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How does a director create witnesses in the theatre? What aesthetic and storytelling tools best cultivate an experience where spectators feel emotionally and ethically transformed into the role of a witness? These were the questions that dominated my research during my MFA studies in directing at Northwestern University, and my goal was to formulate a general approach to witnessing that other directors might be able to utilize. The challenge was that while theories about what it means to be a witness in the theatre are becoming more prevalent, they are also more diverse and oppositional. One need only read Caroline Wake's "The Accident and the Account" in order to get a sense of the breadth of this theoretical terrain. Wake surveys witnessing theories that she divides into several overlapping categories, insinuating how difficult it is to know if and how practitioners can actively create a specific condition of witnessing in the theatre. No matter which definition of witnessing that other directors chose, could I posit some core questions that could aid them in articulating a practicable approach to witnessing?

The questions I found useful in my own work are rooted in creating and maintaining dissonance for my viewers. Theories on witnessing largely hinge on how a spectator is positioned between two modes of perception, which Dwight Conquergood describes as being "above the object of inquiry" and "in the thick of things" (146). He uses these phrases to describe forms of knowledge. The former allows one to learn through "empirical observation and critical analysis from a distanced perspective"; this is the privileged form of knowledge in Western cultures, as it is "rooted in paradigm" and suggests that one can archive, categorize, and clearly utilize all information (146). The latter mode refers to "knowing that is grounded in active, intimate, hands-on participation and personal connection"; it positions the knower on the "ground level," where nuanced and unspeakable truths can be articulated (ibid.).

Conquergood advocates collapsing the binaries between these modes, and asserts that the field of performance studies "is uniquely suited for the challenge of braiding together disparate and stratified ways of knowing" (152). I believe that theatre can likewise be a space where forms of knowing can commingle, deepening our personal understandings and promoting "activism, outreach, [and] connection to community" (ibid.).[1] And in particular, Conquergood's modes readily lend themselves to witnessing theory. Being "in the thick of things" allows spectators to (vicariously or vividly) encounter traumatic events, which are at the heart of most theories of witnessing. Maintaining a "distanced perspective" provides an opportunity for spectators to think critically about how trauma relates to existing sociopolitical paradigms. Somewhere in the tension between these positions exists a place where witnessing can occur.

Many scholars seem to agree with this notion. In "The Accident and the Account," Wake classifies most theories of witnessing as being about *primary witnessing* or *secondary witnessing*. Theories of primary witnessing place spectators "in the thick of things" by positioning them as either the victim, perpetrator, or bystander present at a traumatic event (5), giving them intimate knowledge of unspeakable truths. But scholars of primary witnessing likewise see the value of "critical analysis from a distanced perspective." Tim Etchells in particular studies productions that "demand repeat-

edly of those watching 'be here, be here, be here'" (18). But he prefers this self-presence to result in primary witnesses "feel[ing] the weight of things and one's own place in them" (17), an act that demands critical distance. Conversely, theories of secondary witnessing, proposed by Diana Taylor and Emma Govan, keep spectators "above the object of inquiry" by distancing them spatially or temporally from the traumatic event and prioritizing self-reflection (Wake 7–8).[2] But Taylor also defines *witnessing* as an "involved" and "caring" form of spectatorship (1997, 25), and Govan states that witnesses must be "actively engaged with the material" (58). This suggests that to achieve the status of witness, it is not enough to observe; emotional proximity must be a part of the alchemical equation: "an epistemological point of departure and return" (Conquergood 149).

Much of my research centers on how a director actively uses these modes of "in" and "above" within a performance to induce witnessing. I attempted to apply these ideas through my MFA thesis production of *Thou Proud Dream*, a site-specific, promenade adaptation of Shakespeare's *Henry V* that I conceived and Jenni Lamb wrote. The play blends Shakespeare's story with that of a contemporary Marine veteran in order to explore the ethics and necessity of military rhetoric, and ponder its consequences on recent veterans' reintegration processes. As I sought to place my spectators in and above the play's action I grappled with several core questions: How does a director's personal definition of witnessing determine how he or she prioritizes these modes? How does a director invite spectators to engage in these viewing positions? How do these modes of perception interact during a performance, and to what ultimate purpose? And could any of this be done without resorting to didacticism or blatant manipulation, acts that would destroy a true possibility of witnessing occurring? In this essay I try to dissect some of the more confounding moments I experienced in the hopes that other directors can continue to search for practicable means of creating witnesses.

