

Connecting Absences: *Goodbye Ayacucho* and the Performative Medium of Transmission

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Hemos nacido y vuelto a nacer muchas veces. Con nuestras voces hemos convocado el cuerpo de nuestros ancestros y danzado con ellos. De ese modo también hemos reconocido en nosotros esos otros cuerpos que expresan la diversidad de culturas corporales. Y así, hemos danzado ritmos diferentes.

Miguel Rubio, *El cuerpo ausente*

La materia de la violencia es el cuerpo.

Julio Ortega

*Nature is a temple in which living pillars
Sometimes give voice to confused words;
Man passes there through forests of symbols
Which look at him with understanding eyes.*

Charles Baudelaire, *Correspondences*

Adiós Ayacucho (*Goodbye Ayacucho*), a *nouvelle* written by Julio Ortega in 1986 and later adapted and staged by Grupo Cultural Yuyachkani, tells the story of Alfonso Cánepa, a Peruvian peasant who is tortured, murdered, dismembered, burned and disappeared by the military in a small town in the Andean province of Ayacucho. This story is only one paradigmatic case of what happened to the thousands of victims of the bloody internal war that Peru suffered between 1980 and 2000. This war left more than 60,000 civilians dead or disappeared as a result of either the Sendero Luminoso's terrorist acts or the political decisions made by the Peruvian government and then exercised

through the Army's equally violent presence in the conflict zone. In *Goodbye Ayacucho*, knowing that his bones have been taken to Lima, Alfonso Cánepa starts a long journey to recover his body and to demand a proper burial from the President of the Republic. When Cánepa finally arrives at the capital, he fails to deliver the letter he has written for the President and realizes that his severed body is forever lost. In a defiant afterthought, Cánepa steals some of Francisco Pizarro's bones and then lays in his tomb to rearticulate his own body. This is his story. Now, the question is how is it possible to stage the story of someone who has been disappeared and who was the only witness to his own murder? How can an absent body be made visible? Yuyachkani's performance resolves these questions with the figure of Q'olla, an Andean masked dancer dressed in traditional attire. Yuyachkani's decision to insert a masked Q'olla on stage allows that figure to lend his body to the telling of Alfonso Cánepa's story. In this sense, Q'olla becomes the *medium* through which the spectator connects with stories of the disappeared, stories that address Peruvian history and collective memory.

This essay explores the various mediums used to transmit Cánepa's story of torture and disappearance: the complicated body of the masked dancer, the actor, the audience and online spectators. Each transmission entails an intersubjective relationality activated by a spectatorship's embodied experience. As indicated in the script and enacted in the performance, Q'olla "steps into Cánepa's shoes," which are present on stage, along with his clothes, the only remains of his disappeared body. Q'olla's body trembles as "Alfonso Cánepa begins to speak through him."¹ This scene is key to understanding both the physicality of the medium and also the multiple connections that the medium establishes between Cánepa's story and the spectator. The centrality of the physical, tangible body is relevant both to Cánepa's narrative and to Yuyachkani's work, which prioritizes the body of the performer as a tool. In the same manner that Q'olla lends his body to Alfonso Cánepa, Augusto Casafranca—the on-stage performer—lends his body to Q'olla. Casafranca's physical discipline allows different levels of mediatization, given that his body subtly refers to the different presences through which the disappeared body is channeled. Alfonso Cánepa speaks through Q'olla's body, as Q'olla speaks, moves, laughs and dances through Augusto Casafranca's body. As a result, the dismembered, disappeared body of Alfonso Cánepa appears before our eyes through various mediums.

At first, Cánepa's mistreated body seems destined to be continuously expropriated and re-appropriated. Cánepa's goal is to bring his body

to presence, but on his own terms, so that he can fight for justice and against oblivion. In many cases, the disappeared have been discursively hijacked and have become a floating signifier that can be filled with any political agenda. Contrary to this subordination, *Goodbye Ayacucho* proposes that neither Q'olla nor Casafranca allow Cánepa's story or body to be forgotten. Neither acts as usurper of another's body nor imposes on that body a previous story/history, a political agenda or private interests. Q'olla simply wants to prevent Cánepa's shoes from being thrown away. In the process, he establishes a strong connection with the disappeared, hears his story and agrees to lend his own body for the trip to Lima. In turn, Augusto Casafranca's outstanding performance erases any sign of his own biography on stage. He maintains a state of *tabula rasa*, of a body without past, present or future, which allows his flesh and blood to be a pure transmitter of Cánepa's story—and the story of those like him. The fact that Casafranca has been performing this piece for more than ten years speaks not only of his mastery as a performer, but also of his commitment to a story/history that must be told and transmitted. In sum, Q'olla's and Casafranca's bodies act merely as mediums that allow the spectators to gain access to Cánepa and thereby prevent the forgetting of his story.

