



PROJECT MUSE®

Art from a Fractured Past

Milton, Cynthia

Published by Duke University Press

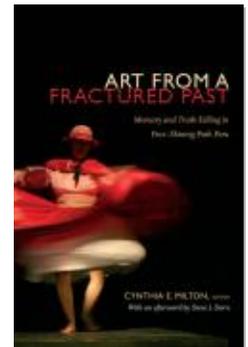
Milton, Cynthia.

Art from a Fractured Past: Memory and Truth-Telling in Post-Shining Path Peru.

Duke University Press, 2013.

Project MUSE., <a href="

<https://muse.jhu.edu/>.



➔ For additional information about this book

<https://muse.jhu.edu/book/64012>



CHAPTER EIGHT / CYNTHIA M. GARZA

COLLIDING WITH MEMORY / GRUPO CULTURAL
YUYACHKANI'S *SIN TÍTULO, TÉCNICA MIXTA*

In 1971, a group of aspiring actors established a testimonial theater company that spoke to the immediate reality of their native country, Peru. Incorporating the performative traditions of Peru—such as mask-making, folkloric song and dance, Andean myths and spirituality—the group has performed in theaters, plazas, markets, and street corners all over the country. Almost forty years later, Grupo Cultural Yuyachkani is one of Latin America's most renowned and longest running theater ensembles.¹ Yet the company's most significant moments might have been in the last decade, when it accompanied the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (CVR) public hearings to collect testimonies concerning the twenty-year armed internal conflict between Shining Path and the state. One of their *acciones escénicas* (staged actions/interventions) produced during this time, *Sin Título, Técnica Mixta* (*Untitled, Mixed Media*) collapses the distance between audience and actor and calls on nontraditional processes for creating and performing the play. Produced in 2004, just after the publication of the CVR's *Final Report*, *Sin Título* creates a theatrical experience that encourages new ways of seeing and remembering traumatic moments in the nation's history and allows details that were previously taken for granted, during both the republican era and the recent past, to emerge within the collective social memory of Peru.²

Staging Socially Engaged Theater

Yuyachkani first took shape when the director Miguel Rubio and the actress Teresa Ralli, who at the time were part of the experimental theater group Yego,

witnessed the events of a miners' strike in the Andean region. The play that resulted was *Puño de Cobre* (*Fistful of Copper*), and in the almost four decades that followed, the idea of creating Yuyachkani's type of socially engaged theater emerged.³ Their vision was to promote theater that would document the most pressing, immediate realities of Peru and make it easily accessible to spectators who would not normally have the knowledge of or resources to attend theater productions. To this end, in addition to the plays produced for Casa Yuyachkani, the troupe's performance and rehearsal space in Lima's Magdalena del Mar neighborhood, the troupe presents free public street performances in spaces not typically used for classical theatrical stagings—open-air markets, the steps of government buildings, even street corners.

The original collective chose the Quechua word *yuyachkani* (meaning both "I am thinking," and "I am remembering")⁴ to represent this socially engaged theater that would navigate the complex national and ethnic identity of Peru. Although the group has always been based in Lima, reflecting on the problems of the country prompted the founders to travel and relocate to cities and towns across Peru, collecting stories and experiences that would later inform their work. During this period, many of the "Yuyas" (a nickname for members of the troupe) researched Andean and Amazonian traditions, learned Quechua, became well versed in indigenous dances and mask-making traditions, and invited feedback from the communities they visited. Gustavo Boada, who became the troupe's mask-maker in 1987, described one of these learning experiences:

In 1973 [the Yuyas] had a performance in Allpamina, a mining town. They did a piece called *Puño de Cobre* . . . based on a strike at a copper mine named Cobriza. The show talks about how the police killed some of the miners who had gone on strike. . . . The actors were acting in blue jeans and white T-shirts, and after the performance the miners told them that they really did like the show, but that "next time, don't forget your costumes." They thought they had forgotten their costumes because for the [Andean] miners—who are very connected with nature, and appreciate colors—mask imagery is very important for them, and dance is an equally important element. . . . This made Yuyachkani realize that they were making a very different kind of theater than what the population [of this region of Peru]

knew. So they decided they had to figure out not only how to investigate social problems, but also how to investigate traditions, and the significance . . . of those traditions.⁵

Boada's anecdote about costuming is important because it elucidates the Yuyas' process of embracing an Andean cosmivision in their work to reach out to a wider Peruvian audience. In this case, the miners in the Andean mining town suggested that without the costumes and masks—whether the colorful, intricate masks of the Puno region or the knitted masks of Ayacucho—this was not a complete performance.