Defining Witnessing

Before engaging with these questions, I must define *witnessing* for myself. My definition synthesizes the positions of "in" and "above" and attempts to straddle Wake's categories of primary and secondary witnessing. A witness, in my terms, feels embedded in the thick of a traumatic event onstage, but simultaneously retains some ability to stay above the object of inquiry and remember their place outside the story.[3] This dissonant viewing experience theoretically allows for two things to happen. First, by acknowledging their subject position, the witness avoids over-identification, which Wendy Hesford calls "an unstable rhetorical stance [that] can function as alibi for lack of action" (105). Identification can also lead to the unethical position of the "false witness": "someone who takes up a subject position which does not belong to them" (Wake 9).[4] Second, by weighing their experience against their presuppositions, the witness can encounter a form of trauma that, in the words of Dominick LaCapra, "upsets expectations and unsettles one's very understanding of existing contexts" (2004, 117). This experience can potentially inspire spectators to "work through" the traumatic material. LaCapra calls "working through" not a "total redemption of the past," but rather an attempt to change the social, political, and economic forces that cause trauma (119). The witness feels a responsibility to reshape their perspective and alter their behavior to prevent further trauma and create a better future.[5]

My definition is not novel in witness theory. In *Performing History*, Freddie Rokem studies Shoah performances where spectators exist both "inside" and "outside" the "fictional frame" (37), and also elucidates moments in which spectators move between primary and secondary modes of witnessing (66). Erika Fischer-Lichte dissects a similar dynamic in Marina Abramović's *Lips of Thomas*. Abramović's self-flagellation so troubled spectators that they chose to intervene in her performance, creating "a common situation of here and now, transforming everyone present into co-subjects" much in the same way I am describing. By stepping into the action and causing it to stop, Fischer-Lichte suggests that spectators entered an "oscillatory" rather than "dichotomous" relationship with the

performance, being at times the subject and other times the object (17). But whereas Fischer-Lichte is articulating an aesthetics of shared creation, my task as a director seems to be to articulate how such oscillation can specifically inspire spectators to "work through" the traumatic material presented to them by reflecting on their personal, social, and political behavior.[6]

Witnessing in *Thou Proud Dream*

A definition of witnessing so rooted in oscillation and dissonance posed many practical challenges, and these became apparent when I tried to cultivate such a viewing experience in my production of *Thou Proud Dream*. I directed the play in June 2014 in a roving promenade production at the Canal Shores Community Golf Course in Evanston, Illinois. The site also serendipitously housed the local American Legion (AL), a veterans advocacy organization dedicated (in part) "to preserv[ing] the memories and incidents of our associations in the Great Wars," as it says in the preamble to its constitution. Lamb and I interviewed a dozen recent veterans and conducted research into military rhetoric and post-traumatic stress disorder. From this research we created the original story of Leroy DuPrey, a recently retired marine lieutenant struggling to find meaning in his traumatic memories of serving in the northern Iraqi city of Kirkuk. We combined Leroy's story with passages from *Henry V*, Shakespeare's epic tale of Henry's invasion of France and ultimate victory at the Battle of Agincourt during the Hundred Years War. Leroy's storyline at times mirrored, and at other times juxtaposed, the play's beautiful language on camaraderie and sacrifice.

Leroy enters the play trying to avoid his homecoming party, where his family expects a rousing speech about his recent deployment. His wife, Alicia, hopes the speech will allow them to start a new chapter in their lives. But instead Leroy is haunted by the ghosts of John and Bashir, two soldiers who he saw killed by an improvised explosive device. Throughout the play, whenever a noise or action triggers Leroy's post-traumatic stress, John and Bashir drag him into his jumble of memories from the incident.

