Filming Theater: The Audiovisual Documentation as a Substitute of the Performance

Nestor Fernando Bravo

Brigham Young University - Provo

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FILMING THEATER: THE AUDIOVISUAL
DOCUMENTATION AS A SUBSTITUTE OF THE PERFORMANCE

By

Nestor F. Bravo Goldsmith

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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GRADUATE COMMITTEE APPROVAL

Of a thesis submitted by

Nestor F. Bravo Goldsmith

This thesis has been read by each member of the following graduate committee and by majority vote has been found to be satisfactory.

__________________________  ___________________________________
Date      Megan Sanborn Jones, Chair

__________________________  ___________________________________
Date      Eric Samuelsen

__________________________  ___________________________________
Date      Dean Duncan
As chair of the candidate’s graduate committee, I have read the format, citations and bibliographical style are consistent and acceptable and fulfill university and department style requirements; (2) its illustrative materials including figures, tables, and charts are in place; and (3) the final manuscript is satisfactory to the graduate committee and is ready for submission to the university library.

Date
Megan Sanborn Jones
Chair, Graduate Committee

Accepted for the Department

Date
Darl Larsen
Graduate Coordinator, Theatre and Media Arts

Accepted for the College

Date
Rory R. Scanlon
Associate Dean, College of Fine Arts and Communications
ABSTRACT

FILMING THEATER: THE AUDIOVISUAL DOCUMENTATION AS A SUBSTITUTE OF THE PERFORMANCE

Nestor F. Bravo Goldsmith

Department of Theatre and Media Arts

Master of Arts

Theatre is not a thermometer of society; it is the fever. The archive is the aftermath that recalls that fever. In this thesis I theorize about the status of audiovisual documentation, its functionality, and its ontological relation with the performance. I argue that the film of a performance does not constitute evidence per se, but it acquires such status through the concurrence of other documents and archival artifacts existentially related to the theatrical production. I also propose that the audiovisual document becomes a substitute for the performance when it has disappeared from the historical world, becoming the new referent for other documents that also speak of the original performance. In the body of my thesis I introduce the trope of the Model Performance (MP), defined as the epitome of all the shows performed throughout the cycle of a theatrical production, in order to problematize the assumed stable nature of the performance as rather an evolvable entity impossible to document in its whole process. The MP, as a construct, allows me to formulate five orientations the archivist could take into account when deciding which, among the successive shows a production performs, should be audiovisually documented. It is through all these ruminations that finally I arrive to the conclusion of creating a holistic archival model using the new digital technologies, that I think are the best present media to recall and to assess the fever.
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Con amor para mis padres, Nelly y Néstor Alberto, y mis suegros Mirna y Alex.
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Chapter One: Introduction

Performance Studies focuses its interest in those iterative human behaviors that are performed, consciously or not, in a wide range of situations. These range from an individual’s unconscious repetitive actions in daily life, to highly structured and planned social events such as political campaigns, sports, and sophisticated rituals. In the field of Performance Studies the noun *performance* is used as an umbrella term, which sees discrete human acts as, according Richard Schechner,1 “twice-behaved behavior”, defined as: “Physical or verbal actions that are not-for-the-first time, prepared, or rehearsed.” (Performance 22). It is through the quality of restored behaviors that performances function, as Diana Taylor states in her text *The Archive and the Repertoire*: “as vital acts of transfer, transmitting social knowledge, memory, and a sense of identity…”(2). Based on this comprehensive notion of performance, theatre and its multifarious manifestations, could be considered as a performative act, and therefore, one of the objects of analysis in performance studies. It is also under this perspective that theatre could be contemplated as an epistemic system that through embodiment, and the extensive use of other expressive means, dynamically preserves and transmits cultural knowledge (Taylor 278).

In this thesis, my theoretical enquiry about the audiovisual documentation of theatre will be informed by this notion of performance as a living vehicle of storing and transmitting cultural knowledge. As a matter of fact, I assert that this trope intersects at the notion and function of the archive as a site for storing, preserving, and retrieving

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1 Richard Schechner is one of the founders of the Performance Studies department of the Tisch School of the Arts, New York University, and currently editor of TDR: The Drama Review.
cultural information contained and represented in the form of multiple artifacts and documents.

