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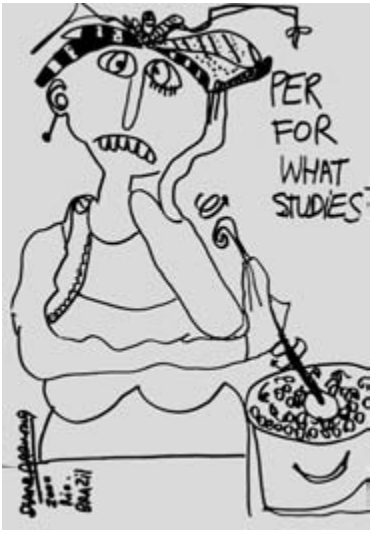
ACTS OF TRANSFER

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.[1] 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).[2] *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 *perfumance.* 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



1. "PerforWhat Studies?" Cartoon by Diana Raznovich, 2000. Reproduced by permission.

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.[6] 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.[7] 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.[8]

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 logocentricism. The fact that we don't have a word to signal that performatic space is a product of that same logocentricism 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 methodological 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.[14] Those who disagreed 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 "dramaturgical," anthropologists such as Turner, Milton Singer, Erving Goffman, and Clifford Geertz began to write of individuals as agents in their own dramas. Norms, they argued, are contested, not merely applied. Analyzing enactment became crucial in establishing claims to cultural agency. Humans do not simply adapt to systems. They shape them. How do we recognize elements 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 influenced by thinkers such as J. L. Austin, John Searle, and Ferdinand de Saussure, who focused on the performative function of communication—*parole,* in Saussure's term.[15] Again, as with the dramaturgical model, the linguistic 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 dramaturgical model, this too stressed the creativity at play in the use of language, as speakers and their audiences worked together to produce successful verbal 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.[16] 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

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.[17] 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.[18] 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.[19] 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."[20] 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 reinscribe 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.[21] We are all in the picture, all social actors in our overlapping, coterminous, contentious dramas. Even Brechtian distanciation relies on notions that the spectators are keenly bound up with events happening onstage, not through identification but through participation, and they are often called on to intervene and change the course of the action.

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.[22] 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."[23] 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.[24] 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

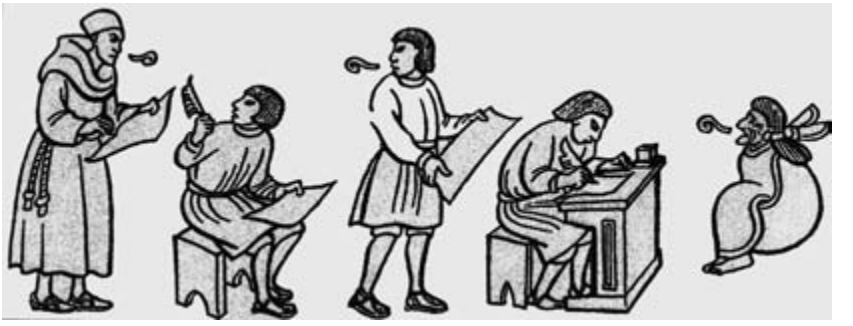
more "invisibly" normalizing, that is, less "theatrical."[25] Both of these terms, however, are nouns with no verb; thus, they do not allow for individual cultural agency in the way that *perform* does. Much is lost, it seems to me, when we give up the potential for direct and active intervention by 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.



2. Drawing by Alberto Beltrán. Reproduced by permission.

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."[26]

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."[27]

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" (39) 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, *huehuehtlahtolli* ("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."[29] 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 semiliterate 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.[34] 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."[35] 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."[36] The difference between my thinking and his, however, is that for him the mileux 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).[37] 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 antihegemonic 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/repertoire 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.' "[39] 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.*"[40] (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."[41] 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.[42] 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."[43] 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."[44]

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 *filosofía 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.[45] The archive, in the case of oral literatures, predates 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.[46] 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 letrados 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."[47]

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.[48] 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.[49]

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.[50] 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.[51] 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.[52]

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, peculiari-

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.[53] 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."[54] 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.[55]

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.[56] 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.[57] 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."[58] 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.[59]

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."[60] 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 compositions, 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 recording, the memory passed down through bodies and mnemonic practices. Memory paths and documented records might retain what the other "for-

got." These systems sustain and mutually produce each other; neither is outside or antithetical to the logic of the other.

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.)[66]

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.[67]

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?" (100). 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."[68] 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."[69] 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

know that the true God is the one "who is not seen."[70] 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, mimesis, 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.