Consequently, when Cánepa's disappeared body speaks through Q'olla's body, the latter becomes the spectator of a story of inhumane violence and at the same time corporally enacts this story on stage. Q'olla, then, is simultaneously medium and spectator/witness. Similarly, Yuyachkani's performance suggests that the performance's spectators are not passively watching a story that is not theirs. On the contrary, they too are mediums and spectators/witnesses, invited by the actor's body to connect their own experiences with Cánepa's story and the collective history of Peru. In this performative experience all are affected by the power of these stories and everyone participates to some degree in the transmission of both the story narrated and recent Peruvian history.

Grupo Cultural Yuayachkani's forty-year trajectory, celebrated in July 2011, has been one of both witnessing and enacting the nation's turbulent history. During that year, the group presented a retrospective review of its work, which also functioned as a review of Peruvian history, given that the group has been actively involved in denouncing social inequality, political conflicts and the obliteration of Peruvian cultural traditions.² Being a spectator of Yuyachkani's performances—in 2011 more than ever—implies bearing witness to Peruvian history and being inserted in a continuous process

of trying to understand our role as both spectators and participants in this same history. Accordingly, Yuyachkani's performances are a privileged site for reflection on new directions in theater, performance and spectatorship. *Goodbye Ayacucho*, in particular, offers powerful insight into the ways in which spectatorship implies acts of connection and inter-subjectivity, whether it takes place in "live" performance or through online videos. Indeed, as a result of Yuyachkani's 40th anniversary, new information, images, videos and interviews are now available on the internet, along with electronic invitations to the group's performances. Yuyachkani's performances are thereby being digitally multiplied by both the members of the group and their audience, a process that promotes an active relationship between the performance and those who experience it online.

In this essay, I argue that this relationality between the spectators and the performance generates forms of resistance against passive spectatorship. Among the diverse ways in which new technologies and visual media are reshaping theatrical performance, the possibility of re-experiencing a performance through online videos provides a basis for reflection on the practice of spectatorship. Perhaps counter-intuitively, the internet and new digital media become not devices for isolation and detachment, but tools with which to re-potentiate strong links of relationality between bodies—both physical bodies and those that might be called "digital bodies." These digital bodies, like Cánepa, are bodies that are and are not there; they inhabit a realm from whence they can be summoned only through a medium. What the Internet and online performances require from the user/spectator is an active engagement, without which the digital bodies cannot be brought to presence. This active relationality is changing the ways in which the spectator interacts and participates in the story told through the actor's bodies—again, both in the flesh and in digital form. Videos of performances appear online in multiple ways, in different websites and through various links, producing new and alternative means to enact the practice of spectatorship. This practice engenders not a "passive spectator," but an "emancipated" spectator—elusive, active and politically committed—who has the power to set in motion the online performance. This is the emancipated and active spectator whom Yuyachkani has been shaping and promoting during the past 40 years.

This emancipated and active relationality between spectator and performed story/history suggests a dynamic meaningfulness that is not closed, but rather comes to life in different ways each time *Goodbye Ayacucho* is staged. Since this play was first performed in 1990, it has had several different

incarnations. *Goodbye Ayacucho*, like *Rosa Cuchillo*—a performance about a mother who begins a long journey to the mythical Andean underworld to look for her dead son—had strong, committed political and social functions by the end of the 1990s. During those years, Yuyachkani collaborated with Peru's Truth Commission to work with victims and survivors of the internal war and to encourage them to share their testimonies. Yuyachkani's audience was comprised of spectators who established a connection with these painful stories through the voices of Alfonso Cánepa and Rosa Cuchillo, both characters who pose questions about violent deaths and disappeared bodies. Yuyachkani staged their stories in small towns all over Peru, in streets, markets and plazas, to make them accessible to those who survived the war, but whose relatives were dead or disappeared. As both witness and spectator of these stories, the spectators understood their role in Peru's history. As living remains of the internal war, they themselves were the ones most able to tell and denounce what had happened to the disappeared. Later, they transmitted their own stories, giving their testimonies to the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission, bringing the absent bodies of their loved ones to the halls in which the testimony sessions were held. The survivors of the conflict thereby acted as the mediums into whose shoes, bodies and voices the disappeared stepped. At another level of mediatization, the survivors transmitted what had happened to those victims.³

Years later, in 2009, Yuyachkani performed *Goodbye Ayacucho* at Rutgers University. That same year a protest by Amazonian indigenous communities in Peru provoked a violent response from the government of then-President Alan García Pérez. Several civilians were killed in a confrontation between the population of Bagua and local police. A few weeks after these events occurred, the spectators at Rutgers established a connection to that more recent moment; the severed body of Alfonso Cánepa served as a cipher for the bodies of those killed in Bagua. Cánepa's search for justice and his failure to deliver his letter to the President seemed to parallel Bagua's severed communications with the government of García.⁴ In other words, the potential force of these performances is continuously activated by the intersubjective relational link with specific spectators in different contexts. The new media era challenges us to generate and analyze new forms of spectatorship, where the relationality is multiple, scattered, elusive and, for these same reasons, powerful and capable of reconstituting itself incessantly. As this particular play proposes, different forms of spectatorship could promote new ways of political participation, according to specific and unforeseen contexts.