Today it is the diversity of Peru's performative customs that are the foundation and inspiration of the group's work. Their public processions in nontraditional spaces and their performances in villages throughout the country often invite the public to join in on the performative conversation, which simultaneously celebrates Peru's national heritage and interrogates its political shortcomings. Thus, the current ensemble—Rubio, Teresa and Rebeca Ralli, Ana and Débora Correa, Augusto Casafranca, and Julián Vargas—is continuing Yuyachkani's original objective of creating a theater for the people and hence a democratic stage in a profoundly nonegalitarian society.

Yuyachkani's work harnesses their engagement with audiences and the stories culled from communities throughout Peru to call on a collective social memory that both creates and recreates the history of Peru. The Yuyas welcome the challenges of this endeavor. As Rubio has explained, Yuyachkani attempts to construct theater with "a complete consciousness of our culture and memory . . . to make Peruvian theater with all of the complexity that this implies. To do that, we have to bring to theater the diversity of Peru, and there [in this diversity] we will find our identity."⁶

Eliciting *Acciones Escénicas*

In 2000, Peru ushered in a new era of democracy and national rebuilding. One of the biggest obstacles on this path was the recent unresolved memory of the two-decade brutally violent internal war between the militarized state and Shining Path. According to the CVR's *Final Report*, almost seventy thousand citizens, the vast majority of them indigenous peasants, lost their lives in this war.⁷ The

plays Yuyachkani produced during the Shining Path era argued that such violence was not new; rather they highlighted the long-standing systemic inequities that the Andean and Amazonian populations had suffered by calling on Andean myths, customs, and the firsthand testimonies of survivors and witnesses.

Predating the work of the truth commission, Yuyachkani staged testimonial performances that bore witness to what many in Lima feigned not to know or did not wish to know. For instance, one of the most memorable pieces addressing the years of violence was *Contraelviento* (*Against the Wind*; 1989), based on a survivor's testimony about a 1986 massacre in the highland region of Ayacucho, the impoverished Peruvian department where Shining Path was born. The story of the massacre, in which armed forces drove villagers over a cliff to their deaths, is reconfigured in this piece through the narrative structure of Andean folklore.

In one scene, for example, the devil, an angel, and the *China diabla* (Chinese devil), well-known characters from Andean folkloric dance, make an appearance.

Masked dancers from pre- and post-Hispanic performative traditions appear onstage and fight ferociously for influence over the peasants—dancing devils and spiteful archangels with trumpets like muskets, transformed into crazed figures of power. The archangels fight for ownership of the peasants' souls in the “*danza de la diabla*” or devil dance from the Fiesta de la Candelaria de Puno. These dances, performed annually for hundreds of years, tell a story as old as the Conquest, as recent as the criminal violence associated with Sendero Luminoso, the Shining Path.⁸

The later play *Adiós Ayacucho* (Farewell Ayacucho; 1990) introduced audiences in both Spanish and Quechua to the ghost of a peasant farmer (played by Augusto Casafranca) who is searching for a proper burial after being tortured, murdered, and thrown into a mass grave. When the play opens, Alfonso Cánepa has just lost his life and stands at his wake before his own flattened clothes surrounded by candles and fresh flowers. This striking scene depicts an Andean burial ritual, the *pacha vela*, whereby families lay out the clothes of their lost loved ones, to honor their absence and to accompany them in their initial postlife journey.

As the violence spread from the countryside to the capital city, so did the settings for Yuyachkani's productions. In *No Me Toquen ese Valse* (*Don't Play That*

Waltz for Me; 1990),⁹ two dead performers return to a *peña* (live music venue) in Lima, a city now paralyzed by violence and destruction. The two struggle to find life—in the space, in their performance, and in their own bodies—and are not able to do so.

Their production *Antígona* (2000) recasts the Greek myth of Antigone in the context of Peru's continuing violence, drawing parallels between both experiences of despotic rule and the human right of proper burial. To help develop her characters for this one-woman play, Teresa Ralli invited women who had suffered loss and trauma into Casa Yuyachkani, first sharing with them the tale of Antigone and then listening to their own stories.¹⁰

In recognition of their unique success, some of the collective's political theater outreach was eventually funded by the NGO Servicios Educativos Rurales (Rural Educational Services) as part of the cvr's *audiencias públicas* (public hearings) scheduled throughout the countryside.¹¹ These *acciones escénicas*, which took place in August and September 2001 and again when cvr's *Final Report* was issued in 2003, were designed to raise awareness of the truth commission's work, to honor the victims of the conflict, and "to prompt people to come forward and speak publicly to the commission without fear."