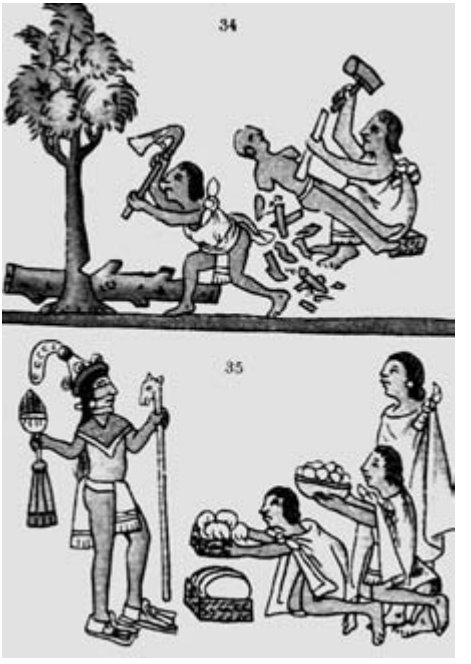
The Náhuatl word *ixiptlatl,* usually translated as *imagen,* points to the basic misunderstanding. Imagen belongs to the same etymologic family as *imitar.*[71] But ixiptlatl does not mean imitar but its opposite, the understanding of "spiritual being and physical being as fully integrated."[72] Ixiptlatl 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.[73] 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."[74] 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."[75] 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."[76] 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-



3. From Bernardino de Sahagún, *Florentine Codex,* ed. and trans. Arthur J. O. Anderson and Charles E. Dibble (Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research and University of Utah, 1982), vol. 1.

mic order or, instead, a symptom of profound disorder is open to debate.[77] 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."[78] 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 spiritual 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 perform many idolatrous things in our presence without our understanding it" (book 1, 45). "Preservation" served as a call to erasure. The ethnographic approach 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 unassimilatable, 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 disappearance 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 survived.

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."[80] 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 theses 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."[81] 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."[82] 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."[83] 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.[84] 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.

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

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," "go[ing] about like monkeys, looking at everything, so as to imitate whatever they see people do."[88] *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?

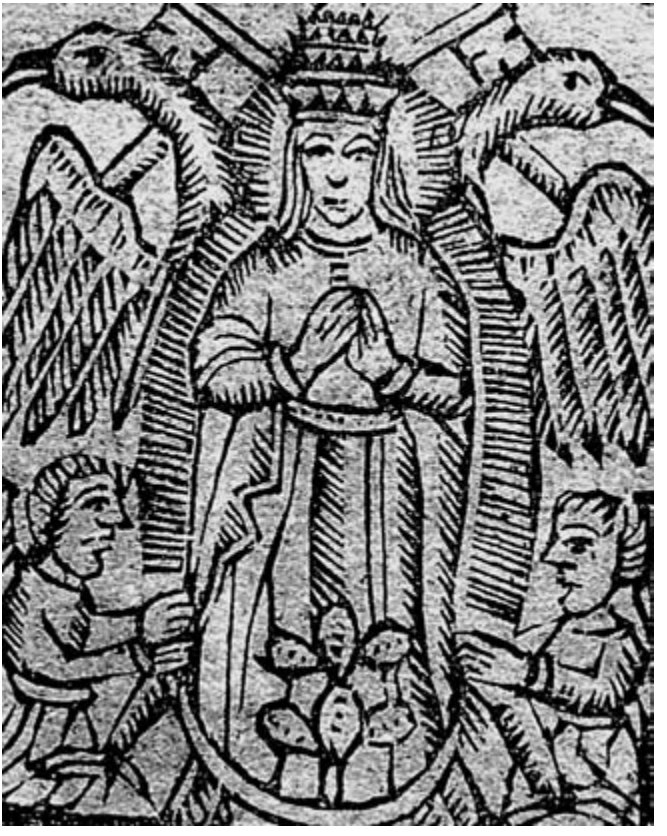
The religious practices of the various groups of colonizers—Puritanism and Catholicism—affected the way native practices survived. Even as Catholics like Durán equated "Indians" with Jews because of what he saw as the similarities in their religious rites and ceremonies, Catholicism, with its emphasis on images, *auto 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.[89] 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.[90] 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."[91] 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.

