THE ARCHIVE AND THE REPERTOIRE

A John Hope Franklin Center Book
To Susanita and Halfcito,

one more offering for your altar

And to Marina,

who helps me light the candles
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As a child growing up in a small mining town in the north of Mexico, I learned that the Americas were one, that we shared a hemisphere. Many years later, when I arrived in the United States to do my doctorate, I heard that “America” meant the United States. There were two hemispheres, north and south, and although Mexico technically belonged to the northern hemisphere, people usually relegated it to the south—part of “Latin America.” Years later, I observed in my daughter’s Rand McNally *Picture Atlas of the World* (1993 edition) that the Americas had been divided in three, and Mexico and Central America were called “Middle America,” a term that accomplished the linguistic distantiation that the land formation refused to justify. I never accepted this steady attempt at deterritorialization. I claim my identity as an “American” in the hemispheric sense. That means I have lived comfortably, or perhaps uncomfortably, in various overlapping worlds.

My academic career began in a one-room schoolhouse in Parral, Chihuahua, a dusty little town whose only claim to fame was that the great revolutionary leader Pancho Villa had been shot to death there. This was a poor little classroom with a corrugated metal roof reserved for the children of the miners. My father, who ran away from Canada at the age of twenty-one, was a mining engineer. My mother, a student of Northrop Frye whose life’s calling was to read who-done-its, would drive me up the crooked dirt road
to school. We never knew what grade we were in. Magically, it seemed, we passed from first to second, from second to third. We never got grades; there were no parent-teacher conferences, no progress reports. Just as magically, we graduated. I was nine years old.

I loved my little town. I considered everyone in it my friend. Don Luis owned the pharmacy and lived in the apartment above it with his beautiful wife, who invited me to tea; they were rumored to be rich, owning miles and miles of splendid poppy fields and all sorts of refining machinery that stirred local imaginations. Their assistant, my school friend’s father, was found dead one morning, cut up into tiny pieces and hanging in a sack from a tree branch—a message of sorts, though indecipherable to me then. Don Jacinto was the garbage collector who rescued precious items for us kids, like soda bottle caps that hid prizes behind the cork liners. Doña Esperanza, a homeless woman, carried a small metal suitcase full of rocks to throw at her many enemies. She trusted me; we’d sit, legs dangling from the bridge over the dry riverbed, and she’d open her metal case to show me her rocks. In turn, I pulled out the tiny pebbles I saved for her in my pockets. Twice a year, the Tarahumara (the indigenous group Artaud so admired) would come down from the mountains to buy staples. Our worlds didn’t touch; I never knew why. We didn’t speak their language. We knew little about their way of life. We’d just watch them come and go—another lesson in indecipherability.

If I was going to study, my parents insisted, I had to go away. “You’ll go to boarding school in Toronto,” my mother said. “You’ll like it there. You’ll be close to Gramma. But you have to learn English.” This meant learning more than the one word I had already perfected, though the way I pronounced it stretched over so many syllables I thought it was a complete sentence: sonofabitché. I remember standing there, in my cowboy boots, my plaid skirt with antigravity suspenders, my brown suede jacket with the fringe, and the pebbles in my pockets. My braids were pulled back so tight I couldn’t close my eyes. My little gold scissor earrings that opened and shut dangled from my ears. I promised: “Sí mamá. I learna da inglish.” So off I went to Canada, announced back then as my extended home, part of my Américas.

My Gramma stiffened in disapproval. She hated the boots, the jacket, the pigtails, and reminded me that only savages pierced their body. My education, she warned, was about to begin. I tried to change the subject and make polite conversation. “Gramma, how’s your cancer?”

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During my four years in boarding school, I had to learn new languages—not just the English, French, and Latin that were required. Twice daily, I had to participate in the ritual incantations of High Anglicanism. In response to the demands for weekly offerings, I stuffed buttons in the collection box, holding my skirt and blazer together with safety pins. I hid my plastic Virgen de Guadalupe in a box behind the chest of drawers. I also had to learn a new body language. Off went the Wild West outfit; on came the blazer and tie, the gray skirt, the button-down white shirt, the oxford shoes and knee-highs. I learned to eat sitting up straight, with a book on my head and a newspaper tucked under each arm. They cut my hair; gone forever were my beloved gold scissor earrings that opened and closed. My body, my head, my heart, and my tongue were in training. My small acts of resistance, inspired by my hero Pancho Villa, ran up against the disciplinary machine. My punishments were so regular that they became part of my weekly schedule: I had to run around the school twenty times at 6 a.m. on weekend mornings, while the rest of the girls slept. My teachers smacked me with hairbrushes, made me chew aspirins, and tried teaching me to spin wool so that I’d stop fidgeting. The goal, the headmistress informed me, was that I should become a respectable Anglo gentlewoman, a worthy companion for Canada’s brightest and best.

I am delighted to report that, for me at least, the training failed miserably. Yet, when I returned home—now Mexico City—at fourteen, I knew I wasn’t Canadian, but I no longer felt completely Mexican. While a citizen of the Américas, I was/am not a happy NAFTA subject, a product of “free” markets and cultural zones. In a world set up in terms of “First World” and “Third World,” “white” and “brown,” “us” and “them,” I wasn’t them but I wasn’t us either. I wasn’t Anglican, but I wasn’t Catholic. Ironically, perhaps, that led me to identify with everything, rather than nothing. Identifying with everything rather than nothing may amount to the same thing, but the spirit behind it was far from nihilistic: I overflowed with identifications, white and brown, English- and Spanish-speaking, Anglican and Catholic, us and them. Mine felt like an entangled surplus subjectivity, full of tugs, pressures, and pleasures. I continue to embody these tugs through a series of conflicting practices and tensions.

Because it’s been impossible for me to separate my scholarly and political commitments and conundrums from who I am, the essays in this book
reflect a range of tone and personal intervention in the discussions. The first three chapters particularly map out the theoretical questions that inform the chapters that follow: How does expressive behavior (performance) transmit cultural memory and identity? Would a hemispheric perspective expand the restrictive scenarios and paradigms set in motion by centuries of colonialism? Although the theoretical implications are no less pressing, the tone in the remaining chapters becomes increasingly personal. As my reflections come out of my own role as participant in or witness to the events I describe, I feel compelled to acknowledge my own involvement and sense of urgency. And, as I argue throughout, we learn and transmit knowledge through embodied action, through cultural agency, and by making choices. Performance, for me, functions as an episteme, a way of knowing, not simply an object of analysis. By situating myself as one more social actor in the scenarios I analyze, I hope to position my personal and theoretical investment in the arguments. I chose not to smooth out the differences in tone, but rather let them speak to the tensions between who I am and what I do.

I wrote this book during the five years that I served as chair of performance studies at NYU, and it reflects many of the conversations that we had around the department’s odd, wobbly, crescent-shaped table in the room composed of windows we call the fish bowl. How would we define performance? What would we include in an Introduction to Performance Studies course? Should performance studies—defined by some of us as postdisciplinary, others as interdisciplinary, others as antidisciplinary, others as preeconomic—have a canon? Who would define it? How can we think about performance in historical terms, when the archive cannot capture and store the live event? I still hear those voices and debates: Fred Moten resisting canons of all kinds, while Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett tried to organize the area exam lists. Richard Schechner and Peggy Phelan would debate whether we could even speak of an “ontology” of performance, while Barbara Browning, José Muñoz, and André Lepecki joined the fray on different sides of the lines. Ngugi wa Thiong’o, always a calming presence, and I spoke of teaching a course on the politics of public space, or perhaps on language rights. All of us sitting there, faculty and often students, came from different academic and personal backgrounds and brought different takes on each issue. One of the things I like most about our conversations is that we never really agreed, and we still haven’t succeeded in formulating a clear party, or even depart-
mental, line. The open-endedness and multivocality of performance studies is an administrative challenge (How to devise a meaningful curriculum, or reading exam lists?), but they prove, I believe, the field’s greatest promise. However we position ourselves in relation to other disciplines, we have been wary of disciplinary boundaries that preclude certain connections and areas of analysis. So we’ve kept talking, and even as the individuals around the table change, the conversations keep going. Inevitably, these debates linger throughout the book, not because my colleagues and students are my ideal audience, but because they have been close interlocutors as I wrote.

Some of the questions took on a special urgency for me as a “Latin/o Americanist.” Is performance that which disappears, or that which persists, transmitted through a nonarchival system of transfer that I came to call the repertoire? My book Disappearing Acts had already engaged with the politics of disappearance: the forced absenting of individuals by Argentina’s military forces and the paradoxical omnipresence of the disappeared. My scholarly and political commitment to these issues continued through the Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics, a consortium that I organized and directed during this same period (http://hemi.nyu.edu). Scholars, artists, and activists throughout the Americas work together in annual encuentros (two-week festivals/work groups) through graduate-level, interdisciplinary courses and online work groups to explore how performance transmits memories, makes political claims, and manifests a group’s sense of identity. For all of us, the political implications of the project were clear. If performance did not transmit knowledge, only the literate and powerful could claim social memory and identity.

This book, then, constitutes my personal intervention in two fields: performance studies and Latin/o American (hemispheric) studies. Here, I try to put these fields in conversation. How does each expand what we can think in the other? How can performance studies’ nervousness about disciplinary boundaries help us destabilize the ways in which the field of “Latin American” studies has been constituted in the United States? Like other area studies, Latin American studies emerged as a result of cold war efforts by the U.S. government to advance “intelligence,” language competence, and influence in countries to the south. Consequently, it tends to maintain a unidirectional north-to-south focus, with the U.S. analyst posited as the unseen, unexamined see-er. Hemispheric studies could potentially counter the Latin...
American studies of the mid-twentieth century and the NAFTAism of the late twentieth century by exploring histories of the north and south as profoundly intertwined. It allows us to connect histories of conquest, colonialism, slavery, indigenous rights, imperialism, migration, and globalization (to name some issues) throughout the Americas. Circulation in the Americas includes the military traffic in peoples, weapons, drugs, “intelligence,” and expertise. It includes the culture industries: television, film, music. It includes practices associated with languages, religious practices, food, style, and embodied performances. If, however, we were to reorient the ways social memory and cultural identity in the Americas have traditionally been studied, with the disciplinary emphasis on literary and historical documents, and look through the lens of performed, embodied behaviors, what would we know that we do not know now? Whose stories, memories, and struggles might become visible? What tensions might performance behaviors show that would not be recognized in texts and documents?

Conversely, “Latin American” studies (like other area studies) has much to offer performance studies. The historical debates concerning the nature and role of performance in the transmission of social knowledge and memory, which I trace to sixteenth-century Mesoamerica, allow us to think about embodied practice in a broader framework that complicates prevalent understandings. Performance studies, due to its historical development, reflects the 1960s conjunction of anthropology, theatre studies, and the visual arts. It also reflects a predominantly English-speaking, First World positioning; most of the scholarship in the field has been produced in the United States, Great Britain, and Australia. But there is nothing inherently “Western” or necessarily avant-garde about the field. The methodology we associate with performance studies can and should be revised constantly through engagement with other regional, political, and linguistic realities. So, although I contest the parochialism of some performance studies scholarship, I am not suggesting that we merely extend our analytic practice to other “non-Western” areas. Rather, what I propose here is a real engagement between two fields that helps us rethink both.

Embodied performances have always played a central role in conserving memory and consolidating identities in literate, semiliterate, and digital societies. Not everyone comes to “culture” or modernity through writing. I believe it is imperative to keep reexamining the relationships between em-
bodied performance and the production of knowledge. We might look to past practices considered by some to have disappeared. We might look to contemporary practices by populations usually dismissed as “backward” (indigenous and marginalized communities). Or we might explore the relationship of embodied practice to knowledge by studying how young people today learn through digital technologies. If people without writing are said to have vanished without a trace, how can we think about the invisibilized body online? It is difficult to think about embodied practice within the epistemic systems developed in Western thought, where writing has become the guarantor of existence itself.

The book is intensely personal in another way as well. On January 27, 2001, my closest friends, Susana and Half Zantop, were brutally murdered by two teenage boys in their home in New Hampshire. It was a Saturday afternoon; Susana was making lunch, Half was puttering around, doing chores. Out of the blue... Later that year, as I was walking out of the gym, I saw the World Trade Center down the street, on fire. A plane had hit it, someone on the street told me, out of the blue. The terror of those events affected us profoundly. The world has changed for me and for those I love during the time I wrote this book. I dedicate this book to Susana and Half, who did not survive the horror. But I also dedicate it to those who did: their daughters, Veronika and Mariana, my husband, Eric Manheimer, and our children, Alexei and Marina, and my sister, Susan. We are still struggling to learn how to live in this very strange new world.

I want to thank the close friends who have sustained me with their love and conversations during this period and over the past few years. Some are my daily interlocutors, whether in the steam room, the gym, the sushi bar, or the coffee shop. I feel their presence throughout this work: Marianne Hirsch, Richard Schechner, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Leo Spitzer, Sylvia Molloy, Lorie Novak, Faye Ginsburg, José Muñoz, Una Chaudhuri, Mary Louise Pratt, and Fred Myers. Others I see less often, but they remain such a close presence that I can hear their comments before I speak with them: Doris Sommer, Agnes Lugo-Ortiz, Mary C. Kelley, Silvia Spitta, Rebecca Schneider, Jill Lane, Leda Martins, Diana Raznovich, Luis Peirano, Annelise Orleck, Alexis Jetter, and Roxana Verona. What would I do without my family and friends? That’s one question I never want to explore.

I also want to thank those who have helped me in other ways. David
Román encouraged me to write a short commentary on tragedy for a special volume he was editing for *Theatre Journal*, an invitation that got me writing again after September 11 and inspired the final chapter of this book. Thanks to my wonderful graduate students and assistants at NYU, all fellow hauntologists, especially Alyshia Galvez, Marcela Fuentes, Shanna Lorenz, Karen Jaime, and Fernando Calzadilla. Karen Young and Ayanna Lee of the Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics help make my life easier on a daily basis. Ken Wissoker, Christine Dahlin, and Pam Morrison of Duke University Press have offered steady support.

As figure 2 of this study indicates, the production of knowledge is always a collective effort, a series of back-and-forth conversations that produce multiple results. The Náhuatl-speaking informant tells his story to the Náhuatl-speaking scribe, who in turn passes it to the translator, who transmits it to the Spanish-speaking scribe, who tells the Spanish friar, the official recipient, organizer, and transmitter of the written document. He in turn gives his version, which will make its way back to the Nahua informant. The document also finds its way into the public arena, where it is met with debates ranging from censorious disapproval to profound gratitude. Back and forth. The versions change with each transmission, and each creates slips, misses, and new interpretations that result in a somewhat new original. In this study too, I build on what I have received from others and attempt to contribute to the debate and pass it back into the public arena for more discussion. The slips and misses are, of course, my own.
From June 14 to 23, 2001, the Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics convened artists, activists, and scholars from the Americas for its second annual Encuentro (encounter) to share the ways our work uses performance to intervene in the political scenarios we care about. Everyone understood the “politics,” but “performance” was more difficult. For some artists, performance (as it is called in Latin America) referred to performance art. Others played with the term. Jesusa Rodríguez, Mexico’s most outrageous and powerful cabaret/performance artist, referred to the three hundred participants as performenzos (menzos means idiots). Performnuts might be the best translation, and most of her spectators would agree that you have to be crazy to do what she does, confronting the Mexican state and the Catholic Church head-on. Tito Vasconcelos, one of the first out gay performers from the early 1980s in Mexico, came onstage as Marta Sahagún, then lover, now wife of Mexico’s president, Vicente Fox. In her white suit and matching pumps, she welcomed the audience to the conference of performance. Smiling, she admitted that she didn’t understand what it was about, and acknowledged that nobody gave a damn about what we did, but she welcomed us to do it anyway. Perforwhat! the confused woman in Diana Raznovich’s cartoon asks. The jokes and puns, though good humored, revealed...
both an anxiety of definition and the promise of a new arena for further interventions.

PERFORWHAT STUDIES?

This study, like the Hemispheric Institute, proposes that performance studies can contribute to our understanding of Latin American—and hemispheric—performance traditions by rethinking nineteenth-century disciplinary and national boundaries and by focusing on embodied behaviors. Conversely, the debates dating back to the sixteenth century about the nature and function of performance practices in the Americas can expand the theoretical scope of a postdiscipline-come-lately that has, due to its context, focused more on the future and ends of performance than on its historical practice. Finally, it is urgent to focus on the specific characteristics of performance in a cultural environment in which corporations promote “world” music and international organizations (such as UNESCO) and funding organizations make decisions about “world” cultural rights and “intangible heritage.”

Performances function as vital acts of transfer, transmitting social knowledge, memory, and a sense of identity through reiterated, or what Richard
Schechner has called “twice-behaved behavior.”³ “Performance,” on one level, constitutes the object/process of analysis in performance studies, that is, the many practices and events—dance, theatre, ritual, political rallies, funerals—that involve theatrical, rehearsed, or conventional/event-appropriate behaviors. These practices are usually bracketed off from those around them to constitute discrete foci of analysis. Sometimes, that framing is part of the event itself—a particular dance or a rally has a beginning and an end, it does not run continuously or seamlessly into other forms of cultural expression. To say something is a performance amounts to an ontological affirmation, though a thoroughly localized one. What one society considers a performance might be a nonevent elsewhere.