Many of the characters that were born and nurtured for each play during the cvr's mandate made appearances in public spaces, interacting with audiences and citizens who had come to share their own testimonies. The actress Ana Correa's character Rosa Cuchillo in the play of the same name (2002) searches for her disappeared son even after she herself is dead. Although primarily based on a book by Oscar Colchado Lucio, the character was also inspired by the life of Angélica Mendoza, known popularly as Mamá Angélica, whose son was kidnapped and disappeared in Ayacucho in 1983.

The character Rosa (played by Ana Correa) staged a performance at the cvr's first public hearing in Huanta, a town in the department of Ayacucho where forty-nine men and one woman were tortured and murdered by Peruvian military soldiers and thrown into a mass grave at Pucayacu. Rosa moved slowly across the public market amid the commotion of a day's shopping, dressed all in white, before mounting a stage beneath the plastic tarps typical of any other itinerant trader, farmer, cook, or artisan. A crowd gathered around her ghostly figure to hear her testimony about her lost son. By the end of the performance,

the connection between Rosa and the audience had grown so intimate, her story so familiar to spectators, that scenes from the play took on profound meaning for both Ana (the actress playing Rosa) and the crowd. In the final scene of the play, for example, Rosa retrieved rosewater and began to sprinkle it onto the onlookers from above. This was meant to represent a ritual of flourishing and growth, and audience members began to rub the water and rose petals onto their arms and faces. Some spectators approached the stage when the play had ended to ask for some of the water to “purify” themselves further. In a similar performance during the public hearings in the entryway to Huamanga’s public market, the actress remembered: “I could not stop crying while I was telling my story because I could see the ‘mamas’ [other women] crying with me.”¹²

Reexamining the Nation: *Sin Título, Técnica Mixta*

A search for the body—or in the case of some, a search for the absent, disappeared body—has become a key theme in Yuyachkani’s more recent plays.¹³ In the production *Sin Título, Técnica Mixta*, the search enacted is not specifically for a physical body but for the collective body of memories that was inscribed on the audiences and performers throughout the two-decade crisis. The accumulation of experiences accrued in Yuyachkani’s almost forty-year history—of travels throughout the country, of audiences weeping during the public testimonies, of stories heard from survivors—are exhibited in *Sin Título* as “an inventory” of memory.¹⁴ In addition, whereas pre-CVR performances sought out individual bodies, in the post-CVR era Yuyachkani turned its attention to the body of the nation.

Sin Título is a work of documentary theater that takes up two narratives simultaneously: the War of the Pacific (1879–1884), a war that tested the boundaries and resolve of the Peruvian nation against external aggressors, and the armed internal conflict between the Peruvian state and Shining Path (1980–2000) that brought the question of nation again to the forefront. As in other Yuyachkani productions staged in public spaces throughout the country, the narrative plays out in one common space. That is, there is no stage, no seating area for the audience, and therefore no separation between actor and spectator.

The setting is the attic of a national museum, and the audience enters through a sectioned-off hallway lined with glass exhibition cases. To the right are news-

paper articles emblazoned with headlines about the Shining Path conflict. These lie beside portions of the CVR's *Final Report* and information pamphlets. Beneath one newspaper headline, a photograph shows a woman holding a picture of a disappeared family member. Tangled pieces of rope, whips, and *hojotas*—the sandals typical of poor Andean villagers, made out of recycled tires—rest haphazardly on top of library books. On the walls above these displays are inscribed the poignant words of Salomón Lerner Ferbes, the Peruvian philosopher and the president of the truth commission: “When memory is really alive, it does not gaze at history, it invites the creation of it. More than simply existing in any museum, where it becomes static, memory is in the air that we breathe.”

Just past the glass cases on the right side of the entry hall hangs a six-foot black-and-white photographic image of the aftermath of the 1992 car bombing by Shining Path on Tarata Street in Lima's upscale Miraflores neighborhood. This blast killed forty people, destroyed almost two hundred homes and four hundred businesses, and launched a week of citywide Shining Path strikes against the Peruvian government that completely shut down Lima. This photograph of Tarata Street is perhaps one of the most widely disseminated images of the years of violence, representing a period when people in Lima were held hostage to fear and mourning.