One of the postulates in my work maintains that live performance, and the cluster of archival documents related to it, are not just linked in ontological terms, but that they also work in tandem defining one another. Based on this relation, I claim that one of the functions of the archive of a performance is to testify\(^2\) of its ephemeral existence in the factual world. Unlike repertoires that have persisted through centuries (such as the religious celebrations and communal performances known as *Hosay* in Trinidad (Frank Korom) or the celebration of the Christian Eucharist in the Roman Catholic Church all over the Western World), theatre performances have a relatively brief temporal existence bracketed by scheduled seasons. The essential hypothesis of my work is the notion that in the absence of the performance, the body of archival artifacts linked to it will surrogate the original performance, and that the audiovisual record will become the central referent of all of the artifacts.

On the other hand, stating that the very existence of the performance, or the memory of its historical existence, depends on the presence of the archive, and vice versa, challenges the idea that the ontological relation between performance and its documentation necessarily implies the precedence of the performance over the archive. In other words, I postulate that sometimes, if not always, there are previous archival sources that help to shape a performance, and that such documents should constitute part of the aftermath archive of the performance. Although I will challenge the temporal preeminence of the performance in relation to the archive, such intent does not, however,

\(^2\) As it will be clear throughout my thesis, the audiovisual document of a performance does not represent visible evidence by itself, but through its correlation with other complementary documents.
ignore the fact that the opposite also occurs, where the archival material is a consequence of an existent performance.

In this light, I claim that in altering the temporal hierarchy between performance and archive, it is possible to realize that the process of documentation can also operate not just before or after the performance, but also synchronically to it. Said differently, there are certain archival artifacts that can only be generated simultaneously to the performative act. That would be the obvious case, for example, of the audiovisual documentation of a theatrical production where the act of recording implies the synchronic run through the performance itself.

The fact that the process of documentation occurs before, during, and after the performance is enacted, coincides with Schechner’s threefold model of performance as a time-space sequence which is composed of the following phases: a) Proto-performance, defined as “a source or impulse that gives rise to a performance…” b) Performance, or the public enactment of the performance as such, and c) Aftermath, which means “the phase of the performance process that may extend for years”, after the performance’s disappearance (191). Taking this model as a referent and a methodology for analyzing performances, and based on what I have previously stated in relation to the ontological enmeshment between performance and its archive material, I will propose that the creation of archival documentation follows Schechner’s process, as a equivalent threefold phase.

Thus, I argue that integral to the proto-performance process there are archival materials which are extensively used by designers, directors, dramaturgs, and other individuals involved in the project, and retrieved from different sources to “in-form”, or
give shape to the performance. In this phase, the referential archival material can belong to previous performances, or other external sources. For example, The Wooster Group’s, *Poor Theatre: A Series of Simulacra*, which is a tribute to Jerzy Grotowski, is based on experiences that members of the Group had while participating in a workshop that Grotowski gave at the University of California Berkeley in the 80’s. This production extensively used filmic material from Grotowski’s production *Acropolis*, which is actually screened on stage through the performance. This screening practice can be traced back to Erwin Piscator’s *Rasputin*, in 1920s, where the director projected onto the stage actual archival photographs portraying the Tsar. Another use of other external archival material can also be illustrated with Fuenteovejuna (BYU, 2005), which I directed in BYU in 2005. In such a production the actresses that played the Catholic Kings created part of their physical score based on gestures and postures of Hitler and other dictators retrieved from photograph archives. In fact, any material used in a performance, from the sound track to props is eventually archival material that is informing, in one way or another, about the performance.

The aftermath of the performance is where the remains and documents of it are gathered and organized by the archivist to constitute the always-unfinished archive of the performance. Schechner explicitly links the last phase of his model, the aftermath, to the archival material when he states that it includes formal and informal responses to the performance and other material, which “may include videotapes, films, and sound recordings, printed matter, props or other artifacts, and anything else concerning the completed performance” (212). From my point of view, linking the archive just to the last stage of a performance process tends to neglect and obscure the role and meaning of
archival artifacts and documents in the making of the performance, and deals with the documentation as an *a posteriori* problem rather than an in-process task that starts even at the birth of the idea of staging a particular performance.

As it can be observed, considering archival material as a process equivalent to that of the time-space sequence of a performance implies practical consequences in the regarding and handling of it. While designers are considering their drawings just as sketches for future costumes or scenery structures, and actors are contemplating their props as expressive material to include in their scores, the archivist is concerned with all of them as current and potential documents, and a probable component of the archive of the performance. From this point of view, archival material can be seen not only as remains of a ephemeral performance but also as an organic component of it, and even as its origin.