The re-contextualizations of the same performance offer questions as to how correspondences are created between diverse objects. Objects clearly contribute to the process of transmission. The shoes, for example, are objects that contain Cánepa's personal story, intertwined with the political and social history of Peru, given that Cánepa is not only a peasant, but also a rural community leader and organizer. The shoes, Q'olla's masked body, the clothes, all allow the disappeared body to become visible. Moreover, the objects make visible not just the disappeared bodies but also the set of relations, the inter-subjectivity that defines the human. Cánepa's absent body speaks to the spectators' bodies and experiences. It is brought to the forefront not only through Q'olla's body, but also through the very presence of the witnesses to the story. Several lines of correspondence arise from this interaction during the live performance, building a universe of possible meanings from elements that are always talking to us. These correspondences are put in motion by the relationality established by the gaze as well as the body. Both the eyes that observe the performance—and later the online video—and the body present in the performance dialogue with that which is not there but which is summoned by a relational force mobilized during the performance. This is not a unidirectional relationship, given that the spectator is not "looking at" the performance, but rather inhabiting it, experiencing it, filling it with her/his presence and being touched by the absent presence summoned by the performance. Merleau-Ponty uses the Lascaux cave paintings to describe this relational connection: "I would be at great pains to say *where* is the painting I am looking at. For I do not look at it as I do to a thing; I do not fix it in its place. My gaze wanders in it as in the halos of Being. It is more accurate to say that I see according to it, or with it, than that I *see it*" (164). *Goodbye Ayacucho* invites the spectator to see *with* Cánepa, to establish a connection with him and his story. Q'olla himself is central to this complex seeing with, or seeing through, embodying as he does this multiple relationality. As a paradoxical live object (a figure of folklore) and embodied presence given life by a performer, Q'olla not only serves as medium/spectator/witness of Cánepa's story, but also enables the audience to become actively engaged with this same story. Q'olla is the first to acknowledge Cánepa's absent presence—a recognition vital for the relationship established between the spectator and the performance.

The relations established in and by the play, as I noted, are interchangeable. Just as the text migrated from *nouvelle* to script, the addressee and context are also open to new interpretations. One of the most powerful

elements of despair, for example, is the letter to the “President of Peru” that Cánepa intends to deliver in Lima. The letter, originally addressed to President Fernando Belaúnde Terry in Ortega’s *nouvelle*, is addressed to “Mr. President” in Yuyachkani’s performance. Sadly enough, the same letter could have been addressed to any of the presidents who have governed Peru in recent decades: Fernando Belaúnde, Alan García, Alberto Fujimori and Alejandro Toledo. The demands for justice included in this letter have not yet been met. Cánepa, through Q’olla’s lips, says: “Your anthropologists and intellectuals have determined that the violence originates in the system and in the State that you [the President] represent,” and “We would remember you [the President] not for the number of votes, but for the number of deaths.” Just as Q’olla cannot remain indifferent in the face of Cánepa’s demands for justice, the spectator cannot remain insensitive. This proximity generates another kind of relationality that can be understood both as compassion—in the sense of “suffering with”—and as an intellectual operation that unveils similarities between the different Peruvian governments, all equally invested in the welfare of a few while ignoring the injustices committed against the masses.

Once this connection is established, the spectators of *Goodbye Ayacucho* might experience frustration and anxiety upon finding themselves unable to fix Cánepa’s story—and Peruvian history—in a stable place. If history tells and retells itself, if Cánepa appears and reappears as a victim of the same crimes over and over again, where does the past reside? When would the present start? What is reserved for the future? This same uneasiness about temporalities suggests a different way to approach this story/history. *Goodbye Ayacucho* offers a series of heterogeneous elements between which diverse associations can be traced, and it is within these connections that the practice of spectatorship occurs. Herein lies one of the main differences between Ortega’s *nouvelle* and Yuyachkani’s performance. Although the same uneasiness about Peruvian history can be generated both by reading the text and experiencing the performance, the possibility of becoming an embodied presence in the performance situates the spectator within the timeline that is first proposed and then destabilized for the duration of the performance. The questions pertaining to temporalities could be suspended when the book is closed and the reading ends; the performance, on the other hand, draws the spectator into this unstable temporality in which her/his body is trapped throughout. Again, the relationality is activated by a body presence that dialogues with an underlined absence. The online performance, on the other hand, contains both the accessibility of the *nouvelle* and the tempo of the live

performance. Nonetheless, the spectator has to adapt her/his body to what is projected on the screen and to deal with the recorded images and sounds. The spectator has to adapt her/his presence in front of the screen in order to summon the absent presence of Alfonso Cánepa. This embodied dialogue establishes a space and time that are in tune with those of the spectator. In the end, this temporality and spatiality could be as elusive and unsettling as the ones staged during the “live” performance. An understanding of relationality not as a vertical, directional experience, but as an assemblage of links is key to alternative perceptions of spectatorship and theatrical performances and to the promotion of a more active experience of “live” performances as well as online video performances.