On another level, performance also constitutes the methodological lens that enables scholars to analyze events as performance.⁴ Civic obedience, resistance, citizenship, gender, ethnicity, and sexual identity, for example, are rehearsed and performed daily in the public sphere. To understand these as performance suggests that performance also functions as an epistemology. Embodied practice, along with and bound up with other cultural practices, offers a way of knowing. The bracketing for these performances comes from outside, from the methodological lens that organizes them into an analyzable “whole.” Performance and aesthetics of everyday life vary from community to community, reflecting cultural and historical specificity as much in the enactment as in the viewing/reception. (Whereas reception changes in both the live and the media performance, only in the live does the act itself change.) Performances travel, challenging and influencing other performances. Yet they are, in a sense, always in situ: intelligible in the framework of the immediate environment and issues surrounding them. The is/as underlines the understanding of performance as simultaneously “real” and “constructed,” as practices that bring together what have historically been kept separate as discrete, supposedly free-standing, ontological and epistemological discourses.

The many uses of the word performance point to the complex, seemingly contradictory, and at times mutually sustaining or complicated layers of referentiality. Victor Turner bases his understanding on the French etymological root, parfournir, “to furnish forth,” “to complete’ or ‘carry out thoroughly.’”⁵ From French, the term moved into English as performance in the 1500s, and since the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries has been
used much as it is today. For Turner, writing in the 1960s and 1970s, performances revealed culture’s deepest, truest, and most individual character. Guided by a belief in their universality and relative transparency, he claimed that populations could grow to understand each other through their performances. For others, of course, performance means just the opposite: the constructedness of performance signals its artificiality—it is “put on,” antithetical to the “real” and “true.” In some cases, the emphasis on the constructedness of performance reveals an antitheatrical prejudice; in more complex readings, the constructed is recognized as coterminous with the real. Although a dance, a ritual, or a manifestation requires bracketing or framing that differentiate it from other social practices surrounding it, this does not imply that the performance is not real or true. On the contrary, the idea that performance distills a “truer” truth than life itself runs from Aristotle through Shakespeare and Calderón de la Barca, through Artaud and Grotowski and into the present. People in business fields seem to use the term more than anyone else, though usually to mean that a person, or more often a thing, acts up to one’s potential. Supervisors evaluate workers’ efficacy on the job, their performance, just as cars and computers and the markets supposedly vie to outperform their rivals. Perform or Else, Jon McKenzie’s title, aptly captures the imperative to reach required business [and cultural] standards. Political consultants understand that performance as style rather than as carrying through or accomplishment often determines political outcome. Science too has begun exploration into reiterated human behavior and expressive culture through memes: “Memes are stories, songs, habits, skills, inventions, and ways of doing things that we copy from person to person by imitation”—in short, the reiterative acts that I have been calling performance, though clearly performance does not necessarily involve mimetic behaviors.

In performance studies thus, notions about the definition, role, and function of performance vary widely. Is performance always and only about embodiment? Or does it call into question the very contours of the body, challenging traditional notions of embodiment? Since ancient times, performance has manipulated, extended, and played with embodiment—this intense experimentation did not begin with Laurie Anderson. Digital technologies will further ask us to reformulate our understanding of “presence,”
site (now the unlocalizable online “site”), the ephemeral, and embodiment. The debates proliferate.

One example of the spectrum of understanding is the debate over performance’s staying power. Coming from a Lacanian position, Peggy Phelan delimits the life of performance to the present: “Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representation. . . . Performance’s being, like the ontology of subjectivity proposed here, becomes itself through disappearance.”9 Joseph Roach, on the other hand, extends the understanding of performance by making it coterminous with memory and history. As such, it participates in the transfer and continuity of knowledge: “Performance genealogies draw on the idea of expressive movements as mnemonic reserves, including patterned movements made and remembered by bodies, residual movements retained implicitly in images or words [or in the silences between them], and imaginary movements dreamed in minds not prior to language but constitutive of it.”10 Debates about the “ephemerality” of performance are, of course, profoundly political. Whose memories, traditions, and claims to history disappear if performance practices lack the staying power to transmit vital knowledge?

Scholars coming from philosophy and rhetoric (such as J. L. Austin, Jacques Derrida, and Judith Butler) have coined terms such as performative and performativity. A performative, for Austin, refers to cases in which “the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action.”11 In some cases, the reiteration and bracketing I associated with performance earlier is clear: it is within the conventional framework of a marriage ceremony that the words “I do” carry legal weight.12 Others have continued to develop Austin’s notion of the performative in many diverse ways. Derrida, for example, goes further in underlining the importance of the citationality and iterability in the “event of speech,” questioning whether “a performative statement [could] succeed if its formulation did not repeat a ‘coded’ or iterable statement.”13 However, the framing that sustains Butler’s use of performativity—the process of socialization whereby gender and sexuality identities [for example] are produced through regulating and citational practices—is harder to identify because normalization has rendered it invisible. Whereas in Austin, performative points to language that acts, in Butler it goes in the opposite
direction, subsuming subjectivity and cultural agency into normative discursive practice. In this trajectory, the performative becomes less a quality (or adjective) of “performance” than of discourse. Although it may be too late to reclaim performative for the nondiscursive realm of performance, I suggest that we borrow a word from the contemporary Spanish usage of performance—performático or performatic in English—to denote the adjectival form of the nondiscursive realm of performance. Why is this important? Because it is vital to signal the performatic, digital, and visual fields as separate from, though always embroiled with, the discursive one so privileged by Western logocentrism. The fact that we don’t have a word to signal that performatic space is a product of that same logocentrism rather than a confirmation that there’s no there there.

Thus, one of the problems in using performance, and its misleading cognates performative and performativity, comes from the extraordinarily broad range of behaviors it covers, from the discrete dance, to technologically mediated performance, to conventional cultural behavior. However, this multilayeredness indicates the deep interconnections of all these systems of intelligibility and the productive frictions among them. As the different uses of the term/concept—scholarly, political, scientific, and business-related—rarely engage each other directly, performance also has a history of untranslatability. Ironically, the word itself has been locked into the disciplinary and geographic boxes it defies, denied the universality and transparency that some claim it promises its foci of analysis. Of course, these many points of untranslatability are what make the term and the practices theoretically enabling and culturally revealing. Performances may not, as Turner had hoped, give us access and insight into another culture, but they certainly tell us a great deal about our desire for access, and reflect the politics of our interpretations.

Part of this undefinability characterizes performance studies as a field. When it emerged in the 1970s, a product of the social and disciplinary upheavals of the late 1960s that rocked academe, it sought to bridge the disciplinary divide between anthropology and theatre by looking at social dramas, liminality, and enactment as a way out of structuralist notions of normativity. Performance studies, which, as I indicated above, is certainly no one thing, clearly grew out of these disciplines even as it rejected their
boundaries. In doing so, it inherited some of the assumptions and methodo-
logical blind spots of anthropology and theatre studies even as it attempted
to transcend their ideological formation. However, it is equally important to
keep in mind that anthropology and theatre studies were (and are) composed
of various different, often conflicted, streams. Here, then, I can offer only
a few quick examples of how some of the disciplinary preoccupations and
methodological limitations get transferred in thinking about performance.

From the anthropology of the 1970s, performance studies inherited its
radical break with notions of normative behavior promulgated by sociologist
Emile Durkheim, who argued that the social condition of humans (rather
than individual agency) accounts for behaviors and beliefs. Those who dis-
agreed with this structuralist position argued that culture was not a reified
given but an arena of social dispute in which social actors came together to
struggle for survival. From the wing commonly referred to as the “drama-
turical,” anthropologists such as Turner, Milton Singer, Erving Goffman,
and Clifford Geertz began to write of individuals as agents in their own dra-
mas. Norms, they argued, are contested, not merely applied. Analyzing en-
actment became crucial in establishing claims to cultural agency. Humans
do not simply adapt to systems. They shape them. How do we recognize ele-
ments such as choice, timing, and self-presentation except through the ways
in which individuals and groups perform them? The dramaturgical model
also highlighted aesthetic and ludic components of social events as well as
the in-betweenness of liminality and symbolic reversal.

Part of the linguistic stream, anthropologists such as Dell Hymes, Richard
Bauman, Charles Briggs, Gregory Bateson, and Michele Rosaldo were influ-
enced by thinkers such as J. L. Austin, John Searle, and Ferdinand de Saus-
sure, who focused on the performative function of communication—parole,
in Saussure’s term. Again, as with the dramaturgical model, the linguist-
ic emphasized the cultural agency at work in the use of language: How, to
play on Austin’s title, did people do things with words? Like the dramatur-
gical model, this too stressed the creativity at play in the use of language,
as speakers and their audiences worked together to produce successful ver-
bal performances. The linguistic stream was also invested in recognizing the
creativity in the everyday life of other people, ways of using language that
were resourceful, specific, and “authentic.”
While performance scholars readily adopted the project of taking embodied enactments seriously as a way of understanding how people manage their lives, they also absorbed the Western positioning of anthropology that continued to wrestle with its colonial heritage. The “us” studying and writing about “them” was, of course, a part of a colonialist project that anthropology had come out of, though the scholars working in the 1970s were trying to break away from the paradigm that fetishized the local, denied agency to the peoples they studied, and excluded them from the circulation of knowledge created about them. Yet communication, for the most part, continued to be unidirectional. “They” did not have access to “our” writing. This one-way writing practice revealed the ongoing ambivalence as to whether “they” occupied a different world—in space and time, whether we are interrelated and coeval. The unidirectionality of meaning making and communication also stemmed from and reflected the centuries-old privileging of written over embodied knowledge. Moreover, little thought was given to the many ways in which contact with the “non-Western” had, for centuries, shaped the very notion of “Western” identity. Some anthropologists and theatre scholars were heavily influenced by the modernist impulse to seek the authentic, “primitive,” and somehow purer expression of the human condition in non-Western societies. Attempts in the literature of the 1970s to illustrate that these “others” were in fact fully human, with performance practices as meaningful as “our” own, betray the anxiety produced by colonialism about the status of non-Western subjects.

In spite of the decolonizing sentiments of many anthropologists in the 1970s, the explanatory frameworks they used were decidedly Western. To return to Turner, the most direct influence on performance studies due to his productive association with Richard Schechner, it is clear that whereas the concept of social drama has been foundational to performance studies, the universalist claims he makes for its ubiquity strain against the rather narrow filter he has for understanding it: Aristotelian drama. “No one,” Turner asserts, “could fail to note the analogy, indeed the homology, between those sequences of supposedly ‘spontaneous’ events which make fully evident the tensions existing in those villages, and the characteristic ‘processual form’ of Western drama, from Aristotle onwards, or Western epic and saga, albeit on a limited or miniature scale.” No one, that is, except for those who participated in the events without the slightest notion of these paradigms. Preempting
a perceived accusation of Eurocentrism, Turner writes, “The fact that a social drama . . . closely corresponds to Aristotle’s description of tragedy in the Poetics, in that it is ‘complete, and whole, and of a certain magnitude . . . having a beginning, a middle, and an end,’ is not, I repeat, because I have tried inappropriately to impose an ‘etic’ Western model of stage action upon the conduct of an African village society, but because there is an interdependent, perhaps dialectic, relationship between social dramas and genres of cultural performance in all societies” (72). Again, Turner’s theories about events structured with a recognizable beginning, middle, and end may have less to do with the “supposedly ‘spontaneous’” events than with his analytical lens. The lens, for him as for everyone else, reveals his (our) desires and interests. He may be correct in noting the interdependency of social and cultural performances within a specific society, yet it might be important to question whether and how this interdependency would work cross-culturally. Moreover, his position as an “objective” observer looking down on the “object” of analysis sets up the unequal, and distorting, perspective that results in the double gesture that characterizes much of the writing about performance practices in contexts other than our own. First, the observer claims to recognize what is happening in the performance of/by the Other. Somehow, this event is reified and interpreted by means of a preexisting Western paradigm. Second, the recognition is followed by a subtle (or not so subtle) put-down: this performance proves a “miniature” or diminished version of the “original.”

From theatre studies—the “maternal” partner, according to Turner (9)—performance studies inherits another form of radicalism: its proclivity toward the avant-garde that values originality, the transgressive, and, again, the “authentic.” This is a different but complementary operation: the non-Western is the raw material to be reworked and made “original” in the West. The presumption, of course, is that performance—now understood as drawing heavily from the visual arts and nonconventional theatrical representations, happenings, installations, body art, and performance art—is an aesthetic practice with its roots in either surrealism, dadaism, or earlier performance traditions such as cabaret, the living newspaper, and rituals of healing and possession. The avant-garde’s emphasis on originality, ephemerality, and newness hides multiple rich and long traditions of performance practice. In 1969, for example, Michael Kirby, a founding member of the

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soon-to-be-created Department of Performance Studies at NYU, asserted that “environmental theatre is a recent development” associated with the avant-garde, even though he admits examples from the Greek theatre onward that could well be labeled by the same term. It’s the “specific aesthetic element” that, for Kirby, differentiates it from earlier forms. His emphasis on aesthetics, however, does not in fact set recent examples apart from earlier ones. Friar Motolinía, one of the first twelve Franciscans to reach the Americas in the sixteenth century, describes a Corpus Christi celebration in 1538 during which native participants from Tlaxcala created elaborate outdoor platforms “all of gold and feather work” as well as entire mountains and forests populated with both artificial and live animals that were “a marvellous thing to see” and through which spectators/participants walked to gain a “natural” effect. Claims such as the one put forth by Kirby in the late 1960s epitomize the period’s self-conscious obsession with the new, as it forgot or ignored what was already there. These kinds of assertions prompted accusations that the nascent field of performance studies was ahistorical if not antihistorical.

There are many more examples of similar forgettings accompanied by new “discoveries” that once again restage the elisions of ties between Western and non-Western practices: Artaud inspired by the Tarahumara, Brecht’s reliance on non-Western forms as a basis for his revolutionary aesthetics, Grotowski’s interest in the Huichol, to name just the most obvious. Few theorists and practitioners—with notable exceptions—seriously think about the mutual construction of the Western/non-Western in the Americas. That would require that scholars learn the language of the people with whom they seek to interact and treat them as colleagues rather than as informants or objects of analysis. This, in turn, would mean that these new colleagues would remain in the loop of all the projects that involved them, from production, to distribution, to analysis. It would also entail a methodological shift, a rethinking about what counts as expertise or as valid source. It would demand the recognition of the permanent recycling of cultural materials and processes between the Western and non-Western. This reciprocal contact has been most commonly theorized in Latin America as transculturation. Transculturation denotes the transformative process undergone by all societies as they come in contact with and acquire foreign cultural material, whether willingly or unwillingly (see chapter 3). Transculturation has been going on forever. But the cross-cultural discussions remain as strained as ever.
The nervousness surrounding the non-Western continues to haunt much of the writing on performance as an aesthetic practice. One example: Patrice Pavis, in his introductory blurb to the section “Historical Contexts” in *The Intercultural Performance Reader*, puts forward a defensive and somewhat paternalistic-sounding project: “We propose to start by bringing together documents and declarations of intent, without allowing ourselves to be intimidated by the hypocrites and bigots of ‘political correctness.’ In an area like this, we need to be both patient and calm. We are still in a phase of observing and surveying cultural practices, and our only ambition is to provide readers with a number of statements from an infinitely possible range, without the imposition of a global or universal theory to analyse these examples definitively.” Just thinking about how to deal with non-Western practices makes Pavis jittery. Claims of inclusion (the “infinitely possible range”) no longer mask the practice of exclusion: not a single essay on Latin American performance, for example. Beleaguered Western critics must maintain the father-knows-best stance of patience and calm. Two or three decades after Turner and Kirby, many scholars have lost the easy assumptions regarding decipherability and newness. Pavis understands that “Western” theorists in the 1990s need to renounce claims of global or universalizing theory, though his emphasis on seemingly disinterested observation and survey re-inscribe the dominance of the critical position. The statements and “historical” documents, all written by decidedly First-World theorists—Ericka Fischer-Lichte, Richard Schechner, and Josette Féral—set the stage. In a separate section, “Intercultural Performance from Another Point of View,” Pavis includes “non-Western” perspectives, though he notes that most of those writing “either live, or have lived and worked, in the United States” (147). Still, they are “foreign” and “Other” and their views “do differ radically from those of the Euro-American interculturalists, being less self-assured” (147).

The double critical move highlights an area of concern (the non-Western) and negates it in the same move. It distances non-Western cultural production as radically other, and then attempts to encompass it within existing critical systems as diminished or disruptive elements. Performance, as Roach points out, is as much about forgetting as about remembering. The West has forgotten about the many parts of the world that elude its explanatory grasp. Yet, it remembers the need to cement the centrality of its position as the West by creating and freezing the non-West as always other, “for-
eign,” and unknowable. Domination by culture, by “definition,” by claims to originality and authenticity have functioned in tandem with military and economic supremacy.

Though ahistorical in some of its practice, there is nothing inherently ahistorical or Western about performance studies. Our methodologies can and should be revised constantly through engagement with other interlocutors as well as other regional, racial, political, and linguistic realities both within and beyond our national boundaries. This does not mean extending our existing paradigms to include other forms of cultural production. Nor does it justify limiting our range of interlocutors to those whose backgrounds and language skills resemble our own. What I am proposing is an active engagement and dialogue, however complicated. Performance has existed as long as people have existed, even though the field of study in its current form is relatively recent. Performance studies emerged on the academic scene with inherited baggage, and it has long tried to overcome and often succeeded in overcoming some of those limitations. The Eurocentrism and aestheticism of some theatre studies, for example, clash against anthropology’s traditional focus on non-Western cultural practices as meaning-making systems. The belief by anthropologists such as Geertz that “doing ethnography is like trying to read . . . a manuscript—foreign, faded, full of ellipses” and that culture is an “acted document” runs up against theatre studies’ insistence on everyone’s active participation and reaction. Performance has existed as long as people have existed, even though the field of study in its current form is relatively recent. Performance studies emerged on the academic scene with inherited baggage, and it has long tried to overcome and often succeeded in overcoming some of those limitations. The Eurocentrism and aestheticism of some theatre studies, for example, clash against anthropology’s traditional focus on non-Western cultural practices as meaning-making systems. The belief by anthropologists such as Geertz that “doing ethnography is like trying to read . . . a manuscript—foreign, faded, full of ellipses” and that culture is an “acted document” runs up against theatre studies’ insistence on everyone’s active participation and reaction.