Displayed opposite this photograph of Tarata are old and worn red and blue uniforms, muskets, medals of honor, maps, and pages pulled from history books, conjuring a war-torn country from a different time, the War of the Pacific. The parallel exhibition brings together on the same plane two disconnected moments in Peruvian history—a war against an outside aggressor that destroyed the country, and an internal conflict that brought it to its knees once again. In the stillness before the play begins, the audience has a moment to reflect back on these two accounts, to reexamine them in a new space, and to ruminate over them side by side while being given frequent reminders of the importance of memory, such as the inscribed quote from Lerner.

Around the corner is a vast dark empty space; the bleachers that usually seat the audience in front of the stage have been removed. The crowd at first roams awkwardly, uncertain of what to do and where to go. Miguel Rubio purposefully devised this format: “When the spectators enter the space, they realize that there is no place to sit, and disconcertedly, attempt to find a place to watch [the



FIGURE 8.1. Yuyachkani actor Julián Vargas sits beside a series of nineteenth-century artifacts as audience members enter the performance venue and observe the museum displays in *Sin Título, Técnica Mixta*. Photograph by Elsa Estremadoyro.

performance]. They don't know yet that they will be able to, or that they will have to, move; they will walk around the space voluntarily or involuntarily if an actor, who they will have to make space for, passes by their side."¹⁵

As the audience leaves the narrow hallway, they enter into this large open room, decorated by groupings of museum displays on the surrounding walls. These displays contain suits, boxes, uniforms, antique books, historical documents, photographs, mannequins, a television monitor, school desks, flags, and newspaper articles, all items common to traditional national museum displays and classrooms. An eerie accompanying music score sounds like the repeating sound of a squeaking wheel or nails being dragged slowly down a chalkboard. The crowd does not know how these artifacts will be used, what these objects mean, or why they were brought here.

Actors are positioned throughout the room, costumed to blend in with the museum displays. A man clothed in a tattered nineteenth-century Peruvian military uniform is sitting on a platform with his back to an assortment of antique brass band instruments. Above him hangs a black-and-white photograph of Andrés Avelino Cáceres, a soldier from the state of Ayacucho who became a national hero (and eventually president of Peru) for leading a resistance to

Chilean occupation during the War of the Pacific. A veiled woman dressed in black stands proudly against the opposite wall, but her face expresses gentle anguish and sadness.

More than official museum displays, this is a holding space, an archive depository containing pieces of disturbing memorabilia. The collection, however, is still waiting to be organized into some kind of coherent order. These artifacts are intended to be handled by the audience and the actors. The play's action is driven by interactions with these objects and images that have not yet been classified by the state, by an artist, or by any arbitrating authority. The artifacts are the mixed media that make up the country's past, its incomplete "nationhood."

Soon the exhibits begin to shatter: the actors who at first stand frozen, much like wax figures in a museum, erupt from inside them and move around the open room. As the action builds, rolling platforms aggressively force startled spectators to quickly move aside and to collide (quite literally) with images, artifacts, other bodies, and words. Neither performer nor spectator stands still.

The way the audience experiences these archival pieces mirrors the processes by which Yuyachkani created the play. Over the period of a year, Rubio and the actors gathered different objects, placed them in a corner of the main room, and interacted with them, bringing the objects to life with action. These artifacts came to Casa Yuyachkani "not as props, but as evidence, testimony, necessary information . . . as images that activate memory and that, at the same time, invite the spectator to choose his own point of view, to decide what he is looking at, what he hears, and where he will stop."¹⁶

This experimental process for creating *Sin Título*, as Rubio described, was like "learning how to walk again," because it moved Yuyachkani away from reliance on a written script and on a narrative structure. Indeed, what the collective began to explore in the creation of *Sin Título* were the details about Peru's past that might emerge if the confines of conventional dramatic structure were broken. The absence of a clear narrative is often disconcerting and forces the audience to consider other connections outside chronology and place, since the action jumps across time and space.

After several minutes of audience interaction with the displays, the play proper begins in the midst of, we are to assume, the War of the Pacific. After a brief silence following the previous action of rolling platforms and collisions, the

actors become unfrozen again and move out into the center of the room. Frantic music, the sounds of scurrying horses, doors slamming, and footsteps that become louder. The discordant back-and-forth of a violin, piano, and an occasional thunderous pounding provides the acoustic backdrop for what looks like the actors' desperate attempts to flee the scene. The actors, preparing to escape, gather suitcases, closing and opening doors, until a woman draws our attention to a man sitting in a small niche, hovering above the room, with a typewriter.