I have divided this thesis in four chapters in which I am going to theorize about performance audiovisual documentation in the realm of theatre, and its relation to other possible artifacts the performance could be linked to. In the context of my thesis, the organized cluster of discrete, but related documents linked to a specific theatre performance constitutes the archive of it. More particularly, the archive of a performance will be the existent system of documents, and archival artifacts, that either engender or derive from the performance. In Chapter Two “The Audiovisual Document as Substitute of the Original Performance,” I argue that the audiovisual archive is not visible evidence *per se*, but it acquires such a condition by the dialogue it establishes with other archives, which are also ontologically related to the performance. I propose the idea that the total constellation of documents of the performance is woven through *discursive narratives*,
which can be aimed to either reconstruct and interpret the original performance (in the
traditional position of history), or define within the archive itself unities, totalities, series,
and relations. Finally, in this chapter I propose that the audiovisual document becomes a
substitute for the performance when it has disappeared from the historical world,
becoming the new referent for other documents that also speak of the original
performance.

Chapter Three, “The Archive: Theoretical Framework” is devoted to defining and
discussing the concept of archive, its functionality, and its ontological relation with the
performance. In doing that, I will briefly review some of the discussions theater, and
documentary theorists, have proposed on the issue of documenting performance in order
to place my own theoretical propositions in perspective. Chapter Four “The Model
Performance” introduces the trope of the Model Performance (MP), defined as the
epitome of all the shows performed throughout the cycle of a theatrical production, in
order to problematize the assumed stable nature of the performance as rather an evolvable
entity impossible to document in its whole process. The MP, as a construct, allows me to
formulate five orientations the archivist could take into account when deciding which,
among the successive shows a production performs, should be audiovisually documented.

Finally, in Chapter Five, “Performing the Audiovisual Document,” I present and
analyze three audiovisually documented performances: Anna Deavere Smith’s *Fires in
the Mirror*, Alvin Ailey’s *Revelations*, and the 2 minute and 53 second record of Michael
Richards performing in the Laugh Factory in November 2006. Through these three cases
of study I discuss and test the essential hypothesis I have raised in my thesis: 1) The
audiovisual documentation of a performance does not constitute evidence *per se*, but
becomes one through the concurrence of other documents and artifacts ontologically related to the performance, 2) The archival documents are not necessarily sub products of a performance, but they can be traced as the origin of it, and eventually to constitute the source, and referent for new performances.

In theorizing the issue of audiovisual documentation I will use several methodologies and theoretical strategies. From Performance Studies I will borrow Schechner’s model of the performance as a space-time sequence, and Diana Taylor’s notions of repertoire and archive as complementary media to preserve, transmit, and contest cultural knowledge. Foucault’s ideas of the methods and concerns of the New History will also inform and articulate my theoretical developments, especially when discussing the function of the archive. I will apply a deconstructive analysis when discussing and challenging the hierarchy of the performance over the archive.

In formulating the trope of a MP, I will employ inductive inferences informed by the evolutionary process all theatre performance undergoes during its life span. Throughout this thesis I will use concrete examples of performances to illustrate some of my points. These examples, although they come principally from the theatre realm, also include some from different artistic disciplines, such as dance, film, stand up comedy, etc. Overall, my analysis is informed by my own experience as a theatre practitioner, specifically in the area of directing, and my contact with other practitioners in the field.

It is not the purpose of this work to discuss or propose a methodology of recording a performance, but to discuss and reflect about performance documentation.

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3 I know, for example, Eugenio Barba is constantly perfecting his productions, not just because he has declared it in his essays, but also because I have seen him taking notes during the shows, and discussing these afterward.
Scholars in the field have thoroughly discussed the legitimacy and functionality of the act of recording performances. However, while addressing issues of contesting binary oppositions like objectivity-subjectivity, living memory-electronic memory, losses-gains, live performance-video etc, they have not given enough attention to the commonalities and specificities of distinct semiotic systems. I think that many of the conflicting dichotomies can be harmonized or at least inverted in relation to their traditional hierarchy (which almost always goes in detriment of the record), and I will try to demonstrate that when it becomes necessary. In addition, ethical issues that problematize the act of archiving, and the difficulties of determining how and what to acquire, preserve, and catalog in the universe of theatre productions, although important, will not be addressed but tangentially when it is merited. Furthermore, although a model for archiving performance will be a logical consequence of theoretical constructs as I am presenting here, I am not facing such task here, but I am leaving it for future works.

