in ‘The Pleasure of the Spectator’, *L’École
 du spectateur*, trans. Pierre Bouillaguet and Charles Jose (Paris: Editions Sociales, 1981).
- 20 Eugene Ionesco, ‘Théâtre et anti-théâtre’, *Cahiers des saisons*, 2 (October 1955), pp. 149–51.
- 21 This entire discussion of Tali’s play and its transformations of genre and reception assumes that the
 context of the university, with its presumed educational biases, is considered a part of the
 genre.
- 22 Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University
 Press, 1985). See also Sue Grand, ‘Unsexed and Ungendered Bodies: The Violated Self’, *Studies in
 Gender and Sexuality*, 4, 4 (2003), pp. 313–41.
- 23 Dürrenmatt, *Writings on Theatre and Drama*, p. 69.
- 24 Although it may be what we now expect of performance art. But in the latter case it also generally, or
 often, begins as performance art, so that we are not watching theatre, which becomes performance art;
 within its choices or limitations the genre is (generally speaking) consistent.
- 25 See also Rob Baum, ‘Deconstruction of Jewish Identity in the Third Reich: *Nazisprache und Geopolitik*’,
National Identities, 2 (June 2006), pp. 95–112.
- 26 Compare the filmic roles of John Davidson in *The Performer*, or Hugo Weaving in *Priscilla, Queen of the
 Desert*.
- 27 It may also be a marker for a perverse kind of luck – its current bearer survived, after all. Compare
 Rokem’s discussion of the Nazi uniform as an ‘unperformable’ or impermissible stage symbol in
 Yehoshua Sobol’s original version (1984) of *Ghetto*; see Freddie Rokem, *Performing History: Theatrical
 Representations of the Past in Contemporary Theatre* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2000),
 pp. 38–56.
- 28 Pierre Clastres, *La Société contre l’état, recherches d’anthropologie politique* (Paris: Minuit, 1974).
- 29 Rokem, *Performing History*, also argues that Israeli performances about the Shoah invariably situate
 local, current politics alongside memories of the Shoah, and therefore confront the history of Jewish
 persecution alongside the currency of Palestinian discrimination; the Israeli is forced to witness as
 victim and (potentially) oppressor; see pp. 56–76.
- 30 Rokem, *Performing History*, p. 69.
- 31 For a richer illustration see my article “‘And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thy hand’”.

- 32 Langer notes that an imitation is ‘never a *copy* in the ordinary sense [but] an unbiased rendering . . . the “simplified or even projected version” . . . ; the imitation of objects with a difference is what we call a *treatment* . . .’. Suzanne K. Langer, *Problems of Art* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1957), pp. 95–7.
- 33 Rokem, *Performing History*, p. 69.
- 34 Janet Adler, ‘Who Is the Witness?’, *Contact Quarterly*, 12, 1 (Winter 1987), pp. 20–9.
- 35 Alternatively, we could consider such an unmaking as ‘performance’, a genre inside and outside of theatre; see, for instance, Nick Kaye, *Postmodernism and Performance* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1994); or Nicholas Ambercrombie, *Audiences: A Social Theory of Performance and Imagination* (London: Sage, 1998). But for discussion of Tali’s work, which was intended as a piece of theatre, I prefer to remain within the bounds of dramatic theory.
- 36 *Gestus* seems to be used in a visual sense; I propose that *gestus* is also auditory. Many death camp survivors cannot to this day tolerate the music of Richard Wagner, or even Richard Strauss, because of their memories of being made to march to it, or of being beaten to it. The *gestus* is an encapsulating event that in turn produces an audience effect. The horn blasts of the *Valkyries*, by signifying Wagner’s opus (let alone his politics), may plunge the hearer helplessly into the wartime past. A replaying of the music that did not consciously include an opportunity to address the negative feelings that arise from hearing the music could reinforce the original effect.
- 37 Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1973).
- 38 Maurice Blanchot, *The Unavowable Community*, trans. Pierre Joris (New York: Station Hill Press, 1988), pp. 19–20, my emphasis.
- 39 No witness is desired, presumably because of the onboard video camcorder, which stands in for the one who receives.

ROB BAUM (rob.baum@uct.ac.za), since completing an independent postdoctorate on gender, gesture and ritual in the Middle East, has lived, worked and taught internationally. Bringing together her passion for interdisciplinary research, community bridging, arts activism and African dance theatre, Rob recently assumed directorship of the new Gordon Institute for Performing and Creative Arts at University of Cape Town, South Africa. The author of a feminist phenomenology of theatre (*Female Absence: Women, Theatre and Other Metaphors*); of articles on cultural trauma, critical race theory and gender studies; and of award-winning plays and poetry, Rob is completing a manuscript on Jewish identity and the Shoah. She has performed in dance, theatre, movement improvisation and circus, directed theatre for people with mixed disabilities, and worked as a professional dance/movement therapist in diverse clinical populations.