In order to overcome these memories and begin to heal psychologically, Leroy asks the audience to help him imagine a romanticized version of *Henry V*. He presents events from the first, third, and fourth acts of Shakespeare's play, focusing specifically on when Henry's powerful rhetoric changes the course of events. Leroy acts as the play's Chorus character, working on the audience's "imaginary forces" (*Henry V* I.0.18) to conjure each scene in turn, hoping to discover the language to honor his own combat experiences. The play moves spectators from the AL's patio to an adjacent, dingy maintenance yard, and finally to the golf course's first fairway as the various storylines interweave and grow more chaotic. It culminates in the famous scene at Agincourt in which Henry delivers the St. Crispin's Day speech, asking his men to stand together in exchange for eternal glory. Inspired by Henry's stirring language, Leroy finally faces his memories and tries to whitewash them with his own positive interpretation. This attempts fails and, re-traumatized by his memories, Leroy ends the play by admitting to Alicia that his deployment was meaningless (fig. 1).

My goal in creating *Thou Proud Dream* was to have spectators simultaneously empathize with Leroy's struggle to make sense of his memories, and to critically consider how stories about war shape our national history. I hoped my viewers would work through their contradictory thoughts and feelings to make their own choice about how best to memorialize our recent wars. But how could I ethically create such an experience? Fischer-Lichte writes, in *The Transformative Power of Performance*, about the "continuous feedback loop" that exists between viewers and performers, giving each live performance its own unique energy. A director's job, she says, is to frame "the conditions for perception created in a performance" that shape the loop's dynamic (60).

This shaping is immensely complex due to the variability of audiences, and these complexities only seem to multiply when trying to induce witnessing. Acknowledging the feedback loop

Fig. 1. St. Crispin's Day speech. King Henry V addresses the circle of spectators and performers in *Thou Proud Dream*. (Photo: Shawn Ketchum Johnson.)

exposes one of the critical questions of witnessing theory: Can witnessing be planned? Here, there is a clear scholarly divide. Wake shows how theories of secondary witnessing acknowledge that "one can intentionally become a witness by consciously deciding to listen to another witness" (15). This act of choice carries significant weight, as the listener/viewer legitimizes the giving of testimony. In her study of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Catherine Cole suggests that the listening public, not the judges and officials in charge of the tribunals, were the true audience to whom testifiers spoke (174). South African director Yael Farber, who specializes in testimonial theatre, echoes Cole's ideas: "Without a listener," he says, the sufferer of trauma is "dislocated from—yet deeply shaped by—[their] own story" (24). The working-through of trauma, in this case, requires that spectators take up a certain position as a receiving subject. Maike Bleeker's work on visuality supports this claim, suggesting that "the positioning of the audience is part and parcel of the performance taking place" (29). The act of inviting spectators into a theatrical work consummates the work's existence, and thus it is vital to the act of witnessing that spectators understand the role they are adopting; in Taylor's language, to "accept the dangers and responsibilities of seeing and of acting on what one has seen" (2008, 294). In my framework this action is confronting one's potential complicity in the traumatic events being viewed.

But Wake also states that in the case of primary witnessing, "we cannot plan to be primary witnesses, that it happens accidentally" (15). Any sort of rehearsed "accident" presents critical ethical dilemmas. Can a director truly invite spectators to traumatize themselves? If so, how can a director encourage them to stand in "the thick of things" so that they might become exposed to images, actions, or ideas that they are not prepared to face?

Both my personal definition of *witnessing* and the very structure of *Thou Proud Dream* required me to wrestle with these contradictions. My definition, falling between primary and secondary witnessing, requires spectators to actively participate, yet remain unmoored on a personal level, to "accept the dangers and responsibility of seeing," but ultimately become mired in the story and see something unsettling. Likewise, *Thou Proud Dream* placed spectators both as willing witnesses to Leroy's retelling of *Henry V,* but unsuspecting witnesses of Leroy's psychic trauma. How could I allow my spectators to engage with the work from "above," even as I worked to "drag [them] closer—too close—in order to become a primary witness" (Wake 11)?