The proposed view of the relationship spectator-performer-performance as a type of relationality between objects opens a productive space in which to think about the political strength conveyed by Yuyachkani’s performances. Augusto Casafranca’s Cánepa and Q’olla are imprinted in collective memory as “things” to be remembered, as “things” with a meaning, as “things” that activated a response from those who interacted with them at some point. Eve Sedgwick, explaining Melanie Klein’s notion of what an *object* is, states: “human mental life becomes populated, not with ideas, representations, knowledges, urges, and repressions, but with *things*, things with physical properties, including people and hacked-off bits of people” (287). Interestingly, those “hacked-off bits of people” uncannily dialogue with Cánepa’s dismembered body. Each piece of his body calls to the other ones, and each one of them talks to the spectator, whose body becomes another thing in this dialogue of correspondences.

This complex, multi-layered relationship builds on the fundamentals of theatre itself, further complicating Brecht’s notion of the actor as a demonstrator who divides her/himself in order to transmit a story. Brecht insists that the actor and character not “fuse,” but rather remain separate, as distinct entities. This eschewal of the fusion actor-character is vital in sustaining a relational connection among character, actor, spectator and the story/history narrated. All of these elements become entities that generate and receive vectors of relationality in the assemblage of experiences created during the performance. The actor and the character, the spectator and the performance, remain separate beings because it is in the relationship between them where the meaning resides. It is in the lines or vectors that come and go from and to different directions that the force of performance achieves its maximum strength. The story/history of the disappeared arises in neither Q’olla nor

Cánepa, but rather in the connection between them, which reminds the spectator that a disappeared body needs to re-incarnate to tell her/his story. Likewise, Cánepa and Casafranca are not absolutely disconnected individuals, nor one fused creature, for it is in the dialogic distance between them that the story is staged; Casafranca and Yuyachkani's mission is to remind the spectator that there are diverse bodies and embodied cultures that have to be acknowledged. Finally, in understanding the distance between Casafranca and his audience, the spectator envisions Yuyachkani's role in bringing the voice of the victims of violence to be heard and their bodies to be seen. And in understanding this distance, the spectator envisions her/his own role in this narrative.

Therefore, while *Goodbye Ayacucho* is a moving and aesthetically beautiful performance, it always marks a certain distance, a gesture that problematizes Augusto Boal's understanding of "empathy," an affective state where "the *man* relinquishes his power of decision to the *image*" (113). In contrast, in *Goodbye Ayacucho*, the onstage image is mobile and mediatized at different levels, clearly distant and detached from any form of absolute comprehension. Curiously, this aesthetic distance demands a more active participation from the spectator. Perhaps for this reason the spectators of 1990 in Peru were able to establish a totally different relationship with the performance than the one established by the spectators of 2009 at Rutgers University. These different ways of engaging with the performance can be read as a repertoire of embodied transmission that requires both an intellectual/affective distance and a physical presence from the spectator.⁵ When Q'olla steps into Cánepa's shoes, and when Casafranca "steps into" Q'olla's body, they invoke an interminable repertoire of traditional practices with their bodies—and thereby bring them to life. For their part, the spectators bear witness to this revitalizing move, but also share an embodied practice, given that the significance of the re-presented body and the re-presented practices "touch" the spectator and the spectator "touches" them with her/his presence. Thus, the notion of the repertoire as embodied practice includes the spectators, as they also perform embodied behaviors based on the relationality established between them and what is re-presented before their eyes. It is through these relational links that knowledge and memory are transmitted, and it is through them that the repertoire has an effect and is affected by the spectators.

Diana Taylor's proposal of the active relationship between the archive and the repertoire opens the discussion with regard to the ways in which performances—as embodied practices—are being transmitted and preserved. As mentioned above, the centrality of the performers' bodies is not diminished

but potentiated with the arrival of new technologies. Different from a written text, digital video renders a performance in “real time,” which can be replicated in the act of playing the video online. *Goodbye Ayacucho* has been preserved in the Hemispheric Institute’s Digital Video Library (HIDVL), a medium that acts as a perennial memory archive accessed and activated by Internet users. Similar connections and relational forces to the ones previously described can be found in Yuyachkani’s performance online video, given that this medium also allows the spectator to engage with specific fragments of Peruvian history. As the first entity to acknowledge Cánepa’s absent presence, Q’olla serves as the first level of mediatization in transmitting Cánepa’s story. Augusto Casafranca incarnates a second level of mediatization when he lends his body to both Q’olla and Cánepa, thus enabling further connections with the audience. Likewise, the Internet video can be considered a third level of mediatization, one that allows a newer and different connection to *Goodbye Ayacucho*.

