SECTION FIVE

PERFORMING THE HOLOCAUST/DEBATING ISRAEL ON STAGE
“The only way to resist geese is to stay as ungoose-like as possible”.

(George Tabori, *The Cannibals*)

What more can be said about the Holocaust after the uncountable memoirs, histories, poems, films and theatre pieces have testified to its opaque and forbidding nature? After new critical approaches and historical revelations have made necessary new kinds of investigations into its multiple meanings? And after too many “enthusiasts” have exploited it for political or other agendas? For those, like myself, who did not live through those terrible times, and who probably would have died in them had we been there, our work has continued to seek understanding of the Holocaust through persistent study and creative endeavor. Despite the hostile forces of critical obfuscation, commercial exploitation, and intellectual fatigue, I believe there is yet a useful knowledge still to be gained from contact with artistic texts—including musical and dance compositions—knowledge that can be extracted from investigations of “texts of catastrophe”. I believe also that those texts must be included in any broad study of human affairs, and of genocide in particular.

Although I do not believe that unanimity of opinion can ever be achieved as to what lessons can be learned from this knowledge, I intend these remarks to shed some light on the ethical and aesthetic problems that preoccupy artists and critics as they go about their difficult tasks. These remarks are influenced by my own work as an American teacher and stage director who has attempted to retrieve useful knowledge from a time when, in a metaphor consistent with George Tabori’s play, we ate each other up.

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1 For example, see Alvin H. Rosenfeld, *Anne Frank and the Future of Holocaust Memory* (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2004), 14–17 (“Manipulating Anne Frank’s Image”).