In Latin America, where the term finds no satisfactory equivalent in either Spanish or Portuguese, performance has commonly referred to performance art. Translated simply but nonetheless ambiguously as el performance or la performance, a linguistic cross-dressing that invites English speakers to think about the sex/gender of performance, the word is beginning to be used more broadly to talk about social dramas and embodied practices. People quite commonly refer now to lo performático as that which is related to performance in the broadest sense. In spite of charges that performance is an Anglo word and that there is no way of making it sound
comfortable in either Spanish or Portuguese, scholars and practitioners are beginning to appreciate the multivocal and strategic qualities of the term. Although the word may be foreign and untranslatable, the debates, decrees, and strategies arising from the many traditions of embodied practice and corporeal knowledge are deeply rooted and embattled in the Americas. Yet, the language referring to those corporeal knowledges maintains a firm link to theatrical traditions. Performance includes, but is not reducible to, any of the following terms usually used to replace it: teatralidad, espectáculo, acción, representación.

Teatralidad and espectáculo, like theatricality and spectacle in English, capture the constructed, all-encompassing sense of performance. The many ways in which social life and human behavior can be viewed as performance come across in these terms, though with a particular valence. Theatricality, for me, sustains a scenario, a paradigmatic setup that relies on supposedly live participants, structured around a schematic plot, with an intended (though adaptable) end. One could say that all the sixteenth-century writing on discovery and conquest restages what Michel de Certeau calls the “inaugural scene: after a moment of stupor, on this threshold dotted with colonnades of trees, the conqueror will write the body of the other and trace there his own history.”

Theatricality makes that scenario alive and compelling. In other words, scenarios exist as culturally specific imaginaries—sets of possibilities, ways of conceiving conflict, crisis, or resolution—activated with more or less theatricality. Unlike trope, which is a figure of speech, theatricality does not rely on language to transmit a set pattern of behavior or action. In chapter 2, I suggest that the colonial “encounter” is a theatrical scenario structured in a predictable, formulaic, hence repeatable fashion. Theatricality (like theatre) flaunts its artifice, its constructedness. No matter who restages the colonial encounter from the West’s perspective—the novelist, the playwright, the discoverer, or the government official—it stars the same white male protagonist-subject and the same brown, found “object.” Theatricality strives for efficaciousness, not authenticity. It connotes a conscious, controlled, and, thus, always political dimension that performance need not imply. It differs from spectacle in that theatricality highlights the mechanics of spectacle. Spectacle, I agree with Guy Debord, is not an image but a series of social relations mediated by images. Thus, as I write elsewhere, it “ties individuals into an economy of looks and looking” that can appear
more “invisibly” normalizing, that is, less “theatrical.” Both of these terms, however, are nouns with no verb; thus, they do not allow for individual cultural agency in the way that perform does. Much is lost, it seems to me, when we give up the potential for direct and active intervention by adopting words such as teatralidad or espectáculo to replace performance.

Words such as acción and representación allow for individual action and intervention. Acción can be defined as an act, an avant-garde happening, a rally or political intervention, such as the street theatre protests staged by the Peruvian theatre collective Yuyachkani (see chapter 7) or the escraches or acts of public shaming carried out against torturers by H.I.J.O.S., the human rights organization composed of children of the disappeared in Argentina (see chapter 6). Thus, acción brings together both the aesthetic and the political dimensions of perform. But the economic and social mandates pressuring individuals to perform in certain normative ways fall out—the way we perform our gender or ethnicity and so on. Acción seems more directed and intentional, and thus less socially and politically embroiled than perform, which evokes both the prohibition and the potential for transgression. We may, for example, be performing multiple socially constructed roles at once, even while engaged in one clearly defined antimilitary acción. Representation, even with its verb to represent, conjures up notions of mimesis, of a break between the “real” and its representation, that performance and perform have so productively complicated. Although these terms have been proposed instead of the foreign-sounding performance, they too derive from Western languages, cultural histories, and ideologies.

Why, then, not use a term from one of the non-European languages, such as Náhuatl, Maya, Quechua, Aymara, or any of the hundreds of indigenous languages still spoken in the Americas? Olin, meaning movement in Náhuatl, seems a possible candidate. Olin is the motor behind everything that happens in life, the repeated movement of the sun, stars, earth, and elements. Olin, also meaning “hule” or rubber, was applied to sacrificial victims to ease the transition from the earthly realm to the divine. Olin, furthermore, is a month in the Mexica calendar and, thus, enables temporal and historical specificity. And Olin also manifests herself/himself as a deity who intervenes in social matters. The term simultaneously captures the broad, all-encompassing nature of performance as reiterative process and carrying through as well as its potential for historical specificity, transition,
and individual cultural agency. Or maybe adopt areito, the term for song-dance? Areitos, from the Arawack aririn, was used by the conquerors to describe a collective act involving singing, dancing, celebration, and worship that claimed aesthetic as well as sociopolitical and religious legitimacy. This term is attractive because it blurs all Aristotelian notions of discretely developed genres, publics, and ends. It clearly reflects the assumption that cultural manifestations exceed compartmentalization either by genre (song-dance), by participant/actors, or by intended effect (religious, sociopolitical, aesthetic) that ground Western cultural thought. It calls into question our taxonomies, even as it points to new interpretive possibilities.

So why not? In this case, I believe, replacing a word with a recognizable, albeit problematic, history—such as performance—with one developed in a different context and to signal a profoundly different worldview would only be an act of wishful thinking, an aspiration to forgetting our shared history of power relations and cultural domination that would not disappear even if we changed our language. Performance, as a theoretical term rather than as an object or a practice, is a newcomer to the field. Although it emerges in the United States at a time of disciplinary shifts to engage areas of analysis that previously exceeded academic boundaries (i.e., “the aesthetics of everyday life”), it is not, like theatre, weighed down by centuries of colonial evangelical or normalizing activity. Its very undefinability and complexity I find reassuring. Performance carries the possibility of challenge, even self-challenge, within it. As a term simultaneously connoting a process, a praxis, an episteme, a mode of transmission, an accomplishment, and a means of intervening in the world, it far exceeds the possibilities of these other words offered in its place. Moreover, the problem of untranslatability, as I see it, is actually a positive one, a necessary stumbling block that reminds us that “we”—whether in our various disciplines, or languages, or geographic locations throughout the Americas—do not simply or unproblematically understand each other. I propose that we proceed from that premise—that we do not understand each other—and recognize that each effort in that direction needs to work against notions of easy access, decipherability, and translatability. This stumbling block stymies not only Spanish and Portuguese speakers faced with a foreign word, but English speakers who thought they knew what performance meant.
The Archive and the Repertoire

My particular investment in performance studies derives less from what it *is* than what it allows us to *do*. By taking performance seriously as a system of learning, storing, and transmitting knowledge, performance studies allows us to expand what we understand by “knowledge.” This move, for starters, might prepare us to challenge the preponderance of writing in Western epistemologies. As I suggest in this study, writing has paradoxically come to stand in for and against embodiment. When the friars arrived in the New World in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, as I explore, they claimed that the indigenous peoples’ past—and the “lives they lived”—had disappeared because they had no writing. Now, on the brink of a digital revolution that both utilizes and threatens to displace writing, the body again seems poised to disappear in a virtual space that eludes embodiment. Embodied expression has participated and will probably continue to participate in the transmission of social knowledge, memory, and identity pre- and postwriting. Without ignoring the pressures to rethink writing and embodiment from the vantage point of the epistemic changes brought on by digital technologies, I will focus my analysis here on some of the methodological implications of revalorizing expressive, embodied culture.

By shifting the focus from written to embodied culture, from the discursive to the performatic, we need to shift our methodologies. Instead of focusing on patterns of cultural expression in terms of texts and narratives, we might think about them as scenarios that do not reduce gestures and embodied practices to narrative description. This shift necessarily alters what
academic disciplines regard as appropriate canons, and might extend the traditional disciplinary boundaries to include practices previously outside their purview.

The concept of performance, as an embodied praxis and episteme, for example, would prove vital in redefining Latin American studies because it decenters the historic role of writing introduced by the Conquest. As Angel Rama notes in *The Lettered City*, “The exclusive place of writing in Latin American societies made it so revered as to take on an aura of sacredness... Written documents seemed not to spring from social life but rather be imposed upon it and to force it into a mold not at all made to measure.”

Although the Aztecs, Mayas, and Incas practiced writing before the Conquest—either in pictogram form, hieroglyphs, or knotting systems—it never replaced the performed utterance. Writing, though highly valued, was primarily a prompt to performance, a mnemonic aid. More precise information could be stored through writing and it required specialized skills, but it depended on embodied culture for transmission. As in medieval Europe, writing was a privileged form practiced by only the specialized few. Through *in tlilli in tlapalli* (“the red and black ink,” as the Nahuas called wisdom associated with writing), Mesoamericans stored their understanding of planetary movement, time, and the calendar. Codices transmitted historical accounts, important dates, regional affairs, cosmic phenomena, and other kinds of knowledge. Writing was censored, and indigenous scribes lived in mortal fear of transgression. Histories were burned and rewritten to suit the memorializing needs of those in power. The space of written culture then, as now, seemed easier to control than embodied culture. But writing was far more dependent on embodied culture for transmission than the other way around. Enrique Florescano, an eminent Mexican historian, notes, “Besides the *tlacuilos*, or specialists who painted the books, there were specialists who read them, interpreted them, memorized them, and expounded on them in detail before audiences of non-specialists.”

To my mind, however, Florescano’s description of these mutually sustaining systems overemphasizes the role of writing. It would be limiting to understand embodied performance as primarily transmitting those “essential facts” written in the codices or painted books. The codices communicate far more than facts. The images, so visually dense, transmit knowledge of ritualized movement and everyday social practices. Many other kinds of
knowledge that involved no written component were also passed on through expressive culture—through dances, rituals, funerals, colors, *huehuehtlah-tolli* ("the ancient word," wisdom handed down through speech), and majestic displays of power and wealth. Scribes were trained in a specialized school or *calmecac*, which also taught dancing, recitation, and other forms of communication essential for social interaction. Education focused primarily on these techniques of the body to ensure indoctrination and continuity.

What changed with the Conquest was not that writing displaced embodied practice (we need only remember that the friars brought their own embodied practices) but the degree of legitimization of writing over other epistemic and mnemonic systems. Writing now assured that Power, with a capital *P*, as Rama puts it, could be developed and enforced without the input of the great majority of the population, the indigenous and marginal populations of the colonial period without access to systematic writing. Not only did the colonizers burn the ancient codices, they limited the access to writing to a very small group of conquered males who they felt would promote their evangelical efforts. While the conquerors elaborated, rather than transformed, an elite practice and gender-power arrangement, the importance granted writing came at the expense of embodied practices as a way of knowing and making claims. Those who controlled writing, first the friars, then the *letrados* (literally, "lettered"), gained an inordinate amount of power. Writing also allowed European imperial centers—Spain and Portugal—to control their colonial populations from abroad. Writing is about distance, as de Certeau notes: "The power that writing's expansionism leaves intact is colonial in principle. It is extended without being changed. It is tautological, immunized against both any alterity that might transform it and whatever dares to resist it." 28

The separation that Rama notes between the written and spoken word, echoed in de Certeau, points to only one aspect of the repression of indigenous embodied practice as a form of knowing as well as a system for storing and transmitting knowledge. Nonverbal practices—such as dance, ritual, and cooking, to name a few—that long served to preserve a sense of communal identity and memory, were not considered valid forms of knowledge. Many kinds of performance, deemed idolatrous by religious and civil authorities, were prohibited altogether. Claims manifested through performance, whether the tying of robes to signify marriage or performed land
claims, ceased to carry legal weight. Those who had dedicated their lives to mastering cultural practices, such as carving masks or playing music, were not considered “experts,” a designation reserved for book-learned scholars. While the Church substituted its own performatic practices, the neophytes could no longer lay claims to expertise or tradition to legitimate their authority. The rift, I submit, does not lie between the written and spoken word, but between the archive of supposedly enduring materials (i.e., texts, documents, buildings, bones) and the so-called ephemeral repertoire of embodied practice/knowledge (i.e., spoken language, dance, sports, ritual).

“Archival” memory exists as documents, maps, literary texts, letters, archaeological remains, bones, videos, films, CDs, all those items supposedly resistant to change. Archive, from the Greek, etymologically refers to “a public building,” “a place where records are kept.” From arkhe, it also means a beginning, the first place, the government. By shifting the dictionary entries into a syntactical arrangement, we might conclude that the archival, from the beginning, sustains power. Archival memory works across distance, over time and space; investigators can go back to reexamine an ancient manuscript, letters find their addresses through time and place, and computer discs at times cough up lost files with the right software. The fact that archival memory succeeds in separating the source of “knowledge” from the knower—in time and/or space—leads to comments, such as de Certeau’s, that it is “expansionist” and “immunized against alterity” (216). What changes over time is the value, relevance, or meaning of the archive, how the items it contains get interpreted, even embodied. Bones might remain the same, even though their story may change, depending on the paleontologist or forensic anthropologist who examines them. Antigone might be performed in multiple ways, whereas the unchanging text assures a stable signifier. Written texts allow scholars to trace literary traditions, sources, and influences. Insofar as it constitutes materials that seem to endure, the archive exceeds the live. There are several myths attending the archive. One is that it is unmediated, that objects located there might mean something outside the framing of the archival impetus itself. What makes an object archival is the process whereby it is selected, classified, and presented for analysis. Another myth is that the archive resists change, corruptibility, and political manipulation. Individual things—books, DNA evidence, photo IDs—might mysteriously appear in or disappear from the archive.
The repertoire, on the other hand, enacts embodied memory: performances, gestures, orality, movement, dance, singing—in short, all those acts usually thought of as ephemeral, nonreproducible knowledge. Repertoire, etymologically “a treasury, an inventory,” also allows for individual agency, referring also to “the finder, discoverer,” and meaning “to find out.”30 The repertoire requires presence: people participate in the production and reproduction of knowledge by “being there,” being a part of the transmission. As opposed to the supposedly stable objects in the archive, the actions that are the repertoire do not remain the same. The repertoire both keeps and transforms choreographies of meaning. Sports enthusiasts might claim that soccer has remained unchanged for the past hundred years, even though players and fans from different countries have appropriated the event in diverse ways. Dances change over time, even though generations of dancers (and even individual dancers) swear they’re always the same. But even though the embodiment changes, the meaning might very well remain the same.

The repertoire too, then, allows scholars to trace traditions and influences. Many kinds of performances have traveled throughout the Americas, leaving their mark as they move. Scholar Richard Flores, for example, maps out the way pastorelas or shepherds’ plays moved from Spain, to central Mexico, to Mexico’s northwest, and then to what is now the southwest of the United States. The different versions permit him to distinguish among various routes.31 Max Harris has traced the practice of a specific mock battle, moros y cristianos, from pre-Conquest Spain to sixteenth-century Mexico and into the present.32 The repertoire allows for an alternative perspective on historical processes of transnational contact and invites a remapping of the Americas, this time by following traditions of embodied practice.

Certainly it is true that individual instances of performances disappear from the repertoire. This happens to a lesser degree in the archive. The question of disappearance in relation to the archive and the repertoire differs in kind as well as degree. The live performance can never be captured or transmitted through the archive. A video of a performance is not a performance, though it often comes to replace the performance as a thing in itself (the video is part of the archive; what it represents is part of the repertoire). Embodied memory, because it is live, exceeds the archive’s ability to capture it. But that does not mean that performance—as ritualized, formalized, or reiterative behavior—disappears.33 Performances also replicate themselves
through their own structures and codes. This means that the repertoire, like the archive, is mediated. The process of selection, memorization or internalization, and transmission takes place within [and in turn helps constitute] specific systems of re-presentation. Multiple forms of embodied acts are always present, though in a constant state of againness. They reconstitute themselves, transmitting communal memories, histories, and values from one group/generation to the next. Embodied and performed acts generate, record, and transmit knowledge.

The archive and the repertoire have always been important sources of information, both exceeding the limitations of the other, in literate and semi-literate societies. They usually work in tandem and they work alongside other systems of transmission—the digital and the visual, to name two. Innumerable practices in the most literate societies require both an archival and an embodied dimension: weddings need both the performative utterance of “I do” and the signed contract; the legality of a court decision lies in the combination of the live trial and the recorded outcome; the performance of a claim contributes to its legality. We have only to think of Columbus planting the Spanish flag in the New World or Neil Armstrong planting the U.S. flag on the moon. Materials from the archive shape embodied practice in innumerable ways, yet never totally dictate embodiment. Jesús Martín-Barbero, a Colombian theorist who works in media studies, illustrates the uses that viewers make of mass media, say, the soap opera. It’s not simply that the media impose structures of desire and appropriate behavior. How populations develop ways of viewing, living with, and retelling or recycling the materials allows for a broad range of responses. Mediations, he argues, not the media, provide the key to understanding social behaviors. Those responses and behaviors, in turn, are taken up and appropriated by the mass media in a dialogic, rather than one-way, manner.