In the case of the online video, Cánepa’s absent body is brought to the fore through a digital body that establishes additional links of relationality with Internet users. The differences between the physical body and the digital body are notable, given that the performances that have been preserved in the digital archive, as opposed to “live” performances, clearly establish relational links not only between different people (spectators, actors, disappeared persons), but also between people and things. The video displayed on the computer screen inhabits a space in-between the text and the live performance—an in-betweenness that speaks to the spectator’s individual memory and to her/his connections to a collective memory. In becoming witness to what happens to a digital body archived online, the spectator gains awareness of her/his role as another vector in the chain of relationships generated by a performative experience. In looking *with* an online performance, the spectator is affected by its force and meaningfulness, and might become even more conscious of her/his role in the set of correspondences that have built and continue to build Peruvian history.

Even though the practice of archiving embodied practices might seem contradictory (how to encapsulate that which is always changing?), digital video and websites have a productive effect, generating new forms of spectatorship. The relationship between the archive and repertoire is re-potentiated, given that a digital archive like HIDVL requires the active participation of Internet users in order to function. While it is true that the repertoire has been (digitally) archived, this repertoire is activated and once again transformed

into a different embodied performance practice when Internet users actually *go* to the computer, *search* for the video and *position* themselves as spectators of the video that contains the performance. In short, the Internet user has to use her/his body in order to inhabit the relational links that will give meaning to the performative experience. These ideas are related to Philip Auslander's aim to destabilize the opposition between live performance and television/film mediums based on the "electronic ontology" of media: "the televisual image is not only a reproduction or repetition of a performance, but a performance in itself" (44). What Auslander proposes is similar to the activity generated by Internet users; their relationship with the video includes a unique, contingent link between elements that are not static forms, but rather things that "come to life" within a specific and unrepeatable experience.

Understood as an embodied performance practice, the experience of inhabiting a contingent connection with either a live performance or a performance video is charged with its own particular meaning and force. In the same way that the spectators of 1990 performed a different reading and connection with the performance than the spectators of 2009, the spectator of the video will perform other relational links. In this sense, with the arrival of online performance in video, *Goodbye Ayacucho*, in its different avatars, becomes the matrix from which uncountable vectors will be generated in a rhizomatic activity with no clear point of departure and no final destination. Of course, the frame in which the video is contained will be another thing to consider, and the multiple elements that can be found on the web related to this video will also play a role in the Internet user's experience.⁶ Although a specific frame could partially settle a particular way to relate to the video, the actual experience of watching it establishes unique and unrepeatable correspondences between the spectator and the story/history conveyed both through the performer's body and the video that contains another avatar of that body. The meaning and the experience of the online video performance, as well as those of the "live" performance, will exist only in the moment in which the relationality is activated. Later, the afterlife of this relationality will reside in the spectator's memory and future actions.

An understanding of disappearance, absence and the ephemeral not as something that goes away but something that establishes unique, meaningful experiences infuses the practice of spectatorship with new strength. In the case of *Goodbye Ayacucho*, what is powerfully meaningful is the act of experiencing a connection with those absent bodies—that other kind of disappearance that populated recent Peruvian history. This connection is ex-

perienced regardless of whether the spectator is viewing a live performance or a video of the performance. It is compelling to understand this relationality from a phenomenological standpoint that emphasizes the lived experience of inhabiting a body—a body that could be seated in a theater or in front of a computer. Sarah Ahmed has explored the way in which bodies take shape by tending toward objects that are reachable, that are available within the bodily horizon. For Ahmed, if consciousness is about how the world “around us” is perceived, then consciousness is “also embodied, sensitive, and situated” (27). However, this embodied presence is affected by certain “orientations” that “shape not only how we inhabit space, but how we apprehend this world of shared inhabitance, as well as ‘who’ or ‘what’ we direct our energy and attention toward” (3). According to this proposal, it is possible to “get stuck in certain alignments” (57) that do not allow a critical and active practice of spectatorship. It is true that the experience of being a spectator of *Goodbye Ayacucho*, live or in video, could establish a facile line of connection—“that is Cánepa’s story and it does not have to do with me as a spectator.” However, it is also possible to disrupt this safe alignment and to create a new angle of relationship—“Cánepa’s story is also *my* story, because his absence speaks to my presence.” Thus, the physical body and the digital body engage in an active dialogue that offers alternate ways of understanding how history is not and has never been detached from individual stories.