The Audience Contract

I had to frame a kind of contract with my viewers in which they explicitly knew their place "above" the action and implicitly knew their place "in" it. Shakespeare's heavy use of direct address, delivered by the Chorus in *Henry V* and by Leroy in *Thou Proud Dream*, provided a useful tool for

navigating this explicit/implicit formulation. The opening Chorus speech immediately established subject positions for both Leroy and the spectators: Leroy was the "cypher to this great account" of Henry's triumphs, and the spectators were those whose "imaginary forces" would allow Henry to become embodied. By establishing the spectators as co-creators I could potentially simultaneously promote both viewing positions: on the one hand, spectators could understand that they were present to hear and legitimize an account of *Henry V*, placing them at a distance; and on the other, by choosing to become co-creators they could enter into an intimate relationship with Leroy and possibly establish the proximity necessary to give his ultimate re-traumatization emotional value.

My first test audience did not respond well to the play, and the problem stemmed largely from this audience contract being unclear. When I asked my advisors why they were struggling to connect with the action, they admitted that intellectually they understood the project, but had a hard time relating to Leroy. Specifically, the advisors pointed to the opening scene of the play when Leroy emerged from the AL and delivered the first Chorus speech. They had no sense of Leroy's post-traumatic stress and therefore did not understand why it was important to follow him. Why did he need to talk with the spectators at this moment? What was at stake for him? Without this information my advisors comprehended their role as witnesses of Leroy's storytelling, but there was no possibility of them becoming witnesses of his eventual re-traumatization.

I decided to restage this scene to better communicate Leroy's struggle with his trauma. When he entered, he burst out of the AL and fumbled for a cigarette. He was followed by John and Bashir, the two ghosts who would shadow his every move. Seeing these specters, Leroy stepped away, pulled a worn copy of *Henry V* out of his jacket pocket, and began to plead with viewers to help him "invocate" the ghost of King Henry. This began to suggest that Leroy urgently needed the audience's help in order to overcome his trauma. Once I completed this reworking of the opening, I found I had to invest Leroy's interactions with spectators with this visceral need to overcome his traumatic memories. I hoped a clearer motivation would allow spectators to better trust and invest in their protagonist, and thus become invested in his emotional journey.

Another element of the opening sequence clarified my viewing contract with the audience, and specifically helped formulate the "above" viewing position. My two ghosts, John and Bashir, took up a position on the fringes of the action and watched Leroy closely as he summoned King Henry. They became witnesses to Leroy's account, observing him as he interacted with the fantasy world of *Henry V*. Henry and the other Shakespearean characters could not see or hear them; John and Bashir existed in a space between the spectators and what they were there to see. By occupying this liminal space and creating a layered image—watching Leroy watch Henry—John and Bashir drew attention to the spectators' position outside of the unfolding story. Even as Leroy's urgent requests drew spectators closer to the action, John and Bashir implicitly promoted distance.

In developing my viewing contract for *Thou Proud Dream* I discovered another conundrum: Was I required to prioritize one mode of perception over the other to successfully promote witnessing? Since my definition of *witnessing* tried to frame "in" and "above" as equal, could I balance the two modes of perception to create the dissonance I sought? Or did one mode need to be established as dominant, and the other act as an antagonist?

In the introduction to her collection of testimonial plays, *Theatre as Witness*, Farber stresses the importance of giving spectators intimate contact with a subject. She argues for rooting theatrical testimony in the "detail that an audience will recognize in their own lives" (20), suggesting that through these details "the barriers we construct to differentiate ourselves from one another" collapse, and spectators can discover a common humanity with those onstage (21). Since I was more accustomed to working on this human detail I devoted myself to exploring ways of cultivating distance in order to craft a balanced viewing perspective. Thus as I began the rehearsal process my instinct was to focus my energy on placing spectators "above" the action.