With the sounds of the man softly hammering away at his typewriter from his suspended nook, observing and recording what is transpiring, the characters below begin introducing themselves. A woman, gently caressing what looks to be a lifeless body, recounts events as they happen in the present tense:

My name is Mariana Violeta de Rodriguez. I am from Chorrillos. My husband and my sons are soldiers and are part of the reserve battalion. Today, January 13, 1881, the enemy army is attacking us from the slopes of San Juan. I run to the central plaza to see if there is news. No one knows anything. Under the dictatorship of Piérola, the newspapers are censored. Suddenly, I see hundreds of soldiers coming down the slopes. Some fall in their path. Others, bloody, ask for help. Many more run toward Lima, where they say they'll fight the final battle. Then, I see a commanding officer and ask him of the whereabouts of my husband. In response, he hands me this [*she motions to the cadaver*].

Next, across the room, a widow and mother of ten children proclaims that she is searching for who is to blame. "But," she asks rhetorically, "what could possibly unify our nation now?" Then she begins to play a familiar melody on her accordion—"Tacna," a song that became the anthem of heroism and nationalism all over Peru. The entire company join their voices in song:

Somos peruanos, Tacna,
te adoramos, Tacna,
como una enseña, Tacna,
con lealtad.

We are Peruvians, Tacna
we adore you, Tacna,
like the insignia, Tacna,
with loyalty.

Y le cantamos, Tacna,
a tu bravura, Tacna,
y a la hermosura de tu gran ciudad

We sing to you, Tacna,
to your bravery, Tacna,
and to the beauty of your great city.



FIGURE 8.2. The actress Teresa Ralli cradling a fallen Peruvian soldier in a scene depicting a battle of the War of the Pacific. Photograph by Elsa Estremadoyro.

Tacna is the southernmost state in Peru and was under Chilean control for fifty years following the Battle of Alto de la Alianza (May 26, 1880), when hundreds of Peruvian soldiers lost their lives to defend the territory. Every year on August 28, Tacneños raise the Peruvian flag to celebrate their return to Peru at the end of the Chilean occupation. The song is most often played and danced as a lively polka, but during *Sin Título* it is slow and morose, and the flag being raised is tattered and torn.

The victims of the War of the Pacific, whose faces Peruvians have only seen in museums and history books, are suddenly resuscitated, over a hundred years later. Symbols that had been stripped of their history through the passage of time and by rituals of nationhood are reinscribed with stories of death and loss. The hovering writer stops typing and narrates by heart a text that concludes the play's introduction. It is an excerpt from a well-known speech delivered a few years after the conclusion of the war on July 29, 1888, by Manuel González Prada, the Peruvian philosopher and poet, from the Teatro Politeama in Lima at an event organized to commemorate Peru's independence day and to raise funds to recapture Tacna and Arica from Chilean control. In this address, he questions whether or not Peru actually exists as a nation:

Peru suffered no greater calamity than that of the war with Chile. The campaigns for Independence and the second battle against Spain cost us precious lives and great sacrifice, but they gave us our own life, fame, and lifted our national spirit. . . . Chile takes *guano* [bird fertilizer], nitrates, and long strips of territory, but leaves us undaunted, petty, accepting our defeat. . . . Chile's brutal hand tore apart our flesh and ground our bones, but the real victors, the weapons of the enemy, were our own ignorance and our spirit of servitude . . . the ignorance of our governors and the servitude of the governed. . . . Chile, with all of its meagerness, will defeat us tomorrow and always if we continue being what we were and what we are.¹⁷

The War of the Pacific for Peruvians was a collective defeat, a collective trauma that lingers in the national consciousness, even today. González Prada argued, in the address highlighted by *Sin Título*, that Peru was defeated by the Chileans not because Chileans were more powerful or better prepared but because Peru was a fractured nation. The speech continues with a portion of the address that sheds light on another impetus central to *Sin Título*: “I am speaking, gentlemen, of liberty for all, and principally for those most helpless. The ‘real’ Peru is not made up of the groups of creoles [descendants of Spaniards] and foreigners who populate the strip of land between the Pacific Ocean and the Andes; the nation is made up of the multitude of Indians scattered along the eastern side of the mountain range. For more than three hundred years, the Indian has crawled among the inferior stratum of civilization.”

One of the central connections between these two seemingly disjointed moments in Peruvian history—the War of the Pacific and the armed internal conflict—is the oppression of the “real” citizens of the nation, those most destitute, the indigenous population. This argument continues into the next section of the play, which addresses the period of Shining Path, the Fujimori administration, and the terror that both inflicted on a nation already divided.