New forms of performance, in dialogue with new technologies, make us think about spectatorship not in terms of representation or in terms of who is viewing/reading/interpreting what, but in terms of a relationship. In this sense, the question would be who is viewing/reading/interpreting *with* whom and how are collective memories related to individual stories, to a specific moment, and to the unique and unrepeatable experience of relating our own bodies and memories with the bodies and memories exposed on stage. This assemblage of objects that converge to generate an exceptional set of connections opens future possibilities that might be grounded in the decisions and activities prompted in the spectator by a performative experience. Moreover, this experience does not lose the intensity of “live” performance; in the same way that Augusto Casafra’s performance in *Goodbye Ayacucho* demands a critical engagement from the spectator, his digital body requires another means of commitment and produces new forms of relationality. Technology has developed new forms of community, intersubjectivity and identities characterized by flexibility and openness. These new identities—individual and collective—are not an obstacle but a condition for performing a continuously

active participation and developing a kind of spectatorship based on a state of being alert to change.

A performance video like *Goodbye Ayacucho* could ignite a more active engagement from the spectator—an emancipated spectator (in the words of Jacques Rancière) whose actions defy passivity. The fact that this video “lives” in the web could promote an empowered and emancipated spectator, who could resist the new machinic assemblages that reign in our Deleuzian control societies, where surveillance and subjection are part of a network of interconnected and interwoven lines of horizontal vigilance. Paradoxically, prospects of freedom rely upon the model of the rhizome. If a rhizomatic model is expandable and non-predictable, then this same system would be able to shelter acts of resistance to global, networked surveillance. Cánepa’s story is an example of this. During the trip to Lima, he takes advantage of his non-present body to avoid being captured by the different actors of the internal war: “On the Ayacucho road it was a four-day trip to Lima. So far nobody had spotted me, and with luck no one would until I got to Lima...” He is invisible to those who don’t want to see him, either because the idea of death is too painful or because they are indifferent to this same pain. Curiously, when the truck in which he is traveling is intercepted by an armed group of Senderistas, the woman leading the group looks at Cánepa, and being able to see him—perhaps because her closeness to death has trained her eyes to see a disappeared body—she says: “You see? That’s what you get for being a reformer. You’re not dead, and you’re not alive...” Indeed, Cánepa is neither dead nor alive; his body is neither absent nor present and his burial is neither in the Andes nor in the coastal capital city. Unreachable and unsettled, Cánepa resists any force that pretends to grasp him. This act of resistance is later crowned by his appropriation of Francisco Pizarro’s bones in Lima’s cathedral. In sum, Cánepa is a meaningful body that cannot be shaped in only one form—a body that will become significant only through its relationship with the spectator.

The fact remains that, while the video of *Goodbye Ayacucho* “is” online, it is not enough to perform acts of emancipation. On the contrary, the video is activated by the spectator and only when she or he decides to open the website and play the digital video. Depending on how “emancipated” this particular spectator decides to be, she or he might become a fourth level of mediatization of Alfonso Cánepa’s disappeared body. The act of playing the video, linking it to other websites, recommending it to other possible spectators, or sharing it in different spaces establishes lines of connection

with that absent body, which becomes present in every act that invokes it, in spite of the fact that that presence is never entirely attained. Indeed, once Yuyachkani's live performance has been archived in the digital world, the potential mediums of transmission of Cánepa's story multiply infinitely, given that this video might be played in unforeseeable times and spaces. Through this mobile chain of connections, the digital video of *Goodbye Ayacucho* not only offers more people the opportunity to witness/experience Cánepa's story, but also underlines the tragedy of his disappearance, mediatized to a third degree. This video also becomes a medium voided of any previous meaning (such as Q'olla's and Augusto Casafranca's bodies), given that what is at the forefront is the very act of transmission of that story, of that absent presence. In this sense, online video performances could be considered not only as a tool to make performances accessible to broader audiences, but also as a device that potentiates and amplifies the most fundamental issues proposed by a group such as Yuyachkani and other theatrical performances invested in the dialogue between performance and politics. The interaction between the (digital) archive and the repertoire (of digital bodies) offers a new perspective from which to study the potential contribution that preservation in digital video might offer for new paradigms in Latin American theater and performance. This potentiality is what gives this video its performative—generative—force. And this potentiality works as a new way to ensure that stories like Alfonso Cánepa's are not forgotten. Above all, it is necessary not to forget them.