Even though the archive and the repertoire exist in a constant state of interaction, the tendency has been to banish the repertoire to the past. Jacques Le Goff, for example, writes of “ethnic memory”: “The principal domain in which the collective memory of peoples without writing crystallizes is that which provides an apparently historical foundation for the existence of ethnic groups or families, that is, myths of origin.” He suggests, thus, that writing provides historical consciousness and orality provides mythic consciousness. Pierre Nora’s distinction between the “lieux”
and “‘milieux’ de mémoire” creates a similar binary, whereby the milieux (which closely resemble the repertoire) belong to the past and lieux are a thing of the present. For Nora, the milieux de mémoire, what he calls the “real environments of memory,” enact embodied knowledge: “gestures and habits, in skills passed down by unspoken traditions, in the body’s inherent self-knowledge, in unstudied reflexes and ingrained memories.” The difference between my thinking and his, however, is that for him the milieux de mémoire constitute the primordial, unmediated, and spontaneous sites of “true memory,” and the lieux de mémoire—the archival memory—are their antithesis, modern, fictional, and highly mediated. A “trace,” “mediation,” and “distance,” he argues, has separated the act from the meaning, moving us from the realm of true memory to that of history (285). This paradigm polarizes history and memory as opposite poles of a binary. Nora does not differentiate among forms of transmission (embodied or archival) or among different kinds of publics and communities. His differentiation falls into a temporal before and after, a rift between past (traditional, authentic, now lost) and present (generalized as modern, global, and “mass” culture).

The relationship between the archive and the repertoire, as I see it, is certainly not sequential (the former ascending to prominence after the disappearance of the latter, as Nora would have it). Nor is it true versus false, mediated versus unmediated, primordial versus modern. Nor is it a binary. Other systems of transmission—like the digital—complicate any simple binary formulation. Yet it too readily falls into a binary, with the written and archival constituting hegemonic power and the repertoire providing the anti-hegemonic challenge. Performance belongs to the strong as well as the weak; it underwrites de Certeau’s “strategies” as well as “tactics,” Bakhtin’s “banquet” as well as “carnival.” The modes of storing and transmitting knowledge are many and mixed and embodied performances have often contributed to the maintenance of a repressive social order. We need only look to the broad range of political practices in the Americas exercised on human bodies, from pre-Conquest human sacrifices, to Inquisitorial burnings at the stake, to the lynchings of African Americans, to contemporary acts of state-sponsored torture and disappearances. We need not polarize the relationship between these different kinds of knowledge to acknowledge that they have often proved antagonistic in the struggle for cultural survival or supremacy.

The tensions developed historically between the archive and the reper-
toire continue to play themselves out in discussions about “world” culture and “intangible heritage.” This is not the place to rehearse the arguments in any detail, but I would like at least to point to some of the issues that concern my topic.

As laws have increasingly come into place to protect intellectual and artistic property, people have also considered ways to protect “intangible” property. How do we protect the performances, behaviors, and expressions that constitute the repertoire? The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is currently wrestling with how to promote the work “of safeguarding, protecting and revitalizing cultural spaces or forms of cultural expression proclaimed as ‘masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity.’” These safeguards would protect “traditional and popular forms of cultural expression,” such as, using their example, storytelling.38

Insofar as the materials in the repertoire participate in the production and transmission of knowledge, I agree that they warrant protection. Yet, it is not clear that UNESCO has been able to conceive of how best to protect this “intangible heritage.” Although they recognize that the “methods of preservation applicable to the physical heritage are inappropriate for the intangible heritage,” these differences can only be imagined in language and strategies associated with the archive. Masterpieces points not only to objects, but to an entire system of valorization that Artaud discarded as outdated in the early twentieth century. Heritage, linked etymologically to inheritance, again underlines the material property that passes down to the heirs. Humanity might well be considered both the producer and the consumer of these cultural goods, but its abstraction undermines the sense of cultural agency. Moreover, UNESCO’s goal seems to protect certain kinds of performances—basically, those produced by the “traditional” and “popular” sectors. This move repeats the salvage ethnography of the first half of the twentieth century, implying that these forms would disappear without official intervention and preservation. Part of UNESCO’s project involves moving materials from the repertoire into the archive (“to record their form on tape”). However, UNESCO is also consciously trying to protect embodied transmission (“to facilitate their survival by helping the persons concerned and assisting transmission to future generations”). But how will this be accomplished? The one program they have developed thus far, “Living Human
Treasures,” protects the “possessors of traditional cultural skills.” To me, this conjures up visions of a fetishized humanoid object that Guillermo Gómez-Peña might dream up for a living diorama in an installation. These solutions seem destined to reproduce the problems of objectifying, isolating, and exoticizing the non-Western that they claim to address. Without understanding the working of the repertoire, the ways peoples produce and transmit knowledge through embodied action, it will be difficult to know how to develop legal claims to ownership. But this differs from the “preservation” argument that, to my mind, barely conceals a deep colonial nostalgia.

The strain between what I call the archive and the repertoire has often been constructed as existing between written and spoken language. The archive includes, but is not limited to, written texts. The repertoire contains verbal performances—songs, prayers, speeches—as well as nonverbal practices. The written/oral divide does, on one level, capture the archive/reertoire difference I am developing in this study insofar as the means of transmission differ, as do the requirements of storage and dissemination. The repertoire, whether in terms of verbal or nonverbal expression, transmits live, embodied actions. As such, traditions are stored in the body, through various mnemonic methods, and transmitted “live” in the here and now to a live audience. Forms handed down from the past are experienced as present. Although this may well describe the mechanics of spoken language, it also describes a dance recital or a religious festival. It is only because Western culture is wedded to the word, whether written or spoken, that language claims such epistemic and explanatory power.

The writing = memory/knowledge equation is central to Western epistemology. “The metaphor of memory as a written surface is so ancient and so persistent in all Western cultures,” writes Mary Carruthers, “that it must, I think, be seen as a governing model or ‘cognitive archetype.’” That model continues to bring about the disappearance of embodied knowledge that it so frequently announces. During the sixteenth century, de Certeau argues, writing and printing allowed for “an indefinite reproduction of the same products,” as “opposed to speech, which neither travels very far nor preserves much of anything. . . . the signifier cannot be detached from the individual or collective body.” (Parenthetically, the limitation that de Certeau attributes here to speech—“the signifier cannot be detached from the individual or
collective body”—also, of course, contributes to the political, affective, and mnemonic power of the repertoire, as I argue in this study.)

Freud’s “A Note upon the ‘Mystic Writing-Pad’” bypasses the historically situated human body in his theorizations on memory. By using the admittedly imperfect analogy to the mystic writing pad, Freud attempts to approximate the “unlimited receptive capacity and a retention of permanent traces,” which he sees as fundamental properties of “the perceptual apparatus of the mind.” A modern computer, of course, serves as a better analogy, though it too fails to generate memories and its exterior body—a see-through shell in the recent Macintosh model—serves only to protect and highlight the marvelous internal apparatus. Neither the mystic writing pad nor the computer allows for a body. So too, Freud’s analogy limits itself to the external writing mechanism and the pure disembodied psychic apparatus that “has an unlimited receptive capacity for new perceptions and nevertheless lays down permanent—even though not unalterable—memory-traces on them” (228). The psyche can be imagined only as a writing surface, the permanent trace only as an act of writing. Instead of reinforcing memory or providing an analogy, writing becomes memory itself: “I have only to bear in mind the place where this ‘memory’ has been deposited and I can then ‘reproduce’ it at any time I like, with the certainty that it will have remained unaltered” (227).

Derrida, in “Freud and the Scene of Writing,” refers to the “metaphor of writing which haunts European discourse” without expanding toward the idea of a repertoire of embodied knowledge. Even when he points to areas for further research, he calls for a “history of writing” (214) without noting that history might disappear in its very coming to light. When he writes “Writing is unthinkable without repression” (226), the repression that comes to my mind is that history of colonial repudiation through documentation that dates back to the sixteenth century Americas. For Derrida, those repressions are “the deletions, blanks, and disguises” (226) of and within writing itself—surely an act of writing that stages its own practice of erasure and foreclosure.

The dominance of language and writing has come to stand for meaning itself. Live, embodied practices not based in linguistic or literary codes, we must assume, have no claims on meaning. As Barthes puts it, “The intelligible is reputed antipathetic to lived experience.” This suggests that
Barthes disagreed with situating intelligibility as antithetical to lived experience, yet in other essays he asserts that everything that has meaning becomes “a kind of writing.”

Part of what performance and performance studies allow us to do, then, is take seriously the repertoire of embodied practices as an important system of knowing and transmitting knowledge. The repertoire, on a very practical level, expands the traditional archive used by academic departments in the humanities. Departments of Spanish and Portuguese in the United States, for example, emphasize language and literature, though literature is clearly their focus. In Latin American institutions, departamentos de letras, which include literature and cultural studies, belong to the school of filosofia y letras (philosophy and literature). Some of these departments do focus on oral literatures, which on the surface at least seem to combine materials from the repertoire and the archive. However, the term oral literature itself tells us that the oral has already been transformed into literature, the repertoire transferred to the archive. The oral was “historically constituted as a category, . . . even fabricated,” Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett argues, under the forces of nationalism. The archive, in the case of oral literatures, pre-dates and constitutes the phenomena it purports to document. Nonetheless, many of these departments do combine the workings of the archive and the repertoire in productive ways, although perhaps not in the way that scholars might expect. Departments that actually take the teaching of language seriously, for example, have some experience thinking about reiterated, embodied social practice. Students learn a second language by imagining themselves in a different social setting, by staging scenarios where the acquired language takes on meaning, by imitating, repeating, and rehearsing not just words but cultural attitudes. Theorizing these practices, not just as pedagogical strategies but as the transmission of embodied cultural behavior, would enable scholars to branch out into new critical thinking about the repertoire. A performance studies lens would enrich these disciplines, bridging the schism not only between literary and oral traditions, but between verbal and nonverbal embodied cultural practice.

Similarly, performance studies challenges the disciplinary compartmentalization of the arts—with dance assigned to one department, music to another, dramatic performance to yet another—as though many forms of artistic production have anything to do with those divides. This compart-
mentalization also reinforces the notion that the arts are separable from the social constructs within which they participate—either for the first or nth time. Performances, even those with almost purely aesthetic pretensions, move in all sorts of circuits, including national and transnational spaces and economies. Every performance enacts a theory, and every theory performs in the public sphere. Because of its interdisciplinary character, performance studies can bring disciplines that had previously been kept separate into direct contact with each other and with their historical, intellectual, and sociopolitical context. This training challenges students to develop their theoretical paradigms by drawing from both textual and embodied practice. They receive training in various methodologies: ethnographic fieldwork, interviewing techniques, movement analysis, digital technologies, sound, textual analysis, and performative writing, among others.

Performance studies, then, offers a way of rethinking the canon and critical methodologies. For even as scholars in the United States and Latin America acknowledge the need to free ourselves from the dominance of the text—as the privileged or even sole object of analysis—our theoretical tools continue to be haunted by the literary legacy. Some scholars turn to cultural studies and no longer limit themselves to the examination of texts, but their training in close readings and textual analysis might well turn everything they view into a text or narrative, whether it’s a funeral, an electoral campaign, or a carnival. The tendency in cultural studies to treat all phenomena as textual differentiates it from performance studies. As cultural studies expands the range of materials under consideration, it still leaves all the explanatory power with the letras while occluding other forms of transmission. Dwight Conquergood carries the point further in a recent essay: “Only middle-class academics could blithely assume that all the world is a text because texts and reading are central to their life-world, and occupational security.”

It’s imperative now, however overdue, to pay attention to the repertoire. But what would that entail methodologically? It’s not simply that we shift to the live as the focus of our analysis, or develop various strategies for garnering information, such as undertaking ethnographic research, interviews, and field notes. Or even alter our hierarchies of legitimation that structure our traditional academic practice (such as book learning, written sources, and documents). We need to rethink our method of analysis.
Here I will focus on one example. Instead of privileging texts and narratives, we could also look to scenarios as meaning-making paradigms that structure social environments, behaviors, and potential outcomes. Scenarios of discovery, for example, have appeared constantly throughout the past five hundred years in the Americas. Why do they continue to be so compelling? What accounts for their explanatory and affective power? How can they be parodied and subverted? Scenario, “a sketch or outline of the plot of a play, giving particulars of the scenes, situations etc.,” like performance, means never for the first time. Like Barthes’s mythical speech, it consists of “material which has already been worked on” (Mythologies, 110). Its portable framework bears the weight of accumulative repeats. The scenario makes visible, yet again, what is already there: the ghosts, the images, the stereotypes. The discoverer, conqueror, “savage,” and native princess, for example, might be staple characters in many Western scenarios. Sometimes they are written down as scripts, but the scenario predates the script and allows for many possible “endings.” At times, people may actually undertake adventures to live the glorious fantasy of possession. Others may tune in regularly to television shows along the lines of Survivor or Fantasy Island. The scenario structures our understanding. It also haunts our present, a form of hauntology (see chapter 5) that resuscitates and reactivates old dramas. We’ve seen it all before. The framework allows for occlusions; by positioning our perspective, it promotes certain views while helping to disappear others. In the Fantasy Island scenario, for example, we might be encouraged to overlook the displacement and disappearance of native peoples, gender exploitation, environmental impact, and so on. This partial blinding is what I have previously called percepticide.

The scenario includes features well theorized in literary analysis, such as narrative and plot, but demands that we also pay attention to milieux and corporeal behaviors such as gestures, attitudes, and tones not reducible to language. Simultaneously setup and action, scenarios frame and activate social dramas. The setup lays out the range of possibilities; all the elements are there: encounter, conflict, resolution, and dénouement, for example. These elements, of course, are themselves the product of economic, political, and social structures that they, in turn, tend to reproduce. All scenarios have localized meaning, though many attempt to pass as universally valid. Actions and behaviors arising from the setup might be predictable, a seemingly
natural consequence of the assumptions, values, goals, power relations, presumed audience, and epistemic grids established by the setup itself. But they are, ultimately, flexible and open to change. Social actors may be assigned roles deemed static and inflexible by some. Nonetheless, the irreconcilable friction between the social actors and the roles allows for degrees of critical detachment and cultural agency. The scenario of conquest, restaged in numerous acts of possession as well as in plays, rituals, and mock battles throughout the Americas, can be and often has been subverted from within. Examples range from sixteenth-century mock battles to Guillermo Gómez-Peña and Coco Fusco’s 1992 “Two Undiscovered Amerindians,” a performance in a cage. Like narrative, as V. Propp proposed in 1928, scenarios are limited to a finite number of variations, with their own classifications, categories, themes, forms, characters, and so on. Here, I will simply point to some of the ways that using scenario as a paradigm for understanding social structures and behaviors might allow us to draw from the repertoire as well as the archive.

First, to recall, recount, or reactivate a scenario we need to conjure up the physical location (the “scene” as physical environment, such as a stage or place in English; escenario, a false cognate means stage in Spanish). Scene denotes intentionality, artistic or otherwise (the scene of the crime), and signals conscious strategies of display. The word appropriately suggests both the material stage as well as the highly codified environment that gives viewers pertinent information, say, class status or historical period. The furnishings, clothing, sounds, and style contribute to the viewer’s understanding of what might conceivably transpire there. The two, scene and scenario, stand in metonymic relationship: the place allows us to think about the possibilities of the action. But action also defines place. If, as de Certeau suggests, “space is a practiced place,” then there is no such thing as place, for no place is free of history and social practice.

Second, in scenarios, viewers need to deal with the embodiment of the social actors. Thus, in addition to the functions these actors perform, so well charted by Propp in relation to narrative structures, the scenario requires us to wrestle with the social construction of bodies in particular contexts. Propp stresses the importance of visual detail in describing the attributes of the characters: “By attributes we mean the totality of all the external qualities of the characters: their age, sex, status, external appearance, peculiar-
ties of appearance, and so forth” (87). But scenarios by definition introduce the generative critical distance between social actor and character. Whether it’s a question of mimetic representation (an actor assuming a role) or of performativity, of social actors assuming socially regulated patterns of appropriate behavior, the scenario more fully allows us to keep both the social actor and the role in view simultaneously, and thus recognize the areas of resistance and tension. The frictions between plot and character (on the level of narrative) and embodiment (social actors) make for some of the most remarkable instances of parody and resistance in performance traditions in the Americas.