Colliding with Memory

After González Prada's speech, a school bell rings loudly, drawing the audience's attention to a woman dressed in a schoolmistress uniform who sings the Peruvian national anthem in a mocking, childlike voice. She insistently points

to dates on a chalkboard and then continues singing the anthem's chorus. She then lets down her hair and tears off her clothes to reveal a student uniform underneath. The teacher-now-student rushes into the center of the room to be indoctrinated by Shining Path.

The narrative structure up to this point—of individual actors recounting different scenes—now fractures. What follows is a whirlwind of action covering every inch of the room; one cannot see everything that is taking place. Not only are the actors all moving constantly to the accompaniment of a military brass band march, but the audience is forced to repeatedly move because actors are marching, running, rolling toward them from every angle. At the back of the room, there are small projected screens on the wall displaying Shining Path women's armies marching in prison yards, saluting the Maoist flag, and chanting. The female teacher-now-student is rolling a desk, jumping on top of it, and riding it around. The music transitions back and forth between a march and a loud electric guitar solo. Another teacher, with a wooden stick in her hand, is now marching militantly about in a dark uniform, hair pulled back in a tight bun. She repeatedly salutes, sometimes with an outstretched arm, other times with her hand to her forehead in the fashion of Shining Path militants.

A man standing on a platform at the back wall suddenly commands everyone's attention: he is the spitting image of Abimael Guzmán, the leader of Shining Path, in his black-rimmed glasses, with left hand on hip and right arm extended as if he were delivering an address to his followers. The student abandons her desk and begins to wave a massive red flag while marching frenetically and screaming, as the teacher lets down her thick black hair, covers her face with a wooden mask, and bangs out a violent rhythm on her desk with two drumsticks.

The music transitions yet again, this time into a distorted Greek wedding song. Actor Julián Vargas is reenacting what was dubbed the "Zorba the Greek" routine made famous when a video of Abimael Guzmán, snapping his fingers, was leaked to the Peruvian press.¹⁸ He snaps and shuffles and kicks, arms outstretched, cigarette dangling from his lip. While the scene is humorous, it also evokes unease at the reminder of this cruel leader's hidden dancing in the dark attic of an affluent Lima apartment years ago.

All of these images—with Guzmán's dancing as familiar as the gray Peruvian school uniform—are thrown at the audience simultaneously as reminders of a

time that many have tried to forget. Because the action is in one common space, the spectators—who are at once drawn to the images and must also flee from them when they get too close—experience the urgency of the chaos firsthand. Moreover, the audience is almost complicit in the drama. At several points in the play, the actors point at and direct their attention to individual members of the crowd and run at them screaming.

Later, masked, mannequin-like bodies come to life, their spindly necks supporting oversized caricatured faces of Alberto Fujimori and Vladimiro Montesinos, the infamous president of Peru (1990–2000) and his head of intelligence, respectively, who became symbols of dishonor and corruption after seizing absolute power through a dense network of businesses, media, and political parties. Although the Fujimori administration is largely credited with the capture of Abimael Guzmán and the end of Shining Path’s terror campaign, it is also associated with massacres, tortures, and political harassment during the internal conflict.

Fujimori and Montesinos make their appearances in *Sin Título* with aloof and childlike expressions. Fujimori is seated, legs crossed, pointing in an accusatory manner at members of the audience. He points at himself and then throws his palms into the air in a gesture of “Who, me?” Some audience members laugh nervously. Montesinos is kneeling, nodding, pointing, and slowly turning out his empty pockets (as if to suggest his innocence of the claims of malfeasance). All the while, circus music is playing in the background. At one point, Monopoly play money is tossed about, and some members of the audience dive for it.¹⁹

These flashes of chaos are broken by and contrasted with moments of quiet, stunning imagery. Now that the space has been fully overwhelmed with images of Peru’s recent tumultuous past, it grows absolutely silent, and dark. A single rolling stage is lit, and a blindfolded woman in a white sleeveless dress stands on top. Her eyes are completely covered by a bright red crinoline cloth, and she is holding a burlap sack in her hands. Several audience members move quickly to her.

To the sound of ethereal xylophone and piano accompaniment, she begins a desperate choreography. There is clearly nothing in the sack, yet she continues to search for something. She reaches inside with her hands, her arms, and then her entire head, becoming more desperate each time she feels the emptiness

within. For a moment, she stands with the sack on her head, evoking a scene of torture. She opens her mouth widely and screams with no sound. Then she begins to thrash around in the bag as her search becomes more frantic. Her movements are hysterical and seizure-like.