On the other hand, similar to the impossibility of finding a “center” or “complete” frame in the rhizomatic activity generated by online performances, Cánepa's written body, flesh and blood body and digital body mirror each other in one fact: they are never fully constituted. In the text, in the live performance and in the online video, Cánepa's dismembered and disappeared body paradoxically contains in itself its opposite—a potential coherent and present body—given that the trip from Ayacucho to Lima is propelled by a desire for completeness. However, this desired presence is not fully performed, as it is always marked by contingency. Neither the performance nor the video makes Cánepa's body present; on the contrary, they connect the spectator with his absence. As mentioned before, none of the presidential figures to whom Cánepa could have sent his letter was or is able to offer him the promise of re-assembling the parts of his body—just as thousands of Peruvians remain disappeared and their dismembered bodies, mixed with others, remain in anonymous mass graves. In the same manner, Cánepa's fragmented body is never fully reconstituted; his severed body parts,

only partially recovered, remain scattered. Likewise, the rhizomatic lines of flight offered by the Internet are discontinuous, mobile and unstable, which is precisely the condition that gives them their strength. Cánepa becomes an *Inkarri* of the technological era, whose fragmented body is all over the web.⁷ However, this *Inkarri* suggests a new twist in the way that political strength is conceived, given that his digital body will never be one complete and coherent body. On the contrary, Cánepa's body suggests an understanding of fragmentation as an act of resistance against the fantasy of vertebrate systems that intend to assimilate and unify diverse bodies in order to better police them. If, as Julio Ortega states, "[t]he matter of violence is the body" ("Nota" 9), the digital body contests this statement by being elusive, refusing to offer itself as tangible matter to be violently victimized. This *Inkarri* resists being reconstituted and, in so doing, fights to escape any attempt of appropriation, violence or subjection.

Just as Cánepa's physical body remains fragmented, the relational links established with that scattered body remain fragmented and disperse. The act of integration is precisely that: an act, a practice that happens when the spectator relates her/himself to Cánepa's physical or digital body, when the spectator relates her/his own *body* to Cánepa's, when the spectator does not "see" Cánepa, but "sees with" him. It is in this connection that absence and fragmentation collapse into momentary integration, an instant that happens when performer and spectator connect. For this very same reason, the spectator's role cannot be passive, because what is at stake in every performance is a continuous activity that allows the transmission of knowledge and affect. *Inkarri*'s body will not be reconstituted; his fragmentation will continue so as to remind performers and spectators that the generation of meaning relies on the connection between fragments of bodies, stories and history. The words of Cánepa's relatives, "There is nothing we can do. When the government kills, everything gets erased," are strong enough to set the path for hopelessness and inaction. However, what Yuyachkani's performance enacts is the necessity of contesting and resisting this statement. There is a remedy, and while we do not know where it is, it is strong, for it could be anywhere. Herein lies the power of this performance, a power that reappears in the different mediums through which the performance is transmitted.

An understanding of both the performer's body and new technologies as mediums of transmission could affect the spectator's relational links with the present and the past, with history and futurity. In a world activated by correspondences, the spectator can also become a medium that performs an

analogous gesture and establishes her/his own links and relations in order to deal with memory, trauma and history. Given that the spectator's individual experiences are an active element in the relationality established through this performance, her/his past is brought to the present in the performative experience. This collapsing of temporalities is also relevant in the shaping of the future. *Goodbye Ayacucho* offers not only a gaze towards the past, but a glimpse of the future, a way to see how potentiality can become reality as a result of political imagination. It is compelling to notice that the verbs used at the beginning and at the end of the performance are verbs in the conditional, which reconfirm this idea of potentiality. The first words that Cánepa utters are: "I came to Lima... to take back my corpse... That's how *I would* begin my speech... when I got to that city" (my emphasis). What the spectators are witnessing in this performance is a quest, a longing for something that has not yet been achieved. The spectators bear witness not only to Cánepa's tragic story, but also to his imagination, his project, his hopes and wishes. Even when those hopes have been destroyed by the indifference of Lima and the President of the Republic, Cánepa does not give up. Instead, he offers his last words, also in the conditional, as an announcement of a future reappearance: "Before long I would rise up from this earth like a column of stone and fire." It is precisely the use of the conditional that supports the alternative reading proposed here. Perhaps Cánepa will never "rise up" and perhaps there is no need to wait for that return. Perhaps Cánepa's dismembered body is already the column, that rhizomatic column that invites the spectator to join an alternative way of inhabiting fragmentation and continuous transformation.

As a final note, at the end of *Goodbye Ayacucho*, when Alfonso Cánepa doesn't find his bodily remains, he decides to take Francisco Pizarro's bones, which are kept at the heart of Lima's cathedral. When he takes as his own the body of the colonizer, this body is re-signified and henceforth transmits a different story/history. This gesture offers a final shift in the reflection upon spectatorship, as an experience with neither a closed beginning nor an ending. In this sense, Cánepa's story mirrors that which new visual media promotes as a transformation of what we expect as spectators and offers the means to imagine the experience of spectatorship beyond the limits of one specific space/time. Cánepa's political imagination allowed him to imagine himself inhabiting Pizarro's bones. This re-signification is empowering and constitutes a final recognition of his suffering as well as the retribution he deserves. But it also becomes another fragment of a story/history that will never be grasped in its "entirety." Thus Cánepa's body and Pizarro's body enter

into a flow between fragmentation and integration, which endlessly reminds us that something is always missing. That absence haunts our individual and collective memories. Performance and spectatorship—physical, digital or otherwise—extend the bridges that connect those absences.