Take the mock battles of the Moors and Christians, for example, staged in Mexico in the sixteenth century. The tradition, as the name implies, came from Spain, a transplanting of the theme of the reconquest of Spain after the expulsion of Moors and Jews in 1492. In Mexico, these battles ended predictably with the defeat of the Indians-as-Moors and a mass baptism. On the level of the narrative structure that polarizes groups into definable us/Them categories, we must agree with commentators who see in these performances the reiterative humiliation of the native populations. In regard to measurable efficaciousness, we might conclude that these scenarios were highly successful from the Spaniard’s perspective, leading as they did to the conversion of thousands of people. The embodied performance, however, permits us to recognize other dimensions as well. For one thing, all the “actors” of the mock battles were indigenous; some dressed up as Spaniards, others as Turks. Rather than cementing cultural and racial difference, as the plot and characterization intend, the enactment might have more to do with cultural masquerading and strategic repositioning. The indigenous performers were neither Moors nor Christians, and their reenactments allowed them to dress up and act out their own versions of the us/Them. In one particularly humorous rendition, the character of the doomed Muslim king surprisingly turned into that of the conqueror Cortés. The obligatory defeat of the Moor in the scripted version masked the joyful, unscripted defeat of the Spaniards in the performance. In this mock battle, the conquered staged their longing for their own reconquista of Mexico, as Max Harris has argued. The space of ambiguity and maneuver does not lie, however, in the “hidden transcript,” the term developed by anthropologist James Scott to mark a strategy that subordinate groups create “that represents a critique of power spoken behind
the back of the dominant.” Transcripts, normally understood as written copy or documents, transfer archival knowledge within a specific economy of interaction. This mock battle makes clear that it’s the embodied nature of the repertoire that grants these social actors the opportunity to rearrange characters in parodic and subversive ways. The parody takes place in front of the Spaniards themselves, one of whom was so struck by the incredible display that he wrote a detailed letter to a fellow friar.

Third, scenarios, by encapsulating both the setup and the action/behaviors, are formulaic structures that predispose certain outcomes and yet allow for reversal, parody, and change. The frame is basically fixed and, as such, repeatable and transferable. Scenarios may consciously reference each other by the way they frame the situation and quote words and gestures. They may often appear stereotypical, with situations and characters frozen within them. The scenario of conquest has been replayed again and again—from Cortés’s entrance into Tenochtitlán, to the meeting between Pizarro and Atahualpa, to Oñate’s claiming possession of New Mexico. Each repeat adds to its affective and explanatory power until the outcome seems a foregone conclusion. Each new conqueror may expect the natives to fall at his feet just on the strength of the reactivated scenario. In time and with changing circumstances, however, the paradigm may become obsolete and be replaced by another. Early sixteenth-century scenarios of conquest, as Jill Lane notes, became recast as scenarios of conversion by the end of the century in efforts to mitigate the violence of the entangled projects. Conquest, as a term rather than as a project, was out. Thus, as with Bourdieu’s habitus—“a particular type of environment [e.g. the material conditions of existence characteristic of class condition] produces habitus, systems of durable, transposable dispositions”—scenarios are “durable, transposable dispositions.”

That is, they are passed on and remain remarkably coherent paradigms of seemingly unchanging attitudes and values. Yet, they adapt constantly to reigning conditions. Unlike habitus, which can refer to broad social structures such as class, scenarios refer to more specific repertoires of cultural imaginings.

Fourth, the transmission of a scenario reflects the multifaceted systems at work in the scenario itself: in passing it on, we can draw from various modes that come from the archive and/or the repertoire—writing, telling, reenactment, mime, gestus, dance, singing. The multiplicity of forms of transmis-
sion reminds us of the multiple systems at work. One is not reducible to another; they have different discursive and performatic structures. A cry or a Brechtian gestus might find no adequate verbal description, for these expressions are not reducible or posterior to language. The challenge is not to “translate” from an embodied expression into a linguistic one or vice versa but to recognize the strengths and limitations of each system.

Fifth, the scenario forces us to situate ourselves in relationship to it; as participants, spectators, or witnesses, we need to “be there,” part of the act of transfer. Thus, the scenario precludes a certain kind of distancing. Even the ethnographic writers who cling to the fantasy that they might observe cultures from the margins are part of the scenario, though perhaps not the one the writers strive to describe.  

Sixth, a scenario is not necessarily, or even primarily, mimetic. Although the paradigm allows for a continuity of cultural myths and assumptions, it usually works through reactivation rather than duplication. Scenarios conjure up past situations, at times so profoundly internalized by a society that no one remembers the precedence. The “frontier” scenario in the United States, for example, organizes events as diverse as smoking advertisements and the hunt for Osama Bin Laden. Rather than a copy, the scenario constitutes a once-againness.

Thinking about a scenario rather than a narrative, however, does not solve some of the issues inherent in representation in any form. The ethical problems of reproducing violence, whether in writing or in embodied behavior, plague scholars and artists, readers and spectators. Saidiya V. Hartman, in Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America, writes, “Only more obscene than the brutality unleashed at the whipping post is the demand that this suffering be materialized and evidenced by the display of the tortured body or endless recitations of the ghastly and the terrible.”

I agree with Hartman that of interest “are the ways we are called upon to participate in such scenes” (3)—as witnesses, spectators, or voyeurs; however, the scenario, as I posit in chapter 2, physically places the spectator within the frame and can force the ethical question: the signifier, we recall, “cannot be detached from the individual or collective body.” What is our role “there”?

By considering scenarios as well as narratives, we expand our ability to rigorously analyze the live and the scripted, the citational practices that
characterize both, how traditions get constituted and contested, the various trajectories and influences that might appear in one but not in the other. Scenarios, like other forms of transmission, allow commentators to historicize specific practices. In short, as I argue in the chapters that follow, the notion of the scenario allows us to more fully recognize the many ways in which the archive and the repertoire work to constitute and transmit social knowledge. The scenario places spectators within its frame, implicating us in its ethics and politics.

In the section that follows, I give an extended example of what an attempt to historicize performance might look like. Although all the chapters in this study look at contemporary performances in the Americas, throughout I propose that some of the debates I deal with can in fact be traced back to the sixteenth century. Scenarios change and adapt, but they don't seem to go away.

**HISTORICIZING PERFORMANCE**

In order to provide a truthful and reliable account of the origin of these Indian nations, an origin so doubtful and obscure, we would need some divine revelation or assistance to reveal this origin to us and help us understand it. However, lacking that revelation we can only speculate and conjecture about these beginnings, basing ourselves on the evidence provided by these people, whose strange ways, conduct, and lowly actions are so like those of the Hebrews, and I would not commit a great error if I were to state this as fact, considering their way of life, their ceremonies, their rites and superstitions, their omens and hypocrisies, so akin to and characteristic of those of the Jews; in no way do they seem to differ. The Holy Scriptures bear witness to this, and from them we draw proofs and reasons for holding this opinion to be true.—Fray Diego Durán, *History of the Indies of New Spain*

The inaugural moment of colonialism in the Americas introduces two discursive moves that work to devalue native performance, even while the colonizers were deeply engaged in their own performative project of creating a “new” Spain from an [idealized] image of the “old”: (1) the dismissal of indigenous performance traditions as episteme, and (2) the dismissal of “content” [religious belief] as bad objects, idolatry. These discourses simultaneously contradict and sustain each other. The first posits that performances, as ephemeral, nonwritten phenomena, cannot serve to create or
transmit knowledge. Thus, all traces of peoples without writing have disappeared. Only divine revelation, according to Durán, can help observers like himself recount the past by fitting it into preexisting accounts (such as the biblical). The second discourse admits that performance does indeed transmit knowledge, but insofar as that knowledge is idolatrous and opaque, performance itself needs to be controlled or eliminated. I would argue that remnants of both of these discourses continue to filter our understanding of contemporary performance practices in the Americas, but my emphasis here is on the initial deployment of these two discourses in the sixteenth century. Although I outline the two discourses separately, as they have been handed down to us, they are of course inseparable and work in tandem.

Part of the colonizing project throughout the Americas consisted in discrediting autochthonous ways of preserving and communicating historical understanding. As a result, the very existence/presence of these populations has come under question. Aztec and Mayan codices, or painted books, were destroyed as idolatrous, bad objects. But the colonizers also tried to destroy embodied memory systems, by both stamping them out and discrediting them. The Huarochirí Manuscript, written in Quechua at the end of the sixteenth century by Friar Francisco de Avila, sets the tone: “If the ancestors of the people called Indians had known writing in early times, then the lives they lived would not have faded from view until now.”61 The very “lives they lived” fade into “absence” when writing alone functions as archival evidence, as proof of presence.

Performance studies, we might claim anachronistically, was first articulated in the Americas as “absence studies,” disappearing the very populations it pretends to explain. Durán’s opening statement in his History of the Indies of New Spain (written in the second half of the sixteenth century) insists that we would need “divine revelation or assistance” to “provide a truthful and reliable account of the origin of these Indian nations.”62 From the sixteenth century onward, scholars have complained about the lack of valid sources. Although these claims go unchallenged, the early friars made clear the ideological assumptions/biases of what counts as sources. Durán stressed the value of written texts for his archival project, lamenting, “Some early friars burned ancient books and writings and thus they were lost. Then, too, the old people who could write these books are no longer alive to tell of the settling of this country, and it was they whom I would have consulted for my
chronicle” (20). That knowledge, he assumes, must necessarily be lost with
the destruction of writing. Why else would he not consult the heirs to the
“living memory”? He had no choice, he concludes, but to rely on his own
best judgment.

Since before the Conquest, as I noted, writing and embodied performance
have often worked together to layer the historical memories that constitute
community. Figure 2 illustrates the collaborative production of knowledge
led by Fray Bernardino de Sahagún that involved recitation, writing, and a
back-and-forth dialogue. The Jesuit friar José de Acosta described how young
people were trained in oral traditions: “It should be known that Mexicans
had a great curiosity in that young people learn by heart the sayings and com-
positions, and for that they had schools, like colleges or seminaries, where
the old taught the young these and many other things that by tradition they
conserve as whole as if they had writing among them.”63 Dance/song (areitos
and cantares) functioned as a way of telling history and communicating past
glories: “The cantares referred to memorable things and events that took
place in times past and present; and they were sung in the areitos and public
dances and in them too they told the praises with which they aggrandized
their kings and people deserving remembrance, for that they took great care
that the verse and language be very polished and dignified.”64

The sixteenth-century indigenous poet Fernando Alvarado Tezozómoc
composed a poem to be recited that depicts memory as grounded both in
orality and in writing (pictographs):

Never will it be lost, never will it be forgotten,
that which they came to do,
that which they came to record in their paintings:
their renown, their history, their memory.

always we will treasure it...
we who carry their blood and
their color,
we will tell it, we will pass it on.65

The telling is as important as the writing, the doing as central as the record-
ing, the memory passed down through bodies and mnemonic practices.
Memory paths and documented records might retain what the other “for-
Local scribes in the Andes have also been keeping written records in Quechua and Spanish since the sixteenth century. Even so, historical and genealogical information has been, and continues to be, performed and transmitted through performed “memory paths,” as anthropologist Thomas Abercrombie puts it, the ritualized incantations by inebriated males of names of ancestors and sacred places during which they remember and recite the events associated with them. Through these paths, they access ancestral stories, hearsay, and eye-witness accounts. (As the percentage of literate persons in the Andes has actually decreased since the sixteenth century, the need to recognize cultural transmission through embodied knowledge becomes even more pressing.)

Even though the relationship between the archive and the repertoire is not by definition antagonistic or oppositional, written documents have repeatedly announced the disappearance of the performance practices involved in mnemonic transmission. Writing has served as a strategy for repudiating and foreclosing the very embodiedness it claims to describe. Friar Avila was not alone in prematurely announcing the demise of practices, and peoples, that he could neither understand nor control. Again, parenthetically, it is important to stress that the repudiation of practices under examination cannot be limited to archival documentation. As Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett makes clear in *Destination Culture*, exhibitions, model villages, and other forms of live display often do the same: repudiate the cultures they claim to make visible.

What is at risk politically in thinking about embodied knowledge and performance as ephemeral as that which disappears? Whose memories “disappear” if only archival knowledge is valorized and granted permanence? Should we simply expand our notion of the archive to house the mnemonic and gestural practices and specialized knowledge transmitted live? Or get beyond the confines of the archive? I echo Rebecca Schneider’s question in “Archive Performance Remains”: “If we consider performance as a process of disappearance . . . are we limiting ourselves to an understanding of performance predetermined by our cultural habituation to the logic of the archive?” On the contrary: as I have tried to establish here, there is an advantage to thinking about a repertoire performed through dance, theatre,
song, ritual, witnessing, healing practices, memory paths, and the many other forms of repeatable behaviors as something that cannot be housed or contained in the archive.

Now, I will look at the second discourse that admits that performance generates and transmits knowledge, but rejects that knowledge as idolatrous and indecipherable. The charge against the ephemeral and constructed and visual nature of performance has tied into the discourse on idolatry. As Bruno Latour cautions in his essay “A Few Steps toward an Anthropology of the Iconoclastic Gesture,” “A large part of our critical acumen depends on a clear distinction between what is real and what is constructed, what is out there in the nature of things and what is there in the representation we make of them. Something has been lost however for the sake of this clarity and a heavy price has been paid for this dichotomy between ontological questions on the one hand and the epistemological questions on the other.”

How does this fracture between the ontological and the epistemological (the is/as) relate to iconoclasm? By delegitimating the constructed as a fetish or idol, the iconoclast attacks it with the “hammer of truth,” that is, God, who has not been made or constructed, is alone capable of creating. As the sixteenth-century friar Bernardino de Sahagún explains in his prologue to book 1 of the Florentine Codex, the idolater worships the constructed image, forgetting that God, not humans, is “the Creator.” “Unhappy are they, the accursed dead who worshipped as gods carvings of stone, carvings of wood, representations, images, things made of gold or of copper.” The “things made,” representations and images, were all deemed false, deceptive, pitiful, ephemeral, and dangerous. The “fact” that the indigenous peoples had been “deceived” cost them their humanity: “The people here on earth who know not God are not counted as human” (55). In shattering one idol, Sahagún creates his own false representation: the image of native peoples as “vain,” “worthless,” “blind,” “confused. . . . All their acts, their lives, were all viscous, filthy” (59–60). Latour, fully owning the constructedness of the fetish, argues for the constructedness of the fact as well: “The iconoclast . . . naively believed that the very facts he was using to shatter the idol were themselves produced without the help of any human agency” (69).

Importantly, Sahagún’s argument centers on binaries created between the visible and the invisible, between embodied and archival knowledge, between those idolaters who worship that which can be seen and those who

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know that the true God is the one “who is not seen.” Sahagún asks the natives to forgo the image and accept “the word . . . here written” (55). The word encapsulates the power of the sacred and the political, for it is the word of God, which “the King of Spain has sent to you,” as well as the Pope, “the Holy Father, who dwelleth in Rome” (55). The natives, he objects, know their gods only through their physical manifestations (the sun, moon, rain, fire, stars, etc.), but do not recognize the (invisible) creator behind these manifestations.

Clearly, the Mexica and other conquered native groups did not endorse the Western true/false, visible/invisible divide. They admitted no ontological distinction between human and nonhuman creation (i.e., ritual/“nature”). Rather, for the Mexicas, human creation participated in the dynamism of the cosmic order. Nature was ritualized just as ritual was naturalized. Mountains and temples shared the same cosmic function of mediating between cielo de arriba [the sky above] and cielo de abajo [the sky below]. This concept has little to do with the theories of representation, mime-sis, and isomorphism that underwrite the Western separation between the “original” and the once-removed. The performances—rituals, ceremonies, sacrifices—were not “just” representations but [among other things] presentations to the Gods as forms of debt payment. They constituted the is as well as the as if. These performances were, of course, also political: they cemented and made visible a social order, remapping the known universe, with Tenochtitlán as the ombligo or center.

The Náhuatl word ixiptlatl, usually translated as imagen, points to the basic misunderstanding. Imagen belongs to the same etymologic family as imitar. But ixiptlatl does not mean imitar but its opposite, the understanding of “spiritual being and physical being as fully integrated.” Ixiptlatl constitutes a very flexible category that includes gods, god delegates, god impersonators, priests, sacrificial victims dressed as gods, beggars wearing the flayed skins of captives, and wooden and vegetable seed-dough figures. One of the requirements of the ixiptlatl was that it be made, constructed, and that it be “temporary, concocted for the occasion, made and unmade during the course of the action.” Its constructed quality enabled, rather than detracted from, its sacred quality because the making was the currency of participation. Rather than a fetish, in which facere (to make) comes to mean feitico (sorcery, artificiality, idols), the ixiptlatl’s constructedness allows for
communication, presence, and exchange. Delegado (delegate) and representante (representative) and enviado (envoy) are more precise translations for ixiptlatl, reflecting that “which enables the god to present aspects of himself.” In other words, the ixiptlatl more closely coincided with the Catholic idea of transubstantiation than with an image or idol. The consecrated wafer, though man-made, was the body of Christ, not a representation or metaphor. Though it is an object, Catholics see it as imbued with divine essence, accomplishing the integration of spiritual and physical substance. Needless to say, Catholics’ deep anxiety about assuring orthodoxy in the understanding of the spiritual/physical relationship in their own practice (especially in the age of the Council of Trent) contributed to their dismissal of Mexica’s ixiptlatl as “bad objects” (idols).

The temporary nature of the ixiptlatl should not, as the Spaniards would suggest, connote the ephemeral and disappearing nature of the phenomenon. The constant making and unmaking points to the active role of human beings in promoting the regenerative quality of the universe, of life, of performance—all in a constant state of againness. Conversely, we can note in passing that the obsessive dependence on ritual participation also suggests that the Mexica and other groups were trapped in a sociopolitical system defined and maintained by ritually induced crisis, whether the rehearsal of the end of the world every fifty-two years in the New Fire ceremony or in relation to other natural cataclysms such as drought or earthquake. The making/unmaking reflects the defiance and terror associated with disappearance: the first four suns had all come to a catastrophic end. The extreme reliance on performance constituted the attempts by the Mexica to forestall closure by constantly choreographing the various apparitions, correspondences, and interventions (divine and human) that kept the universe in movement.