Is she the mother of a disappeared person searching fruitlessly for her son? Does she represent the nation searching for an end to the violence or searching for answers? Some audience members seem confused and wait for more to happen. Others gasp, moved to silence and tears. Again, there are no words and no narrative. This moment, this imagery is created only by gestures and the anguish displayed via the actress Teresa Ralli's body.

Learning to Walk Again

Sin Título challenges audiences to search out new ways of seeing and remembering two moments in Peruvian history. By juxtaposing the nationalistic narratives of the War of the Pacific—which take for granted the suffering of indigenous populations and ignore the enduring inequalities of a divided nation—with the internal conflict of the twentieth century, the Yuyas successfully demonstrate that the nation's most traumatic memories were, in a sense, the same mistake made twice.

The most poignant example of this argument comes in the final scene of the play, which begins with the actresses Ana and Débora Correa entering the space on separate rolling platforms. The overhead lights are off, and actors dressed as schoolchildren hold flashlights that spotlight sections of the women's bodies. Débora is clothed in a *pollera*, the traditional wide circular skirt of Andean women, and a hat painted in the red and white colors of the Peruvian flag. Ana is scantily clad in the feathered, beaded garments of the Asháninka peoples of the Peruvian Amazon. In a moving tribute to the women sexually and physically abused by military forces and Shining Path members during the years of violence, Ana opens up a leather cloak covering her breasts to reveal her naked body and her narrative written on the inside lining of the cloak.

In order to read the text, spectators approach the platform and lean in closely. Eventually, as others catch on, the entire crowd huddles intimately around the two women. Because the text is lit so dimly and because there are nearly a hundred people approaching the actors, the distance between audience and

performer increasingly collapses. As Débora and Ana turn to reveal more narrative, more layers of clothing covered in words, more body parts, the story written on their bodies becomes visible.

“On Ana” is the story of a pregnant woman who lost her fetus after being kicked by Senderistas in front of her entire village. In an act that “showed the villagers what they [the Senderistas] were capable of doing,” they then forced the woman to eat her aborted fetus.²⁰ On the other side of the room, Débora opens her wide *pollera* as the flashlights turn to reveal another atrocity committed against indigenous women, this time by the state.

During Alberto Fujimori’s second term in 1995, as part of the family planning portion of the national population law, female sterilizations were incorporated through a program of “voluntary surgical contraception.” . . . It is estimated that 300,000 Peruvian women were sterilized without their consent between 1997 and 1998. . . . Many of them were indigenous campesinas, illiterate, Quechua-speaking, and of the poorest population on the Andean plateau, where women were tricked into trucks with the promise of food and other provisions. They were told that they would be taken back to their villages, that the procedure would not be painful, but it was not this way. The women were taken to medical posts lacking hygienic conditions, were not given anesthesia or medication, and had to return to their villages on foot. Many women bled to death.²¹

A number of audience members now cover their mouths with their hands in horror and walk away from the stages. All the while, Débora and Ana stand sternly staring ahead, bodies exposed. Eventually, as the music crescendos, the women begin to dance. Débora performs a *huayno*, a lively Andean dance meant for couples that in her version includes gestures of running and screaming. As she wildly spins, her *pollera* floats up to reveal her bare feet and strong legs. Ana stomps her own bare feet into the ground and waves her arms. Later, she is holding two *sicuris*—large Andean pan flutes—and poses with them as if they were guns.

The more they dance, their unsmiling faces transform into expressions of joy, and the audience members disperse around the room’s space again. Suddenly the two women stop abruptly and face each other, mirroring each other’s



FIGURE 8.3. The text written on Débora Correa's *pollera*, in the colors of the Peruvian flag, is no longer visible as she dances and spins during the last scene of *Sin Título, Técnica Mixta*. Photograph by Elsa Estremadoyro.

outstretched hands. They are from different parts of the country and speak different languages, but this gesture, this scene, joins them in what they suffered at the hands of the government and Shining Path. They eventually step off to the side of the platforms to reincorporate themselves into the museum displays, to the sound of the ticking clock, and the lights go out. This is how *Sin Título* ends.

When the lights come back up, the audience has the opportunity to view again the artifacts on display, to reprocess them. These lifeless artifacts observed on entering now hold new meanings: the text written on the side wall is the same story printed on Débora's *pollera* in the final scene, about the maiming of woman's bodies in the Andes; a black-and-white photograph of indigenous women in bowler hats hangs beside the clothing of the mother who caressed her husband's cadaver in the opening sequence; a typewriter sits on a pedestal, pages falling from its carriage. The actors that stood among these museum displays are now gone, but their presence and what they represented lingers on.