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Notes

¹ The quotes from *Goodbye Ayacucho* come from the version published in Yuyachkani's *El cuerpo ausente* (2008), Julio Ortega's most recent edition of *Adiós Ayacucho* (2008), the translated text published in Taylor and Townsend's *Stages of Conflict* (2008), or the performance preserved in the online video on the HIDVL webpage. As Alfonso Cánepa's multiple lives refuse to be ossified and forgotten, his words and gestures are intended to be assembled in this essay as an interminable and rhizomatic puzzle.

² During its 40 years of activity, Yuyachkani has performed and re-performed its repertoire in different settings and contexts. In so doing, the group has activated multiple and diverse experiences—some of them as the intended goal for the performance and some of them as an unexpected result of staging the same performance in a new environment. In an interview given the day of Yuyachkani's anniversary, Miguel Rubio, founder and director of the group, said: "40 years have passed: 40 years of learning, 40 years of trying to find a new theatricality based on popular tradition, on popular culture, on the street, on the multiple disciplines that have come together in this theatrical proposal. This proposal is essentially based on learning, on inventing a theater for these times" (Interview for RPP Noticias; my translation). http://www.rpp.com.pe/2011-07-19-yuyachkani-celebro-40-anos-en-la-plaza-de-armas-noticia_386324.html

³ It is compelling to note that new visual media also played a vital role in the transmission of testimonies during the sessions of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The website <http://www.cverdad.org.pe/> contains transcriptions of the testimonies as well as images. Moreover, a Google search for videos offers a glimpse of what the relatives of the victims declared. These videos undoubtedly transmit part of the emotional struggle that characterized those sessions and therefore establish another kind of relationality between those who watch the videos and the stories contained within.

⁴ In the foreword to the 2008 edition of *Goodbye Ayacucho*, Julio Ortega describes yet another reaction to the same performance, this time from the side of Sendero Luminoso supporters: "No pude ver la puesta en escena sino hasta 1991, cuando vino a Nueva York. La vi la segunda de las dos noches que estuvo en el teatro Pregones del Bronx. Me contaron los Yuyas que la noche anterior, Sendero había estado en la sala, y que cuando se hizo la declaración contra Sendero (un gesto de protesta contra la violencia dentro de la violencia, que yo había cuidado en dejar claro) se escuchó en la sala el ronquido 'Sen-de-ro, Sen-de-ro...'. Los Yuyas habían recibido amenazas pero no dejaron de hacer su propio camino, el de las recuperaciones de una vida peruana capaz de responder a la matanza" (11-12).

⁵ Diana Taylor, who has explored the implications of embodied memory and the transmission of knowledge through performative practices (the *repertoire*), states that the repertoire is always embodied and always manifested in performance, in action, in doing. It is also a practice that is in dialogue with the action of recording and preservation in the archive. To explore the repertoire is to explore the embodied knowledge passed from generation to generation and to consider the social relations that allow this repertoire to be performed and transmitted. Therefore, the repertoire is inextricably linked to people and to their embodied behaviors. This might explain the necessity of physical objects like the clothes and shoes set on stage to evoke Cánepa's absent body. As Taylor states:

This haunting image from *Adiós Ayacucho* suggests the ways Yuyachkani layers its approach to representing violence. The clothes laid out in memory of the dead re-present the missing body of the victim of disappearance, even as they echo an ancient burial practice. These practices are alive; other bodies will perform them just as the man fits himself back into the waiting clothes. Andean performance practices, this shows, are not dead things, fading from view. Nor do they function in a parallel universe. (*The Archive* 206)

It is significant that the notion of the repertoire has been expanded and potentiated by the use of new visual media for the preservation of theatrical and non-theatrical performances.

⁶ Of note are the ways through which *Goodbye Ayacucho*'s performance video can be accessed on the web. For example, it can be found through an open Google search or through the Hemispheric Institute website by searching under the keyword *Yuyachkani*. However, the searching options (through similar words, recommended links, etc.) and the contexts in which the video can be viewed are innumerable. This rhizomatic activity surely deserves a detailed mapping that could offer a cartography of the relational links generated by this video.

⁷ The myth of *Inkarri* recounts how Spanish conquerors dismembered the last Inca's body and buried his limbs in different regions of Peru. According to the myth, one day the *Inkarri*'s body will re-assemble and the Inca will rise to take back his territories and the power stolen by the colonizers.

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