Interestingly, Sahagún interviewed the “leading elders” of villages for years and worked closely with experts “in all things courtly, military, governmental, and even idolatrous.” One assumes that he would have understood the multiple functions and meanings of the ixiptlatl as somewhat more complex than the biblical notion of the graven image. Not so. These are the images that he included to back up his argument about the indigenous peoples’ idolatrous practices.

Whether the Mexica performances were effective in maintaining the cos-

mic order or, instead, a symptom of profound disorder is open to debate. But there was no doubt in the minds of any of the early evangelists that performance practices efficaciously transmitted collective memories, values, and belief systems.

Sahagún clearly recognized how beliefs were transmitted through performance, though he acknowledged that he did not understand the content. The Devil “our enemy planted, in this land, a forest or a thorny thicket filled with very dense brambles, to perform his works therefrom and to hide himself therein in order not to be discovered.” The enemy of transparency, the Devil takes advantage of songs and dances and other practices of indigenous people as “hiding places in order to perform his works... Said songs contain so much guile that they say anything and proclaim that which he commands. But only those he addresses understand them.” The colonists’ claim to access met with the diabolic opaqueness of performance: “And [these songs] are sung to him without its being understood what they are about, other than by those who are natives and versed in this language... without being understood by others” (58). Shared performance and linguistic practices consti-
tuted the community itself. Others could not decipher the codes. The spiri-
tual conquest, these friars feared, was at best tentative. The Devil awaits the
“return to the dominion he has held. . . . And for that time it is good that
we have weapons on hand to meet him with. And to this end not only that
which is written in this third Book but also that which is written in the first,
second, fourth and fifth Books will serve” (59).

Writing served as a recognized weapon in the colonial arsenal. Sahagún
maintained that he needed to write down all the indigenous practices to
better eradicate them: “It is needful to know how they practiced them in the
time of their idolatry, for, through [our] lack of knowledge of this, they per-
form many idolatrous things in our presence without our understanding it”
(book 1, 45). “Preservation” served as a call to erasure. The ethnographic ap-
proach to the subject matter offered a safe strategy for handling dangerous
materials. It allowed, simultaneously, for documentation and disappearance;
the accounts preserved “diabolic” habits as forever alien and unassimilat-
able, transmitting a deep disgust for the behaviors described.79 The studied,
scholarly distancing functioned as repudiation. Yet, even after fifty years of
compiling the massive materials on Mexica practices, Sahagún suspected
that they had not completely disappeared.

These early colonial writings are all about erasure, either claiming that
ancient practices had disappeared or trying to accomplish the disappear-
ance they invoked. Ironically, they reveal a deep admiration for the peoples
and cultures targeted for destruction, what Sahagún refers to throughout the
Florentine Codex as “the degree of perfection of this Mexican people.” Even
more ironic, these writings have become invaluable archival resources on
ancient practices. During Sahagún’s lifetime, in fact, the Office of the Holy
Inquisition concluded that instead of serving as weapons against idolatry,
the books preserved and transmitted what they attempted to eradicate. The
prohibition was outright: “With great care and diligence you take measures
to get these books without there remaining originals or copies of them. . . .
you will be advised not to permit anyone, for any reason, in any language, to
write concerning the superstitions and way of life these Indians had” (book 1,
36–37). Sahagún died without knowing that one copy of his work had sur-
vived.

For all the ambivalence and prohibitions, these sixteenth-century writers
begrudgingly observed something again and again: these practices were not
disappearing. They continued to communicate meanings that their nervous observers did not understand. In 1539, a governmental edict took a hammer to the indigenous observance of the sacred, demoting it to a secular distraction. It mandated “that the Indians not have fiestas . . . in which there are areitos” and prohibited churches from attracting the native population “by profane means that include areitos, dancers, pole-flyers, that look like things of theatre or spectacle, because these spectacles distract their hearts from the concentration, quiet and devotion that one should have for divine practice.”

The fiestas, dances, and pole-flyers, integral components of the sacred, were now ordered aside in favor of the quiet behaviors the Spaniards associated with “divine practice.” In 1544 an edict lamented the “shame that in front of the Holy Sacrament there go men with masks and wearing women’s clothes, dancing and jumping, swaying indecently and lasciviously. . . . And, beside this, there is another greater objection, and that is the custom that these natives [naturales] had in their antiquity of solemnizing their fiestas to their idols with dances, music, rejoicing. They will think and accept it as doctrine and law that in this foolishness lies the sanctification of the fiestas” (241–42). A 1555 edict calls attention to the continuing nature of these practices: “Very inclined are the Indians of these parts to dances, and areitos and other forms of rejoicing that since their heathenism they were in the habit of practicing.” It also prohibits the following: “no use of insignia, nor ancient masks, that can cause any suspicion whatever, nor singing the songs of their rituals and ancient histories” (245). I’ll skip to 1651: “That in the Easter fiestas no profane comedies be permitted, nor indecent things mixed together.” But the prohibitions had widened; now the edicts targeted not just the native peoples but the religiosos as well: “Clergy should not dress up as women” (252). The practices, these edicts suggest, were in fact expanding, catching on with nonindigenous peoples. In 1670 the edicts include “not only Indians, but the Spaniards and the clergy” (253). In 1702, the battle against idolatrous performance continued with new prohibitions: “That there be no dances or other ceremonies that make allusion or reference to the superstitions of ancient heathenism” (257). And on and on: 1768, 1769, 1770, 1777, 1780, 1792, 1796, 1808, 1813.

Civil and ecclesiastical powers tried to replace the indigenous peoples’ opaque and “idolatrous” practices with other, more “appropriate” behav-
iors: shows of obedience and acquiescence. This clearly involved the transformation of the relationships among space, time, and cultural practice. The Church tried to impose itself as the sole locus of the sacred and organized religious and secular life both spatially and temporally. All indigenous peoples were ordered to live in town with “a good church, and one only, to which all may come.”

The litany of prohibitions sought to impose new segregated spatial practices and make visible the new social hierarchy: “Indians must not live off in the forests . . . under pain of whipping or prison”; “The caciques shall not hold gatherings, nor go about at night, after the bells are sounded for the souls in purgatory”; “All people must bend the knee before the sacrament”; “No baptized person shall possess idols, sacrifice any animals, draw blood by piercing their ears or noses, nor perform any rite, nor burn incense thereto, or fast in worship of their false idols”; “No dances shall be held except in daytime”; “All bows and arrows are to be burned”; “Towns must be in Spanish fashion, have guest-houses, one for Spaniards and another for Indians”; “No negro, slave or mestizo shall enter any village save with his master, and then stay more than a day and night.”

These edicts sought to limit the indigenous peoples’ capacity for movement, economic independence, self-expression, and community building, and they attempted to simplify surveillance to control visible behaviors. Changes in the patterns sought to interrupt what Maurice Halbwach called “the social framework of memory.” Under attack, of course, is the understanding, as Roach puts it, that “expressive movements [function] as mnemonic reserves, including patterned movements made and remembered by bodies.” Anything that recalled past behaviors was to be avoided, as was anything that complicated visible categorization and control. The finely honed racial categories put forward in the sixteenth century through the Inquisition—with its categorization of mestizos, mulattos, moriscos, and zambos, among others—participated in the development of techniques for visual control. The many edicts against all sorts of performance practices, from the danced songs or areitos to the “secret” gatherings, conveyed the recognition that they functioned as an episteme as well as a mnemonic practice.

The performance of the prohibitions seems as ubiquitous and continuous as the outlawed practices themselves. Neither disappeared.
MULTICODED PERFORMANCE

Around the hills there are three or four places where [the Indians] used to make very solemn sacrifices and they came to these places from distant lands. One of these is here in Mexico, where there is a hill called Tepéacac and the Spaniards call it Tepeaquilla, and now it is called Our Lady of Guadalupe; in this place they had a temple dedicated to the mother of the gods, whom they called Tonantzin, which means our Mother; there they made many sacrifices to honor this goddess and came to her from distant lands from more than twenty leagues, from all the regions of Mexico and they brought many offerings; men and women and young men and young women came to those feasts; there was a great gathering of people on those days and they all said let us go to the feast of Tonantzin; and now that the Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe was built there, they also call it Tonantzin. . . . it is something that should be remedied . . . this appears to be a satanic invention to lessen the idolatry under the equivocation of this name Tonantzin and they come now to visit this Tonantzin from far off, as far off as before, which devotion is also suspicious because everywhere there are many churches of Our Lady and they do not go to them.—Bernardino de Sahagún, Historia general de las cosas de Nueva España, translation in Memory, Myth, and Time in Mexico, by Enrique Florescano, trans. Albert G. Bork

Indigenous performances, paradoxically, seem to be transferred and reproduced within the very symbolic system designed to eliminate them: Roman Catholicism. Religion proved a vital conduit of social (as well as religious) behavior. The transfers occurred not just in the uneasy tensions between religious systems but within the religious systems themselves. It was not long before the very friars who had boasted of early spiritual victory over the conquered suspected that these new converts were in fact worshipping their old gods in a new guise.85 “Offerings to the idols,” Sahagún noted, “are clandestinely practiced under the pretext of the feasts which the Church celebrates to revere God.”86 Instead of replacing pre-Conquest forms of worship, the new rituals allowed for their continuity; satanic “equivocation” permitted those kneeling before Guadalupe to direct their attentions to Tonantzin.

The friars riled against any mixing and overlapping of belief systems, threatening to withhold Christian instruction “until the heathen ceremonies and false cults of their counterfeit deities are extinguished, erased.”87 The equivocal (because multivocal) nature of religious practice led friars to suspect the truthfulness of the native’s piety. Insisting on strict orthodoxy, they feared anything in indigenous practice that somehow resembled or

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overlapped with their own. Durán, in the *Book of the Gods and Rites*, draws some uneasy comparisons between the Nahua’s practice of human sacrifice and Christian communion, noting “how cleverly this diabolical rite imitates that of our Holy Church” (95). He concludes that either the native peoples already knew about Christianity (and were thus heathens, not pagans) or “our cursed adversary forced the Indians to imitate the ceremonies of the Christian Catholic religion in his own service” (95). Native peoples came to be seen as perpetual performers, engaged in “idolatrous dissembling,” “going about like monkeys, looking at everything, so as to imitate whatever they see people do.” Dissembling conveys the deep nervousness experienced by the colonial observer when faced with native performance. The suspicions concerning religious orthodoxy were expressed too, as ambivalence toward mimesis. On the one hand, Europeans from Columbus onward had praised the native peoples’ capacity for imitation and used that to argue that they could be taught to be Christians and take the sacraments. On the other hand, the mimicry was inappropriate and bestial, “like monkeys.” How could the friars tell if their converts were sincere when they bent their knee before the altar? Did the performance of piety confirm Christian devotion?

The religious practices of the various groups of colonizers—Puritanism and Catholicism—affect the way native practices survived. Even as Catholics like Durán equated “Indians” with Jews because of what he saw as the similarities in their religious rites and ceremonies, Catholicism, with its emphasis on images, *autos sacramentales*, and spectacular ceremonies, was considered by Protestants to border on the idolatrous. Later commentators, such as the nineteenth-century ethnologist Charles de Brosse, claimed that the Catholic reliance on images in fact provided the environment in which native belief systems continued to flourish. W. J. T. Mitchell, in *Iconology*, quotes Willem Bosman’s view that Catholicism’s “ridiculous ceremonies” linked them to the heathens. And it is clear that the early efforts by evangelists to convert native peoples through the use of religious theatre allowed not only for the creation of a new genre (“missionary theatre”), but for the transmission of native languages, staging techniques, and oppositional practices.

Pre-Conquest performances and images continued to be transmitted through multiple syncretic and transcultured forms such as music, dance, the use of color, pilgrimages, the ritualized marking of place (such as small
structures known as santopan, place of the saint] that later came to be called altares but that dated back to pre-Conquest times. Although performed embodied practice might be limited in its reach because the signified cannot be separated from the signifier, the relationship of signifier to signified is not a straightforward one-to-one. The bent knee might signal devotion to the Catholic saint even as it makes manifest continued reverence to a Mexica deity. The act of transfer, in this case, works through doubling, replication, and proliferation rather than through surrogation, the term Joseph Roach has developed to think about the ways that transmission occurs through forgetting and erasure: “Into the cavities created by loss through death or other forms of departure . . . survivors attempt to fit satisfactory alternatives.” Roach gives an example of surrogation: The King is dead, long live the King. The model of surrogation forgets its antecedents, Roach reminds us, by emphasizing seemingly uninterrupted stability over what might be read as rupture, the recognizable one over the particularities of the many.

Roach’s contribution to our thinking about performance as a form of surrogation has been extremely generative, but it is equally urgent to note the cases in which surrogation as a model for cultural continuity is rejected precisely because, as Roach notes, it allows for the collapse of vital historical links and political moves. The friars might well have wished that the new approved social behaviors they were imposing on their native population functioned as a form of surrogation. The recent converts, however, may just as readily have embraced these ambiguous behaviors as a way of rejecting surrogation and continuing their cultural and religious practices in a less recognizable form. The performance shift and doubling, in this case, preserved rather than erased the antecedents. The proliferations of the signified—the many saints and rituals—tell stories of shaky continuities and even reimagined connections in the face of historical ruptures. The “satanic invention” that Sahagún alludes to in the quotation introducing this section allows one deity to be worshipped not only under the guise of another but at the same time as another—a form of multiplication and simultaneity rather than surrogation and absenting.

The widely spreading cult of the Virgen de Guadalupe from the mid-sixteenth century to the present provides one example. Cortés marched toward Tenochtitlán carrying the banner of the Virgen de Guadalupe de Extremadura. In 1531, the Virgen de Guadalupe is said to have appeared to Juan
Diego, a Mexica recently converted to Christianity, in Tepeyac, the site of the Mesoamerican goddess Tonanztin. The early friars, as I noted, worried that Tonanztin had disappeared only to reappear in the cult of the Virgen de Guadalupe. Had the pre-Conquest goddess been successfully surrogated by the Virgin, or did she in fact live on in the Christian deity? Did the uninterrupted pilgrimage to her shrine signal alliance to the old or to the new? How did she go from being the Virgen of the conquerors to the “dark Virgin” of the conquered, from the patron of the newly developing “Mexican” identity (1737), to the Patroness of all Latin America (1910) and the Philippines (1935), to the Empress of the Americas (1945)?

The images in Figures 4 through 6 illustrate the struggles to identify the Virgen with specific sectors of the population, emphasizing her “Mexican-
ness” by accentuating her proximity to Mexican land (the maguey plant), cityscapes (the Virgen as patron of Mexico City), and peoples (the indígenas).

If we look closely at Figure 6, we notice that there are four other appearances of the Virgen in this one canvas: in the upper left and upper right corners as well as one on each tip of the eagle’s wings. The representational practice of multiplying the images of the Virgen reflects the multiplication of the apparitions themselves. There are innumerable transformations of the Virgen into multiple regionally specific figures.93 Every area colonized by the Spaniards has a pantheon of Virgenes. And this is in addition to the numerous versions and reported appearances of the Virgin of Guadalupe herself, who is patron of ethnically diverse groups throughout the Americas. This strategy

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of doubling and staying the same, of moving and remaining, of multiplying outward in the face of constricting social and religious policies tells a very specific story of oppression, migration, and reinvention that might be lost if the model of substitution, loss, and narrowing down were used to explain the “continuities.”

Embodied performance, then, makes visible an entire spectrum of attitudes and values. The multicodedness of these practices transmits as many layers of meaning as there are spectators, participants, and witnesses. Sometimes the performances reveal the convergence of religious practices [e.g., adorning the saints with intricate feather work and flowers in the processional paths of Corpus Christi]. Sometimes the performance of acquiescence
(kneeling at mass, or participating “appropriately” in a ritual) hides either multiple allegiances (thought by the friars to be irreconcilable) or deep disenfranchisement. At times, the natives performed their idolatry for the audience of suspicious friars, who demanded that the neophytes produce their “idols” and confess on pain of torture to the continuity of pre-Hispanic rites “as they were used and accustomed to do in the time of their heathen past.” As protestors at the time pointed out, this demand led the native peoples into the ridiculous task of “combing the ruins of Coba, more than twenty-five leagues distant, searching for idols” to produce the fictitious evidence. At times, the transfer of performances outlasted the memory of their meaning, as populations found themselves faithfully repeating behaviors that they no longer understood. At other times, the make-believe quality so commonly attributed to performance offers opportunities for open parody, for example, a representation in which the actor “who plays the part of Jesus Christ came out of the theatre publicly nude with great indecency and scandal.” Many contemporary performances carry on these representational traditions as they continue to form a living chain of memory and contestation. Religious pilgrimages maintain certain kinds of transcultured belief, combining elements from various belief systems. Political performance, for example, might draw from pre-Conquest plots to elucidate contemporary conditions for indigenous populations. Performance artists draw from the repertoire to add historical depth to their political and aesthetic claims. Coaticue, the mother of Huitzilopochtli, the Nahua’s principal deity and god of war, reappears in Astrid Hadad’s *Heavy Nopal* to denounce pollution, unequal north/south relations, oppressive gender and sexual relations, and anything else that occurs to Hadad as she sings, dances, and delivers her commentaries onstage.