I want to move beyond the contingent discussion of whether an audiovisual record should be done or should the ephemeral performance be allowed to disappear without articulated traces. I am starting the discussion about the issue of archiving performances under the assumption that someone wants to undertake the task. The recurrent use and references to an “archivist” throughout my thesis, must be considered as a generic or ideal figure, which represents someone undertaking the mission of documenting or keeping an archive of the performance.

Since making an audiovisual archive of a performance, by definition, is a synchronic act exerted while the performance still exists (it is not possible to photograph, film or record the sound of a vanished production), it is necessary to be careful not to lose
the opportunity to document the transitory present using the same academic zeal employed in reconstructing and studying the past. In his essay “Cinema as a Cultural Interface: The Most Popular Moving Image Sequence of All Times”, Lev Manovich deals with the idea of studying the past and speculating about the future while neglecting the present:

Future researchers will wonder why the theoreticians, who already had plenty of experience analyzing older cultural forms, did not try to describe computer media's semiotic codes, modes of address, and audience reception patterns. If, for instance, they painstakingly reconstructed how cinema emerged out of preceding cultural forms (panorama, optical toys, peep shows), why didn't they attempt to construct a similar genealogy for the language of computer media at the moment when it was just coming into being, while the elements of previous cultural forms going into its making are still clearly visible, still recognizable before melting into a new unity (2).

It is in considering the present as tomorrow’s earlier existence of our theatrical history that I find the necessity of keeping systematic records of our theatrical immediacy, in order to study it here and now, and preserve it for the next generations. This is the time to begin to preserve our creative activity seriously and systematically. In doing so, future historians will be able to explore our work metahistorically, interpreting this legacy of documents and even questioning the interpretations we have made of them. Audiovisual archiving is an act devoted to the present, which urges archivist to implement measures, policies and plans of documenting here and now. Any procrastination in doing that will result in the definite loss of valuable theatrical documentation.

In 1942, Allied bombs destroyed the Kunsthalle Museum in Bremen. In 1992, during the war between Georgia and Abkhazia, four Georgian members of the National Guard burned the Abkhazian State Archives “resulting in the destruction of much of the
history of the entire region” (Manoff 12). In 2000 Taliban religious police in Afghanistan destroyed more than 2,700 works of art including many ancient cultural treasures, because they were considered promoters of idolatry. In the aftermath of the U.S. led “Operation Iraqi Freedom” “Iraq’s National Museum, National Library, National Archives, and other repositories have been looted and burned” (12). In 1945, the new owners of the Chaplin Studio on La Brea Boulevard in Hollywood threw out the contents of the prop room. Among the items was the giant wooden gears used by Chaplin in Modern Times. They also emptied the film vaults where hundreds of valuable outtakes were stored. Some of the material was saved while some was not (Usai 66). The artifactual heritage lost in the events mentioned above is but one dramatic demonstration of the not only of a specific culture but also of the whole humanity.

While some iconoclasts destroy their own artistic heritage, others are investing considerable efforts in preserving it from the effects of human intervention. The Lascaux cave paintings, remnants of the Upper Paleolithic Age were severely threatened by the presence of so many warm-blooded, carbon dioxide-exhaling bodies of the 1,700 daily visitors in the 1950’s. Andre Malraux, France’s Minister of Culture, ordered the cave closed in 1963. Studies determined that the cave could handle no more than five visitors a day for 35 minutes each. In the 2000s the cultural heritage of Lascaux’s art has been again menaced, this time by fungus that are covering the entire cave in white. The problem has been probably provoked now by the new system of ventilation emplaced in the cave. Experts are trying to remove the spots without harming the paintings and restore the fragile ecological balance that has kept the paintings intact during 17,000 years. Maybe the war that is taken place in Lascaux nowadays is a good example of the
negotiation that occurs between the thanatological human trend to destroy the archive and the pleasure derived from preserving it, which probably is linked to our own instinct of preservation. In his Freudian analysis of the archive, Derrida states that the death drive “is above all anarchivic, one could say, or archiviolithic. It will always have been archive-destroying, by silent vocation.” (Archive Fever 10). Also, he posits the act of archive destruction as a way of inciting forgetfulness, amnesia, and annihilation of memory (11).