But this proved problematic. As mentioned above, my spectators remained distant from Leroy due to a lack of details. As I worked to clarify my viewing contract I also took steps with my actor to provide spectators with more access to Leroy's emotions. Lamb also wrote additional scenes exploring Leroy's marriage to Alicia, making their relationship more concrete and worthy of investment.

As I managed these early struggles I started to ponder whether being "above" the action only had meaning when trauma was applied to the situation. This too was an over-simplification. As I stated before, many forms of secondary witnessing prioritize distance over empathy, thus disproving this very notion. Instead, my conundrum seemed to emphasize the importance of each director having a clear definition of *witnessing*. While my definition excited me because of its complexity, it also required careful consideration and balance. For other directors, knowing whether one mode predominates in one's thinking can start to clarify the tools at one's disposal.

Working Towards the "Inverted V-effekt"

After I clarified my early storytelling and started to establish the potential for dual positioning, I had to consider my ultimate objective. I had established spectators above the story through the use of direct address and the spatial positioning of John and Bashir. Leroy, via his vulnerability and need from the audience, had started to pull spectators into the action. What then needed to happen, narratively and experientially, to induce witnessing and inspire a conversation among spectators on war and memory?

What I hoped to craft was what Rose Parekh-Gaihede calls the "inverted V-effekt." She uses the term in relation to performances she attended by Argentina's El Periférico de Objetos and Germany's Wunderland to describe "moments where an appeal to empathy is used to interrupt an established aesthetic distance" in order to deepen the spectator's thought process on their own responsibilities (177). In each case the director established distance as the prominent mode of reception. Then a punctuated moment in the action "stripped" Parekh-Gaihede "of [her] shield of distance and cold, analytical observation" and created "a kind of sharp empathic experience" (187). I wanted to punctuate my production with a similar moment of perceptual reversal, one where spectators encountered the material in a new and surprising way.

But rather than working from a distance/empathy binary, I worked from a dissonance/harmony one. My moment of reversal would be one of utter simplicity and clarity. To give this moment its full weight it became clear that I had to find ways to keep dynamically oscillating spectators between the two viewing positions throughout the majority of the performance. What tools of staging and characterization could I use to continue to promote each position? And, as always, how could I do all this while respecting the "feedback loop" and allowing spectators to own their individual experiences?

My initial intention was to use the inherent frames of the play's structure to try and accomplish this fluctuation. In the opening scene Leroy established that spectators were both watching and creating a vision of *Henry V*. Each time Leroy presented the audience with a new scene in a new location he had to set up a frame through which the audience viewed it. In order to induce witnessing, I wanted to create what Hans-Thies Lehmann calls a "multiplication of frames" (290), by which spectators could start to question the representations they were seeing.

I began this multiplication when we transitioned from the play's starting place on the patio to the neighboring maintenance yard. Leroy used the Chorus's speech from the top of act 3 of *Henry V* to establish the scene before his viewers as the breach in the walls of Harfleur. But as Henry began rallying his troops Alicia appeared behind the spectators, and the focus suddenly shifted to her. Throughout the next twenty minutes, action occurred on all sides of the spectators, creating multiple viewing perspectives instead of the original single frame. This called into question the perspective

inherent in any war narrative. By exposing more material beyond the frame, I hoped to expose how, in Bleeker's terms, "our senses are cultured to perceive certain privileged modes of representation as more natural, real, objective, or convincing than others" (13). I wanted my spectators to question these privileged forms of representations by the end of the play (fig. 2).