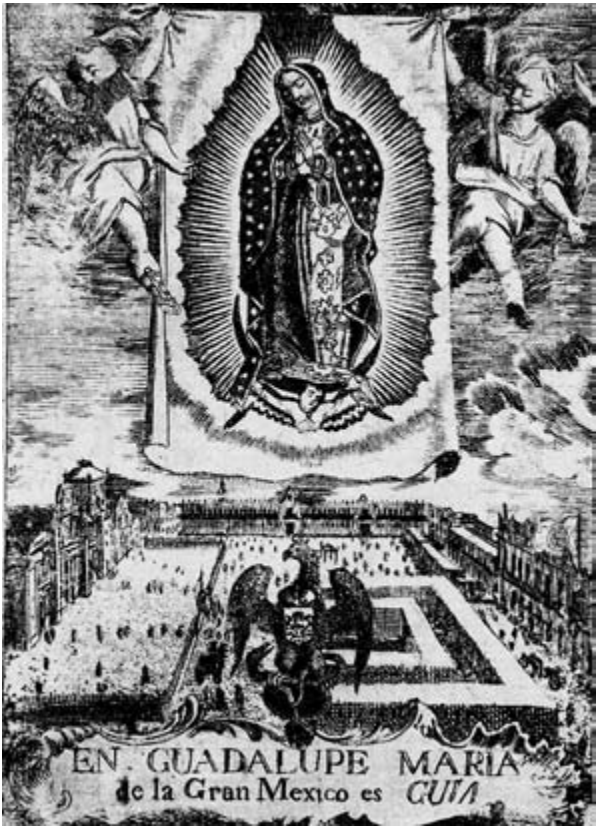
The widely spreading cult of the Virgen de Guadalupe from the mid-sixteenth century to the present provides one example. Cortés marched toward Tenochtitlán carrying the banner of the Virgen de Guadalupe de Extremadura. In 1531, the Virgen de Guadalupe is said to have appeared to Juan



4. Miguel Sánchez, Virgin of Guadalupe, cover illustration for *Imagen de la Virgen María* (Mexico, 1648).

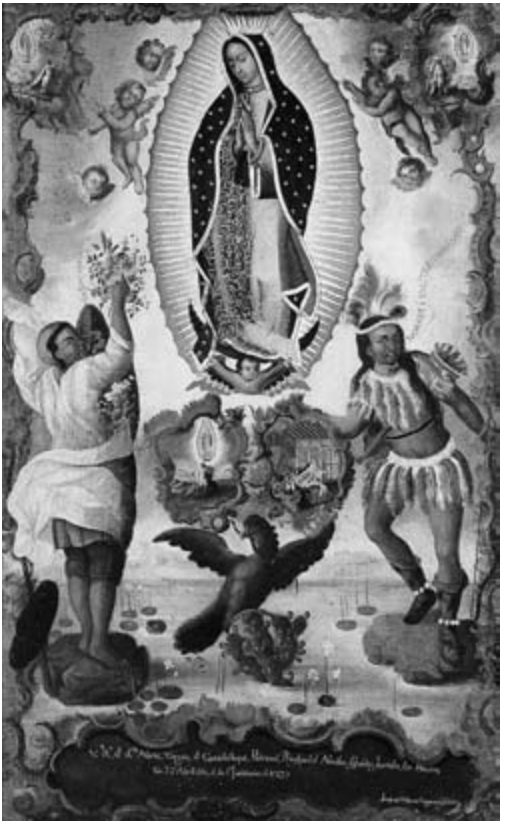
Diego, a Mexica recently converted to Christianity, in Tepeyac, the site of the Mesoamerican goddess Tonanztin. The early friars, as I noted, worried that Tonanztin had disappeared only to reappear in the cult of the Virgen de Guadalupe. Had the pre-Conquest goddess been successfully surrogated by the 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)?[92]

The images in Figures 4 through 6 illustrate the struggles to identify the Virgen with specific sectors of the population, emphasizing her "Mexican-



5. Mena, *Imagen de la Virgen de Guadalupe con las armas mexicanas y vista de la Plaza Mayor de México.* Colección Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid.

ness" by accentuating her proximity to Mexican land (the maguey plant), cityscapes (the Virgen as patron of Mexico City), and peoples (the *indigenas*). 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



6. José de Ribera y Argomanis. *Imagen de jura de la Virgen de Guadalupe como patrona de la ciudad de México,* 1778. Colección Museo de la Basílica de Guadalupe, Mexico City.

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."[94] 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.[95] 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."[96] 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. Coatlicue, 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-

7. Astrid Hadad as Coatlicue, in *Heavy Nopal.* Courtesy of Astrid Hadad, 1999.

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.