This study traces some of the issues raised here by focusing on twentieth- and twenty-first-century performances in the Americas: How does performance participate in acts of transfer, transmitting memories and social identity? How does the scenario of discovery continue to haunt the Americas, trapping even those who attempt to dismantle it (chapter 2)? And if cultural memory is an embodied practice, how do gender and race affect it (chapter 3)? How does a radically different archive give rise to a new sense of cultural identity (chapter 4)? How do certain scenarios encourage a “false identifica-
tion” that gets used politically (chapter 5)? How do the archive and the repertoire combine to make a political claim (chapter 6)? How does performance participate in the transmission of traumatic memory (chapter 7)? How can performance help us address, rather than deny, structures of intercultural indecipherability (chapter 8)? Chapter 9 traces my own positioning as a witness to the events of September 11. The final chapter advocates that we remap our existing concepts of the Americas and use embodied performance to trace trajectories and forms of interconnectedness.

I draw from my own repertoire for some of the material in this book: my participation in political events and performances and my experience of the attack on the World Trade Center. As a social actor, I try to be attentive to
my own engagement and investment in the scenarios I describe. Some of the
transfers that I’ve been party to have taken place through live enactments
and encounters: those at the Hemispheric Institute’s encuentros, in public
lectures, in the classroom, in activities I share with colleagues and friends.
This book, however, is destined for the archive.
CHAPTER ONE. ACTS OF TRANSFER

1 The Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics is a consortium of institutions, scholars, artists, and activists in the Americas who explore the intersections of “performance” and politics (both broadly construed) in the Americas since the sixteenth century. For more information, see http://hemi.nyu.edu.

2 Tim Weiner, in “Pummeling the Powerful, with Comedy as Cudgel,” New York Times, June 15, 2001, A4, writes that “when Jesusa Rodríguez is on—onstage, on camera, in the streets protesting the latest outrage—she may be the most powerful woman in Mexico.”


4 The as/is distinction is Richard Schechner’s; see his Performance Studies: An Introduction (London: Routledge, 2002), 30–32. However, we disagree on whether the is reflects an ontology. For Schechner, “performance is anything but ontological. . . . It is socially constructed through and through” (personal correspondence). I find the tension between the ontological and constructed more ambiguous and constructive, underlining the field’s understanding of performance as both “real” and “constructed.”

5 “Here the etymology of ‘performance’ may give us a helpful clue, for it has nothing to do with ‘form,’ but derives from Old French parfournir, ‘to complete’ or ‘carry out thoroughly.” Victor Turner, From Ritual to Theatre (New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1982), 13.
The Barnhart Dictionary of Etymology states that Steele, writing in Tatler in 1709, used the term in “the sense of a public exhibition or entertainment” and in 1711 to refer to “the one who performs” (777).


Ibid., 326.

See, for example, Emile Durkheim, The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life [New York: Free Press, 1915].


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had grown there. It was a marvellous thing to see, for there were many trees: wild trees,
fruit trees, and flowering trees, and mushrooms and fungus and the lichen that grows
on forest trees and rocks. There were even old broken trees; in one place it was like a
thick wood and in another it was more open. On the trees were many birds, both big
and small: falcons, crows, owls; and in the wood much game; there were stags, hares,
rabbits, coyotes, and very many snakes. These last were tied and their fangs drawn, for
most of them were of the genus viper, a fathom in length and as big around as a man’s
arm at the wrist. . . . In order that nothing might be lacking to make the scene appear
completely natural, there were hunters with their bows and arrows well concealed on
the mountain. . . . One had to look sharply to see these hunters, so hidden were they and
so covered with branches and lichen from the trees, for the game would easily come
right to the feet of men so concealed. Before shooting, these huntsmen made many
gestures which aroused the attention of the unsuspecting public.” Fray Toribio Moto-

19 Fernando Ortiz, *Contrapunteo cubano del tabaco y el azúcar* (Caracas: Biblioteca Aya-
cucho, 1978).
22 *El* performance usually refers to events coming out of business or politics, whereas the
feminine *la* usually denotes those that come from the arts. I am indebted to Marcela
Fuentes for this observation.
UP, 1988], xxv.
24 In *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean, 1492–1797* (London: Rout-
ledge, 1986), for example, Peter Hulme discusses the narrative of the encounter within
the general rubric of “colonial discourse,” thereby accentuating the tropes and “linguis-
tically-based practices” that stemmed from it [2].
25 Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* (Detroit: Black and Red, 1983), 4; Diana Tay-
lor, *Disappearing Acts: Spectacles of Gender and Nationality in Argentina’s Dirty War*
1996], 29–30.
27 Enrique Florescano, *Memory, Myth, and Time in Mexico: From the Aztecs to Indepen-
28 De Certeau, *Writing of History*, 216.
30 Ibíd., 443. I use *repertoire* rather than *repertory* for somewhat obscure reasons. *Reper-
toire*, according to the *OED*, refers to “a stock of dramatic or musical pieces which
a company or player is accustomed or prepared to perform” [2: 466]. *Repertory*, on
the other hand, refers to more “archival” kinds of knowledge: “An index, list, cata-
logue or calendar” and a “storehouse, magazine or repository, where something may be found” (467).


33 Rebecca Schneider, in “Archives Performance Remains,” asks whether “in privileging an understanding of performance as a refusal to remain, do we ignore other ways of knowing, other modes of remembering, that might be situated precisely in the ways in which performance remains, but remains differently?” *Performance Research* 6, no. 2 (2001): 101.


37 Though it seems intuitive that the live event associated with the repertoire would precede the documentation of the archive, this is not necessarily the case. An original live theater performance might well interpret an ancient text. Or, to give a very different kind of example, obituaries of famous people are usually written before they die, so that the media immediately have the materials when the time comes.

38 “Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity,” http://www.unesco.org/culture/heritage/intangible/index.shtml, accessed in 2002. The *unesco* document continues: “*unesco* seeks to draw attention to cultural spaces or traditional and popular forms of cultural expression. We have to be quite clear about the difference between a cultural space and a site. From the standpoint of the cultural heritage, a site is a place at which physical remains created by human genius [monuments or ruins] are to be found. A ‘cultural space’ is an anthropological concept that refers to a place or a series of places at which a form of traditional or popular cultural expression occurs on a regular basis. But the value of such cultural expression is not necessarily dependent on a particular space. For example, when storytellers traditionally ply their art either at the same place or at fixed times, we have a cultural space. But other storytellers may by tradition be iterant performers and their performance a cultural expression. Both cultural spaces and cultural expressions qualify to be regarded as masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity.”


40 De Certeau, *Writing of History*, 216.

41 Sigmund Freud, “A Note upon the ‘Mystic Writing-Pad,’” in *The Standard Edition of


44 Roland Barthes, Mythologies, trans. Annette Lavers [New York: Noonday Press, 1988], 110. He adds: “We shall therefore take language, discourse, speech etc., to mean any significant unit or synthesis, whether verbal or visual . . . even objects will become speech, if they mean something” [111]. In his posthumous work, Empire of Signs, trans. Richard Howard [New York: Hill and Wang, 2000], Barthes refers to “three writings” in Bunraku performance to signal “three sites of spectacle: the puppet, the manipulator, the vociferant: effected gesture, effective gesture, and the vocal gesture” [48–49].


46 This is not the same project as many so-called interdisciplinary programs in the United States, where teams of scholars, training in one traditional field, coteach students in a particular course. Rather, performance studies helps students acquire the training they need to rigorously examine materials in the archive and the repertoire even as they challenge the boundedness of the “field.”


49 See D. Taylor, Disappearing Acts, ch. 5. I return to the concept of percepticide in the last chapter of this study.


51 My thanks to Doris Sommer for this observation.


54 See Max Harris, Aztecs, Moor, and Christians, 23.

55 See Motolinía, History, ch. 15; Max Harris, The Dialogical Theatre [New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1993], ch. 6; and James C. Scott, Domination and the Arts of Resistance [New Haven: Yale UP, 1990].


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Bourdieu defines habitus: “The structures constitutive of a particular type of environment [e.g. the material conditions of existence characteristic of a class condition] produce habitus, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations which can be objectively ‘regulated’ and ‘regular’ without in any way being the product of obedience to rules, objectively adapted to their goals without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary to attain them and, being all this, collectively orchestrated without being the product of the orchestrating action of a conductor.” Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice [Cambridge, England: Cambridge UP, 1989], 72.


José de Acosta, *Historia natural y moral de las Indias* [Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1962].


Ibid.


“Ixiptlas were everywhere, the sacred powers represented in what we would call mul-
tiple media in any particular festival—a stone image, richly dressed and accoutred for the occasion; in elaborately constructed seed-dough figures; in the living body of the high priest in his divine regalia, and in the living god-image he would kill: human, vegetable and mineral ixiptlas.” There were three criteria: (1) it was “a made, constructed thing”; (2) “it was formally ‘named’ for the particular sacred power, and adorned with some of its characteristic regalia”; and (3) “it was temporary, concocted for the occasion, made and unmade during the course of the action. [The great images within the shrines . . . were not described as ixiptlas, nor were they processed or publicly displayed.]” Inga Clendinnen, *The Aztecs: An Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991), 252.

Ibid.


Performance was certainly crucial to maintaining sociopolitical order. Political power was sustained by hegemony rather than force. See Ross Hassig, *Aztec Warfare* [Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1988], 19. Given the need to maintain hegemonic order, performance served to maintain and communicate dominance [military, political, social]. Power was made visible through the show of force and order [Flower Wars, conquest wars, dress codes].

Sahagún, *Florentine Codex*, prologue to book 1, 45.


Maya Ramos Smith, Tito Vasconcelos, Luis Armando Lamadrid, and Xabier Lizarraga Cruchaga, eds., *Censura y teatro novohispano (1539–1822): Ensayos y antología de documentos* [Mexico City: Conaculta, INBA, Citru, 1998], 239–40. Quotations that follow are from this source; all translations are mine.


See Maria Concepcion García Saiz, *Las castas mexicanas/The Mexican Castes* [Milan: Olivetti, 1989].

Durán, for example, claimed that religious conversion was happily accepted, that Indians “began to abandon their idols. They broke them, mocked them, stepped on them, and demolished the cues where these images had been. . . . it was an amazing thing to see the millions who came for this baptism and who gave up the blindness in which they had lived” [*History*, 562].

Sahagún, *Florentine Codex*. 

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CHAPTER TWO. SCENARIOS OF DISCOVERY: REFLECTIONS ON PERFORMANCE AND ETHNOGRAPHY

2 Connerton, How Societies Remember, 64.
3 Propp, Morphology, 20ff.
4 References to this letter are from B.W. Ife, ed. and trans., Letters from America: Columbus’s First Accounts of the 1492 Voyage (London: King’s College London, School of Humanities, 1992), 25; and R. H. Major, ed., Christopher Columbus: Four Voyages to the New World, Letters and Selected Documents (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1978). Columbus’s original letter to the King and Queen, written in 1493, was his first account
of his voyage. In the introduction to the Major edition, John E. Fagg notes the instability of the text: “This letter was apparently enclosed with another that has been lost, one dispatched by Columbus to Ferdinand and Isabella. The original of our letter has also disappeared, though eight copies of it remain extant. In 1847, when R. H. Major edited this selection of documents for the Hakluyt Society, he relied on Martin Fernández de Navarrete’s invaluable collection. Much later, the Hakluyt Society issued a similar publication but, in the case of the Letter on the First Voyage, was able to use a more accurate text based on a folio unknown to Major” (vii).

7 Major, Columbus, first letter, 16–17.
8 B. W. Ife, translator and editor of the King’s College edition of Columbus’s “Letter to the Monarchs,” writes that the act of possession included three essential steps: “It took a physical, symbolic form (cutting the branch of a tree, drinking water or eating fruit), and, to be valid in law, had to be witnessed, preferably by Crown representatives. In addition, those who were being dispossessed had themselves to give permission; hence the significance of Columbus’ insistence that there had been no opposition” [Letters, 25, n.2].
10 Patricia Seed, Ceremonies of Possession in Europe’s Conquest of the New World, 1442–1640 [New York: Cambridge UP, 1995], makes the important point that though these scenarios were “readily understood” by the colonizers’ countrymen, the scenarios differed significantly among the various colonizing groups in the Americas—Spanish, British, Portuguese, French and Dutch. “Their rituals, ceremonies, and symbolic acts of possession overseas were based upon familiar actions, gestures, movements or speeches, and as such were readily understood by themselves and their fellow countrymen without elaboration, and often without debate as well” [5]. But it would be a mistake, she warns, to extend that familiarity to “homogenize the five major powers colonizing the Americas into a single identity: ‘Europe’” [3]. The scenarios of discovery share notable features but also manifest important variations of a theme.
11 Major, Columbus, first letter, 29.
12 Columbus, Journal, 23–24.
13 Ife, Letters, 27.
14 Columbus, Four Voyages, 57. Quotations that follow are from this source.
15 Greenblatt, New World, 61.
16 For example, Durán’s assertion that they were Jews [chapter 1].
17 Anthony Pagden, “Translator’s Preface” to Hernán Cortés: Letters from Mexico, by Hernán Cortés [New Haven: Yale UP, 1986], states, “Like Columbus and Vespucci be-
fore him, Cortés realized the full political importance of the printing press. The open public legitimation of his behavior would be harder for the crown to ignore than a public request, which is probably one of the reasons why the letters were banned in 1527. But Cortés was also aware of the importance of arguing his case before posterity. If his *fama et gloria* which, as he knew, were the nobleman’s most precious, and most precarious, possessions were to survive they had to be preserved for a later generation on his own terms, and in print” (xliv).


23 See chapter 1 for a discussion of performance as an object of study in performance studies and as a theoretical lens.


26 Jorge Portilla, *La fenomenología del relajo* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1986), describes relajo as a three-part process: [1] a displacement of attention from what is being offered as the value/topic to be accepted; [2] the subject assumes a position of dis-solidarity with the value/topic, as [3], by means of gestures or words, he or she invites others to join in the act of dis-solidarity (19).


28 The comment was made during a discussion following my lecture, “A Savage Performance,” in the “Performing Identities” lecture series, Center for Ideas and Society, University of California, Riverside, February 28, 1997.


30 For all the parodic staging and acting, many in the audience believed the performance. Although Fusco and Gómez-Peña had intended to play “the identity of an other for a white audience” (Fusco, *English*, 37), it never occurred to them that they would be taken literally. In her essay written after the experience, Fusco notes that more than half of their 150,000 spectators believed the Guatinaius were “real.” This was in spite of the fact that the information on the walls around the cage specifically set the piece in a tradition of a representational practice, that nonwhites and “freaks” have been exposed for centuries.
34 Fusco, *English*, 50.
35 Ibid., 40.
39 Applying terms such as “real” and “authentic” to cultural behavior has been continually problematized by people such as Clifford, *Predicament*; Schechner, *Between Theater and Anthropology*; Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media* (New York: Routledge, 1994); Rony, *Third Eye*, and many others. They therefore require no further elaboration here.
40 Fusco, *English*, 37, 40, 50.

CHAPTER THREE. MEMORY AS CULTURAL PRACTICE: MESTIZAJE, HYBRIDITY, TRANSCULTURATION

2 Bernal Díaz del Castillo, in *The Conquest of New Spain*, trans. J. M Cohen (London: Penguin, 1963), describes many of the wonders of Tenochtitlán, citing among them the remarkable “large canoes that could come into the garden from the lake, through a channel they had cut” [215].
4 Lockhart, in *The Nahua after the Conquest*, relates the following: “In the legend of Sula [Tlalmanalco area, on the northwestern edge of Chalco], as it was written down sometime in the late seventeenth century, the choice of Santiago as a patron took place in the following manner. When the Spaniards not long after the conquest said that it was time for Sula to decide on a saint, the people delegated the task to the two oldest and wisest among them. Sleeping on the matter, each had a dream in which Santiago appeared in great splendor, declaring himself to be from Persia (i.e., far away), and announced that he would be Sula’s saint. Still in doubt the next morning, the two elders questioned each other, and on discovering that their dreams had been identical, proclaimed the choice of Santiago to the populace. These two eldest citizens are [though named differently] an embodiment of the autochthonous pair, representing Sula’s dual organization...; one of them as ‘Quail-lord’ and ‘Quail-serpent’ also represents the...
preconquest totemic deity. Thus the indigenous bearers of ethnic identity are made to endorse and become associated with the saint, who can be viewed as having been thereby consecrated in the role of the sacred symbol of the community” [236].

5 Marianne Hirsch and Valerie Smith edited a special issue of Signs, “Gender and Cultural Memory” [vol. 28, no. 1 [autumn 2002]], dedicated to the question of the gendering of cultural memory. They note in the introduction that to their knowledge, their volume provides the first occasion since 1987 [Michigan Quarterly Review's special issue “Women and Memory”] for an interdisciplinary and international dialogue between feminist theories and theories of cultural memory [4].


7 See García Saiz, Las castas mexicanas.

8 Race was theoretically about blood and skin color, but practically it was about lifestyle, class, and environment. As Robert H. Jackson writes, the castas were “based on documented bloodlines as well as skin color that established legal distinctions between people of predominantly European ancestry and of indigenous or African ancestry. . . . However, other criteria also figured in the creation of racial identity such as stereotypical assumptions about culture, behavior, and . . . place of residence” [Race, 4]. “Indian,” as Knight notes, was an ethnic rather than racial designation, grounded in “language, dress, religion, social organization, culture, and consciousness” (“Racism,” 73).

9 Cope, The Limits of Racial Domination, 18.

10 For a detailed analysis of the caste system, see ibid., ch. 1; Jackson, Race, ch. 2.

11 Justo Sierra, for example, one of Mexico’s great educators of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, promoted European immigration “so as to obtain a cross with the indigenous race, for only European blood can keep the level of civilization . . . from sinking, which would mean regression, not evolution.” Political Evolution of the Mexican People, quoted in Knight, “Racism,” 78.