By multiplying these frames into a liminal space, viewers suddenly had to look past or even directly at other spectators. I hoped that this would cause spectators to recognize one another as subjects capable of being seen. Taylor sees power in this recognition. She has investigated the complexities of witnessing through lengthy dissections of Argentine playwright Griselda Gambaro's play *Information for Foreigners.* In particular she applauds the way in which Gambaro "constantly call[s] attention to the fact that the spectators" of her plays "are looking"; for her "the looking, not the violence" is central because it forces spectators "to relinquish [their] comforting assumptions about violence, [their] claims to deniability, innocence, and quietism" (1992, 170). Spectators have to face the fact that they "have the capacity for choice and for action that the [onstage] victim does not" (1996, 216). I hoped that by seeing one another my spectators would confront an "ethical ambiguity" that would cause them "to be self-consciously present at the event" (Wake 6) and have to reconsider their acceptance of Bleeker's "privileged representations."

These framing devices were useful and important, but my reworking of the opening revealed that I had other tools of staging and characterization at my disposal to cultivate dissonance. And to my surprise I found that each tool held a paradox, simultaneously solidifying and undermining each viewing position. Leroy himself proved a particular puzzle. To give viewers further emotional access to Leroy, I pushed my actor to use each of his interactions with Alicia to demonstrate the depths of his love. But the play's conflict hinges on the fact that Leroy is too traumatized to effectively communicate with her. Time and again he lashes out at her for want of a better means of expressing himself. When they saw a later run my advisors observed that the more they understood Leroy's psychic fragility and emotional illiteracy, the less reliable he became as a narrator, complicating his own storytelling. Thus a tool that I intended for clarifying one aspect of the story ultimately made the entire piece more complex.

The same paradox started to appear in my formulation of John and Bashir. In the opening sequence they established a liminal space between the spectators and the *Henry V* fantasy, which helped solidify the "above" position. This spatial positioning actually allowed me to experiment with John and Bashir as a kind of Joker pair in the play. Augusto Boal first formulated the idea of the Joker as "a contemporary and neighbor of the spectator" who existed to "make the performance develop on two different and complementary levels: that of the fable (which can use all the conventional imaginative resources of the theater), and that of the 'lecture,' in which the 'Joker' becomes an exegete" (175). Mady Schutzman theorizes that the joking of the Joker opens up "a potential place

Fig. 2. King Henry V in the foreground of the maintenance yard and Leroy and Alicia in the background, with the audience between them in *Thou Proud Dream*. (Photo: Shawn Ketchum Johnson.)

of dissent": "In [watching the Joker] refusing the predictability of 'the point,'" or what the official message is intended to be, she suggests that "we wonder what is the point anyway? Is it deserving of our trust? How did it come to be taken as truth? Who benefits from complicity with it?" (135). As I further positioned John and Bashir adjacent to the audience, I asked Lamb to provide the characters with more opportunities to mock what they were seeing. Their mocking offered spectators a potential "place of dissent" to question Leroy's allegiance to the purpose-giving myth he was creating.

And yet, John and Bashir were more than Jokers; they were the physical embodiment of Leroy's trauma. In one particular sequence their peripheral presence, which had been so effective in creating distancing opportunities, actually helped to invite spectators further into "the thick of things." At this point Leroy was viewing Henry's ultimatum to the town of Harfleur. As Henry threatened to rape the city's women and torture its elderly, John and Bashir bounced around the edges of the action, reenacting the raids that they conducted of suspected insurgents. Leroy fought to stay focused on Henry's words, but the doubling of verbal and visual violence served to further upset him.

What became clear through all of these discoveries was how precise I had to be in each particular moment of the play about what I hoped to accomplish. Especially because I was working in a promenade production in which spectators were regularly moving and thus looking for clues as to how their viewing position was changing, I needed to provide stability and clarity even as I sought to create dissonance.

The St. Crispin's Day Speech

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, how could all of this dissonance ultimately induce witnessing? I wanted my moment of reversal that could create an "inverted V-effekt" to occur during Henry's St. Crispin's Day speech. Having spent an hour cultivating the atmosphere laced with dissonance and uncertainty that I described above, I wanted this speech to be a moment of simplicity and perhaps clarity for my viewers. I hoped that through this moment of clarity spectators would feel a new and unsettling proximity to Henry's rhetoric, which would allow for Leroy's eventual re-traumatization to take on increased meaning. The shock of the climax would thus potentially cause spectators to avoid returning to the dissonance that they had been sitting in and instead take a stance on the topic of military rhetoric. To do so I saw that the position of "above" had to momentarily disappear, and that spectators had to be intensely "in the thick" of the *Henry V* narrative.