Global warming (the outcome of economic profit, uncontrolled consumerism, and environmental destruction) and suicide bombers (destruction of the infidel in order to gain eternal reward) are clear contemporary examples of the perpetual negotiation between the principle of pleasure and the death drive. But these conflicting forces of death drive and preservation are not always so evident. Sometimes these forces can be disguised under the pleasant attitude of indifference and inaction. The act of not documenting when it is possible to do so is also a form of archival destruction. It is in fact an easy way of preventing the existence of a potential archive.

At an institutional level, bureaucracy, negligence, inertia, incomplete or ambiguous policies of preservation, procrastination, or ignorance could be some of the factors that constrain the process of documentation. Collaborative work between theorist and practitioners from discrete disciplinary fields is, in my perspective, another important problem to be overcome in order to enhance the scope and limits of their own paradigms. It is surprising how many American and Latino American universities, having theatre and film departments at least nominally related, are not working in tandem to preserve audiovisually their theatrical heritage. Theatre scholarship can be enhanced by
documentary and film theory in understanding how its community of theorists and practitioners have been dealing with the status of reality, the modalities of recording actuality, and how it is performed by the filmmaker who attempts to capture the event developed before the camera. The debate that theatre theorists have sustained in the last twenty years on fidelity, betrayal, and subjectivity involved in the act of recording theatre, has been under discussion for almost a century in film, and I believe that hearing the established arguments of film theorists adds valuable insights to the issue of documenting theatre. The literal practice of audiovisual archivization of performance implies the realization that the performability of such procedure is a craft that ultimately is performed by a filmmaker. The professionalization of recording performances in order to acquire useful, longer lasting and quality material for manageable repositories implies a necessary collaborative contact, using the expertise of theorists and practitioners from the field of theatre and film.

No matter what institutional reasons and factors are involved in constraining the act of documenting performances today the consequences are clear: the more we presently neglect the creation of archives, the more difficult and complex the process of recovering and reconstructing valid and more complete archives in the future. Derrida is not tacit on this issue when he affirms that the question of the archive is:

A question of the future, the question of the future itself, the question of a response, of a promise and of a responsibility for tomorrow. The archive: if we want to know what that will have meant, we will only know in time to come. Perhaps. Not tomorrow but in time to come, later on or perhaps never (Archive 36).

To document and preserve the ephemeral theatrical event is a question dealing with the future, which starts here and now, in the present. Destruction of the archive in the
present, or similarly, not to create it during the lifetime of the performance, means a “failure of the present in its responsibility to the future” (Manoff 11). Consequently, one aim of this work consists on promoting such duty and necessity in those called to take actions in that direction: universities, cultural institutions, and anyone interested in preserving our theatrical heritage. If four Georgian Guards could throw incendiary grenades and destroy centuries of valuable archives in hours, four can build others for the coming centuries as a response to our responsibility for the future.
Chapter Two:
The Audiovisual Document as Substitute of the Original Performance

After its last performance, a theatrical production disappears and we are left only with some material traces, written concepts, and audio records, images, and spectator’s memories of what it once was. All these aftermaths are but remnants, or mirages of the performance, artifacts that I prefer to call archives rather than epitaphs. Theatre is an ephemeral art. Its transient nature remains an essential condition that practitioners, archivists and scholars need to deal with continuously, when producing and presenting a new performance, preserving its archival artifacts, or analyzing them.

Barthes’s fascination with the nature of photographs and photography made him declare that he was so “overcome by an ‘ontological’ desire” that he wanted to learn “at all cost what photography was ‘itself’, by what essential feature it was to be distinguished from the community of images” (Barthes 3). Then, after showing that a specific photograph is never distinguished from its referent—a selected portion of the historical world—and that it always carries its referent with itself (5), he declared that it seems to him “closer to Theatre…by way of Death” (31). Photography is, for Barthes a kind of “primitive theatre, a kind of Tableau Vivant, a figuration of the motionless and made-up face beneath which we see the dead” (32). It follows that for theatre practitioners, theorists, archivists, and literate theatergoers, the still or moving images of theatre represents not just the post obitum (after death) of a performance, but also a unique way to know something about it. The existential anxiety that theatre provokes in its followers is not only related to its ephemerality but also to their inability to always be there when a theatrical event occurs, the anxiety of having not seen the actual performance before its disappearance. The audiovisual archive of a performance seems to satisfy both the
anxiety of the lost linked to the ephemeral condition of theatre and the anxiety of having been absent when the event actually occurred. However, the audiovisual archive of a performance, although it is always the likeness of its referent, is never the performance itself. It is, using Derrida’s words, _spectral_ in its structure in relation to its model in the historical world being “neither present nor absent 'in the flesh', neither visible nor invisible, a trace always referring to another whose eyes can never met” (84).