Many of the artifacts, photographs, and texts brought to the set of *Sin Título* were used in previous *acciones escénicas*, as pieces from other plays and

installations. Like these artifacts, the Yuyas themselves bring to the set bodies heavy with memory but not weighted down by it. In this sense, the actors themselves present evidence and testimony, rather than a character based on a script or historical narrative. What Miguel Rubio called “learning to walk again”—the process for creating the play (and the delivery of the piece itself)—allowed the Yuyas to explore the scenic mechanism of both theater and remembering in a whole new light, and fully open up these experiences to the audience. With the collection of plays addressing the internal conflict that culminated in *Sin Título*, *Técnica Mixta*, Yuyachkani’s art has transformed into a new self, a stronger body, just like the audiences and the nation they serve, ready to move into the performance spaces of a new Peru.

Notes

I would like to thank the Grupo Cultural Yuyachkani, Socorro Naveda, Tory Pegram, Diana Taylor, and the Hemispheric Institute for their participation in this chapter. Elsa Estremadoyro graciously provided the photographs.

1. Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire*, 196.
2. Yuyachkani, *Sin Título, Técnica Mixta (Untitled, Mixed Media)* was produced in 2004. There is no published version. All of the citations are based on the author’s attendance of three performances in September 2008, and all translations here are by the author.
3. Bell, “Rediscovering Mask Performance in Peru.”
4. In some regions where Quechua is spoken, *yuyachkani* also means “I am your memories” and “I am your thoughts.”
5. Gustavo Boada, “Rediscovering Mask Performance in Peru,” interview with John Bell (*The Drama Review*, Fall 1999), 170.
6. Ana Zwagner, “Yuyachkani: Más de treinta años,” Agencia Perú, <http://agenciaperu.com/cultural/tablas/especial/yuyachkani.htm>, accessed June 26, 2013.
7. The CVR’s *Informe final* estimates that of the more than 69,000 victims, three of every four were Quechua-speaking campesinos.
8. Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire*, 190.
9. “No me toquen ese valse” is also the title of a famous creole waltz written by Julio Jaramillo.
10. For a fuller description of this process, see Lane, “*Antígona* and the Modernity of the Dead.”
11. A’ness, “Resisting Amnesia,” 397n. 5.
12. Discussion between Ana Correa and New York University students after performance of *Rosa Cuchillo* on July 25, 2005, at the Casa Yuyachkani in Lima.

13. Rubio Zapata, *El Cuerpo Ausente*, 35–38.

14. Rubio Zapata, *El Cuerpo Ausente*, 38.

15. Rubio Zapata, *El Cuerpo Ausente*, 193–194.

16. Rubio Zapata, *El Cuerpo Ausente*, 194–195.

17. This excerpt is from *Sin Título* and the translation is by the author. Prada's famous speech is reproduced on several websites. For instance, www.voltairenet.org/article120667.html, accessed July 15, 2013.

18. Available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=FEzWdx-QAqs, accessed June 26, 2013.

19. This happened in one of the three performances attended by the author, when some students from an eighth-grade class playfully went for the money when it was thrown on the floor. In subsequent performances, the actors threw the money in some audience members' faces.

20. The main source for the excerpts written on the Asháninka clothing was Ernesto de la Jara Basumbrío's "Memoria y batallas en nombre de los inocentes, Peru 1992–2001" (Lima: Instituto de Defensa Legal), 2001. This document is also referenced in the CVR's *Informe final*.

21. The Committee for the Defense of Women's Rights in Latin America and the Caribbean (Comité de América Latina y el Caribe para la Defensa de los Derechos de la Mujer) released a report in 1999, *Nada personal: Reporte de derechos humanos sobre la aplicación de la anticoncepción quirúrgica en el Perú* ("Nothing personal: A human rights report on the implementation of surgical sterilization in Peru"), that details nearly 250 complaints (including thirty deaths) received by the Committee since the sterilization program began in 1996. Yuyachkani employed this document, as well as testimonies collected by women's rights organizations, Movimiento Manuela Ramos, and Flora Tristan Women's Center, to piece together the narrative printed on Débora's clothing. Conversation with Ana Correa, Lima, August 5, 2005; email correspondence with Socorro Naveda, August 13, 2010. The CVR did not investigate this program.