13 Alfredo López Austin, Cuerpo humano e ideología [Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1989], 1:71.

14 Connerton, How Societies Remember, ch. 3.

15 I understand the difference between Mexican-American women and Chicanas as one of political positioning. Woman is to feminist what Mexican American is to Chicana; the latter reflects a commitment to issues of social justice and equality.
16 Alfredo López Austin, “La parte feminina del cosmos,” *Arqueología Mexicana* 5, no. 29 (1998), notes, “As in other conceptions of the world, Mesoamerican thought did not accept the possibility of pure beings. Everything that existed, even the gods, were a mix of the essence of the masculine and the feminine. It was the predominance of one of these that determined classification” [6].

17 Ibid.


19 See Rosemary A. Joyce, *Gender and Power in Prehispanic Mesoamerica* (Austin: U of Texas P, 2000), especially ch.5, “Becoming Human,” where she notes how “the cosmological patterns of gender complementarity inscribed in Aztec myth, ritual practice, and monumental representation were also embodied in the monumental temporal scale of narratives of royal origins of the Mexica. Susan Gillespie shows that official Aztec genealogies relied on the transmission of the right to rule through women, who are specifically treated as links to traditions of creation” [172].


21 Joyce, *Gender and Power*, 172.


24 Contemporary references to her can be found in Sahagún, *Florentine Codex; Díaz del Castillo, The Conquest of New Spain*; Francisco López de Gómara, *Cortés: The Life of the Conqueror by His Secretary*, trans. Lesley Byrd Simpson [Berkeley: U of California P, 1964]; and in a letter from Cortés to the King of Spain. Innumerable books, articles, plays, poems, essays, and newspaper articles also have been written about her. The Mexican and Mexican American repertoire is also full of masked dances and other kinds of performances in which La Malinche plays a prominent (though often wildly divergent) role.


26 Ibid.


29 María Moliner, *Diccionario de uso del español* [Madrid: Editorial Gredos, 1967], defines *mestizo/a* as follows: “[Del lat. tardío <mixticius> deriv. de <mixtus>, partic. de <miscere>, v. <mixto>.] Hijo de padres de distinta raza. Particularmente, hijo de indio y blanco. También se aplica a los animales y a las plantas procedentes del cruce de individuos de distinta raza” [402]. The verb *mestizar* is more judgmental, defined as
“Adulterar la pureza de una raza por el cruce con otras” (402). Mestizaje, the dictionary notes, has only recently been admitted into the official language as controlled by the Diccionario de la Real Academia Española.

Gilberto Freyre, in the 1930s, for example, declares the following: “Hybrid from the beginning, Brazilian society is, of all those in the Americas, the one most harmoniously constituted so far as racial relations are concerned, within the environment of a practical cultural reciprocity that results in the advanced people deriving the maximum of profit from the values and experiences of the backward ones, and in a maximum of conformity between the foreign and the native cultures, that of the conqueror and the conquered.” The Master of Slaves: A Study in the Development of Brazilian Civilization [Berkeley: U of California P, 1986], 83.

Corominas, Breve diccionario etimológico.


A new journal of Latin/o American studies, Nepantla, is being published by Duke University Press. Mexican and Chicano/a artists such as Guillermo Gómez-Peña and Gloria Anzaldúa also write of their experience of nepantla.


Quoted in Brading, Mexican Phoenix, 297.

I argue this point more fully in Diana Taylor, Theatre of Crisis: Drama and Politics in Latin America [Lexington, U of Kentucky P, 1990], ch. 4.

Gloria Anzaldúa, Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza [San Francisco: Spinsters/Aunt Lute, 1987], 78.

Cherríe Moraga, Loving in the War Years [Boston: South End Press, 1983], 100.


Skeat, Concise Etymological Dictionary.

The debates about the inferiority, even nonhumanness of a hybrid species [rather than race] is described in Young, Colonial Desire, ch. 1.
CHAPTER FOUR. LA RAZA COSMÉTICA: WALTER MERCADO PERFORMS LATINO PSYCHIC SPACE

I want to thank Doris Sommer for the Wardy epigraph at the beginning of this chapter.

1 Sahagún, Florentine Codex, book 1, ch. 12, p. 24.


3 Moctezuma, the Nahua ruler at the time of the arrival of the Spaniards in 1519, called before him his soothsayers, “you [who] study the night sky . . . and observe the movement of the celestial bodies, the course of the stars,” begging them “not to hide anything from me, but to tell me all” (Durán, History of the Indies of New Spain, 493). Furious at their evasive answer, Moctezuma threw them in jail. When the soothsayers disappeared from jail, apparently through the strength of their own magic, Moctezuma had their wives and children killed and their possessions destroyed.
Florescano, *Memory, Myth, and Time in Mexico*, focuses on these visionary movements to explain the ways orality and myth shape social identity in Mexico. He writes: “One characteristic distinguishes these movements: they are born and gain strength under the impulse of a sacred event that has occurred or is about to occur—the announcement of a miracle, the appearance of a Virgin, the prophecy of an apocalyptic ending, the arrival of a savior who will wipe out injustice and establish an Indian millennium. In all these cases, the sacred event appears as an exceptional occurrence, as an extraordinary privilege reserved to the group that lives the event” (167).


In contrast to the story of the miraculous childhood circulated by Walter himself, people remember him as a young television personality who starred in soap operas in Puerto Rico. However, the refashioning has been so successful that few people remember the preprophetic Walter, and it’s difficult to locate materials pertaining to that past.


The Census 2000 officials “acknowledged that 97% of the 15.4 million people who checked the ‘some other race’ box were Hispanics who ignored requests by federal officials to indicate their Hispanic origin in the ethnic category, not racial category. ‘Hispanic’ is a catch-all term designated to cover an array of Spanish-speaking people.” Eric Schmitt, “For 7 Million People in Census, One Race Category Isn’t Enough,” *New York Times*, May 13, 2001, A1.


Cherrie Moraga, *Loving in the War Years* (Boston: South End Press, 1983), 120.

As Latin America has historically been a site of intense migrations, the populations are very mixed. There are large European communities in countries such as Argentina, Chile, and Mexico who might also be considered Latino/as in the United States.

In one noteworthy case in Texas, two Latina women, Ester Hernandez and Rosa Gon-
zalez, were fired from their jobs for refusing to sign a pledge to speak only English in their workplace, even though they had been hired because they spoke Spanish. Gonzales refused on the basis that she speaks both English and Spanish in her daily life: “I told him no. This is what I am; this is what I do. This is normal to me. I’m not doing it to offend anybody. It just feels comfortable.” Sam Howe Verhovek, “Clash of Cultures Tears Texas City,” New York Times, September 30, 1997, A14.

20 Austin, How to Do Things with Words, 7.
24 Ybarra-Frausto, “Rasquachismo.”
25 Ibid., 155.
29 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and the original texts of Articles VIII and IX in Richard Griswold del Castillo, The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo: A Legacy of Conflict [Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1990], 179–99. The treaty, in fact, reneged on an earlier promise to grant Mexicans who stayed on their lands—which were now U.S. territory—citizenship within a year. “Those [Mexicans] who shall prefer to remain in the said territories [previously belonging to Mexico, and which remain for the future within the limits of the United States] may either retain the title and rights of Mexican citizens, or acquire those of citizens of the United States” [Article IX]. These Mexicans had one year to decide whether to stay on their land as U.S. citizens or migrate south, to the newly defined Mexico. Those who remained did not in fact enjoy “all the rights of citizens of the United States,” as guaranteed by Article IX, which was stricken from the treaty by the U.S. government.
CHAPTER FIVE. FALSE IDENTIFICATIONS:
MINORITY POPULATIONS MOURN DIANA

CHAPTER SIX. “YOU ARE HERE”:
H.I.J.O.S. AND THE DNA OF PERFORMANCE

1 The acronym H.I.J.O.S. stands for Hijos por la Identidad y la Justicia, contra el Olvido y el Silencio (Children for Identity and Justice, against Forgetting and Silence).

2 See, for example, Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, Testimony: Crisis of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History (New York: Routledge, 1992); Cathy Caruth, Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1996).

3 Laub, in Felman and Laub, Testimony, 57.

4 As Richard Schechner points out, “Behavior is separate from those who are behaving; the behavior can be stored, transmitted, manipulated, transformed” (Between Theater and Anthropology, 36).


6 For a succinct discussion of DNA, see Brian L. Silver, The Ascent of Science (New York: Oxford UP, 1998), especially ch. 24, “The Gene Machine.” Silver notes that “your DNA, unless you are an identical twin, is distinct from everyone else’s in the whole Creation, the difference being, as we said, in the order of the bases. . . . DNA carries all your genetic information, a collection of genes that contain a set of instructions for building you” (295). See, too, Matt Ridley, Genome (New York: Harper Collins, 1999). Ridley defines DNA as a filament of information, “a message written in a code of chemicals, one chemical for each letter” (13), that includes four bases: A, T, C, and G. Sections of the filament, known as genes, form units of 120 “letters” that are “constantly being copied into a short filament of RNA. The copy is known as 5S RNA. It sets up residence with a lump of protein and other RNAs, carefully intertwined, in a ribosome, a machine whose job it is to translate DNA recipes into proteins. And it is the proteins that enable DNA to replicate” (16). For speed and accuracy when referencing them, the genes were clumped into three-letter genetic codes, each letter “spelling out a particular one of twenty amino acids as part of the recipe for a protein” (19). “Life consists of the interplay of two kinds of chemicals: proteins and DNA” (16–17). It is interesting to note that both Ridley’s description and the image below (from Andrew Pollack, “Scientists Are Starting to Add Letters to Life’s Alphabet,” New York Times, July 24, 2001, F1) stress the metaphors of language and writing in explaining the composition and workings of DNA. This supports my argument that epistemic systems need each other in order

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to make their claims. DNA is not a “language,” though that word is repeatedly used to describe it, but the relationship is not simply metaphoric. Both codes—DNA and linguistic—are interrelated modes of thinking about and organizing knowledge.


8 Nunca Más: The Report of the Argentine National Commission of the Disappeared [New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1986]. By this insistence on the live, I don’t want to lessen the importance of the video and virtual testimonies that have gained currency in the past decade. The Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies at Yale and Web sites such as www.witness.org and The Vanished Gallery (http://www.yendor.com/vanished.html), which include materials from Argentina, are only three of the many initiatives designed to expand our ability to archive and recapture the act of testifying. They store knowledge and make it available to a far greater number of people than any live scenario permits. But the re in recapture is not the reiterative repeat of either trauma or performance; it is, rather, a transfer into the archive—a different economy of storage and representation. The replay will always be the same, a record of an earlier moment, an anterior utterance that is frozen for posterior use. I am not suggesting that the transmission of traumatic memory happens only in the live encounter. But I do want to distinguish between different, though intertwined, systems of knowledge—the archival and the embodied—that participate in the transmission and politicization of traumatic memory.


10 “When we die there are two things we can leave behind us: genes and memes. We were built as gene machines, created to pass on our genes. But that aspect of us will be forgotten in three generations. . . . But if you contribute to the world’s culture, if you have a good idea, compose a tune, invent a sparking plug, write a poem, it may live on, intact, long after your genes have dissolved in the common pool” (ibid., 214).


16 The archive in the body is related to what I have elsewhere called the repertoire: the embodied images and behaviors that get transmitted through performance. Here, the embodied performance consciously displays the archival both as it promises to preserve materials and threatens to erase them.

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Postcard/flier, *Teatro por la identidad*, Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo.

See the Web site www.hijos.org.


José Gobello, *Diccionario Lunfardo* (Buenos Aires: Peña Lillo Editor, 1982).

Julio Pantoja writes that when Antonio Domingo Bussi, a known torturer during the dictatorship, was democratically voted in as Tucumán’s governor, he decided he had to do something using his own instrument: photography. “Durante los cuatro años que duró el formalmente democrático gobierno de Bussi, me dediqué sistemáticamente a retratar a los hijos de víctimas de la represión en Tucumán, que según los organismos de Derechos Humanos deben ser alrededor de mil. Al principio fue tal vez sólo un impulso casi ingenuo de resistencia empujado por la indignación, pero de a poco fue consolidándose y tomando forma de una toma de posición lúcida usando mi herramienta: la fotografía” (“Los Hijos, Tucumán veinte años después”).

While members of H.I.J.O.S. officially endorse the political activism of their parents, and vow to continue it, they had until recently avoided some of the pitfalls of other movements. Like the Madres, H.I.J.O.S. also split in two, with a new group, called HIJOS (or HIJOS ROJOS, red), taking a more radical political position.

**CHAPTER SEVEN. STAGING TRAUMATIC MEMORY: YUYACHKANI**


3 See, for example, the essays in Mark Rogers, ed., “Performance, Identity, and Historical Consciousness in the Andes,” special issue of *Journal of Latin American Anthropology* 3, no. 2 (1998), especially the essay by Mark Rogers, “Spectacular Bodies: Folkorization and the Politics of Identity in Ecuadorian Beauty Pageants.”


5 Personal interview, Paucartambo, Peru, July 1999.


7 The antistar sentiment was, of course, often contradicted in the group’s makeup, with the director functioning as leader and even guru. See Yolanda González-Broyles’s study of the Teatro Campesino as an example, *El Teatro Campesino: Theater in the Chicano Movement* (Austin: U of Texas P, 1994).


11 Hugo Salazar del Alcazar, interview in Persistencia de la Memoria, documentary video on Yuyachkani, dir. Andrés Cotler.

12 Encuentro de zorros is based on a text by José María Arguedas entitled “El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo” and cowritten by the group and Peter Elmore. Adios Ayacucho is based on a text of the same name by Julio Ortega.

13 Quoted in Cotto-Escalera, “Grupo Cultural Yuyachkani,” 156.

14 D. Taylor, Disappearing Acts.


19 Interview, Rebeca Ralli, Casa Yuyachkani, June 1996.

20 Rowe and Schelling, Memory and Modernity, 55.


CHAPTER EIGHT. DENISE STOKLOS:
THE POLITICS OF DECIPHERABILITY


2 Denise Stoklos, The Essential Theatre (São Paulo: Denise Stoklos Productions, 1992), 47.

3 “I worked on two performances in England. Those two plays have been, for me, technically important. They incited the beginning of my personal research on graphic projection of the text. By this I mean the alienated verbal representation of a text that occurs, for instance, when a text is delivered in a foreign language. On this occasion, the experience of ‘feeling in Portuguese and expressing in English’ revealed the denial of that emotional flowing that happens spontaneously when using the music of the first language. I perceived that this new alienation dramatized the encounter with oral signs contained in the musicality inherent to a foreign language. Within my research on the essentialities of the theatre, the perception of ‘schizophrenia’ caused by the clash between the sound and the meaning of the word shed a light on the verbal path I would pursue in my future work” (ibid., 30).

5 Media coverage on Stoklos’s most recent festival. Denise Stoklos has won the Best Actress award nine times in Brazil; she has been the recipient of a Guggenheim award and a Fulbright Scholarship and her work has been translated and staged in thirty-one countries. For texts, see Taylor and Costantino, eds., *Holy Terrors* (Durham: Duke UP, 2003).


7 Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, 63. At the time of writing this piece, Debord did not see the two spectacles as connected. Only in his later work, *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Malcolm Imrie (London: Verso, 1998), did he see the two as working together, as the “integrated” spectacle. “The controlling centre,” he writes, “has now become occult: never to be occupied by a known leader, or a clear ideology. And on the more diffuse side, the spectacle has never before put its mark to such a degree on almost the full range of socially produced behaviour and objects. . . . When the spectacle was concentrated, the greater part of surrounding society escaped it; when diffuse, a small part, today, no part” (*Comments on the Society of the Spectacle*, 9).

8 Thoreau, *Civil Disobedience*, 387.


11 See my chapter on transculturation (ch. 4) in D. Taylor, *Theatre of Crisis*.


CHAPTER NINE. LOST IN THE FIELD OF VISION:
WITNESSING SEPTEMBER 11


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4 Aristotle, Poetics, 30.

5 Ariel Dorfman, the Chilean writer, relates September 11 to another September 11, in 1973, the day President Salvador Allende’s democratic government was toppled by military forces backed by the CIA: “I have been through this before. . . . The resemblance I am evoking goes well beyond a facile and superficial comparison, for instance, that both in Chile in 1973 and in the States today, terror descended from the sky to destroy the symbols of national identity. . . . No, what I recognize is something deeper, a parallel suffering, a similar pain, a commensurate disorientation” (NACLA Report on the Americas 35, no. 3 [2001]: 8). Eduardo Galeano also connects the dots: “There is a lot of similarity between homemade terrorism and high-tech terrorism, that of religious fundamentalists and that of fundamentalist believers in the market, that of the desperate and that of the powerful, that of crazies on-the-loose and that of the military in uniform. They all share the same disdain for human life” (NACLA Report on the Americas 35, no. 3 [2001]: 9).


CHAPTER TEN. HEMISPHERIC PERFORMANCES

1 For a video of Berta Jottar’s talk and images of rumba in Central Park, visit the Web site of the Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics http://hemi.nyu.edu in the Web Cuaderno section.


3 For specific examples, see Barbara Browning, Samba: Resistance in Motion (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1995), and Infectious Rhythms (New York: Routledge, 1998); Roach, Cities of the Dead.


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Hirsch, Marianne, and Valerie Smith, eds. “Gender and Cultural Memory.” Special issue of *Signs* (fall 2002).


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