Throughout the play I had maintained a layer of distance between the spectators and King Henry. While John and Bashir could clearly see and talk to the audience, Henry was unaware of their presence. For the St. Crispin's Day speech, however, we placed the spectators around the edges of a circle of light, and Henry's soldiers stood amid them as they prepared for battle. When Henry appeared from the surrounding darkness he stepped within this circle of light and, for the first time, addressed the spectators directly. They became part of Henry's "band of brothers" as the soldiers among them openly wept.

Katherine Jean Nigh discusses the "thin layer" that separates those who suffer violence from those who witness or perpetrate it. Theatre has the potential to viscerally stir spectators by bringing them into close proximity with this barrier (153). In this moment of *Thou Proud Dream* I attempted to erase that thin layer and transform spectators into Fischer-Lichte's "co-subjects." I hoped that such direct address and physical proximity to other characters would allow spectators to deeply understand the value of Henry's language and know what it felt like to be inspired to fight to the death. I kept this moment short. No sooner did Henry finish this speech than his army marched off, and once again we put our spectators at an increased distance. Accustomed to intimacy and inclusion, spectators watched with a new form of impotence as Leroy tried to confront his traumatic memories, only to fail and become re-traumatized.

Conclusion

Thou Proud Dream is a work in progress. While spectators largely responded positively to the piece—one veteran, in particular, raved to my producers about it—I cannot definitively say I created witnesses. While it helped me to articulate the ways in which I hope to work in the future, I believe it also elucidated larger questions that can be applied to any director seeking to transform spectators into witnesses. The interplay of "in" and "above" can be a useful framework for formulating a definition of *witnessing* and thinking through the tools of staging. Clarifying the contract between viewer and performer and prioritizing the modes of perception allow artists to communicate a starting point for spectators. Finding ways to punctuate action with surprising shifts in the viewing position can bring spectators closer to that space where witnessing occurs.

But each question holds its own paradox, and rather than being an act of chemistry, creating witnesses is more like alchemy. It is part science and part magic; partially planned and partially accidental. It relies just as much upon a director's vision for framing the event as it does on allowing spectators to experience something in their own unique ways. The best we can do is be specific with our choices, and then to stay humble as we observe our spectators' feedback. Such an act comes with its own dangers and responsibilities, much like witnessing itself.

Damon Krometis is a theatre director and educator working in the Boston area. He is currently an affiliated faculty member at Emerson College, where he teaches classes in directing and adaptation. He is the former artistic director of Examined Man Theatre in New York City, and has directed plays in New York, Chicago, London, Boston, and Baltimore. He also spent five years traveling as the assistant director for Yael Farber's acclaimed production of *Molora*. He holds an MFA in directing from Northwestern University.

Notes

1. Diana Taylor takes a similar position in her book *The Archive and the Repertoire*.

2. See Taylor's *Disappearing Acts*, describing the artists and citizens performing memories of Argentina's Dirty War, as well as her studies of Grupo Teatro Yuyachkani in Peru.

3. I choose to use the nongendered pronouns when talking about hypothetical witnesses.

4. Wake is taking this idea from Dominick LaCapra's *Representing the Holocaust* (46).

5. Sigmund Freud postulated the idea of "working through" in "Remembering, Repeating, and Working-Through" (155). Christina Wald outlines the difference very clearly in her *Hysteria, Trauma and Melancholia*; and LaCapra, in *Representing the Holocaust*, effectively applies this term when discussing the handling of performative trauma.

6. It is important to note that the spectators at *Lips of Thomas* ultimately "acted out" by protecting Abramović rather than working through. For a description of "acting out," see Freud, "Remembering, Repeating, and Working-Through" (150).

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