**Film as a means of validation of verbal accounts of the performance**

Prefacing Jerzy Grotowski’s _Towards a Poor Theatre_, Peter Brook suggests that if you are interested in his research and findings “you must go to Poland” or “Bring Grotowski here” (Grotowski 13). Grotowski’s contributions to the development of the theatre of the 20th Century cannot be thoroughly understood by just reading his most important key book _Towards the Poor Theatre_, articles or his conference talks. Since Grotowski’s theoretical work is closely related to his experimental methodology, it must be understood in the context of his practical investigations and his theatrical productions. He states:

> This is not a product of a “philosophy of art” but comes from the practical discovery and use of the rules of theater. That is, the productions do not spring from _a priori_ aesthetic postulates; rather, as Sartre has said: “Each technique leads to metaphysics (18).

And then he adds:

> I realized that the production led to awareness rather than being the product of awareness. Since 1960, my emphasis has been methodology. Though practical experimentation I sought to answer the questions with which I had begun: What is the theatre? What is unique about it? What can it do that film and television cannot? (18)
Since Grotowski’s theoretical reflection is meta-theatrical, it cannot be effectively examined without a knowledge of the praxis that supports it. For those who did not have the privilege of going to Poland, or bringing Grotowski here (wherever here might be) in order to see his productions or training sessions, there are a few alternatives available to acquaint yourself with his practical work (for example, his theatre of productions phase from 1959 to 1969). These alternatives include reading or hearing archival descriptions from which we might extrapolate Grotowski’s theoretical model, or reviewing audiovisual evidence from his productions and laboratory workshops. Other possibilities are experiencing equivalent training or directing processes by working directly with Grotowski’s qualified disciples, seeing contemporary performances that revive original productions by the Theatre Laboratory, or viewing new productions rooted in Grotowski’s methodologies and ideologies. The primary way of acquiring knowledge of about Grotowski’s theatre is directly related to tracing traditions and influences of Grotowski’s work from the material archive available (Taylor 20). The secondary has to do with knowing mutated embodied practices inscribed in such traditions.

For example, the absent audiences of Grotowski’s 1965 production of *The Constant Prince* are only able to know what happened there through primary and secondary sources. According to some theatre critics and theorists that were among the few spectators allowed during the events, Ryszard Cieslak’s creation of the Prince embodied the maximum expression of Grotowski’s acting technique, and was one of the fundamental performances of the 20th century. Stefan Brecht\(^1\) in his essay *The Laboratory Theatre in New York, 1969: A Set of Critiques* says of Cieslak, “Cieslak’s movements,

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\(^1\) Stephan Brecht is the author of numerous works, including two-volume study of Peter Schumann’s Bread and Puppet Theatre. His other writings include *Queer Theatre* and *The Theatre of Visions: Robert Wilson*. (Source: Schechner 1997 xv)
facial expressions tones do not express thoughts or external sensations but only emotional and volitional states of the spirit. They express these states naturally (as though the body were just the organ of spirit throughout)” (Schechner, Sourcebook 125).

Josef Kelera pointed that although he accepted with reservation Grotowski’s terms such as “secular holiness, “act of humility, and “purification”, after seeing Cieslak’s performance he could “admit that they can be applied perfectly to the character of the Constant Prince”, and then he adds:

A sort of psychic illumination emanates from the actor… In the culminating moments of the role, every thing that as technique is as though illuminated from within, light, literally imponderable. At any moment the actor will levitate…He is in a state of grace (Grotowski 109).

Eugenio Barba, who met Cieslak while working with Grotowski in Opole, says that when he saw him after two years in his performance in the Constant Prince, “everything I had based my ideas on, was disappearing beneath my feet, I saw another being. I saw a man who had discovered his own completeness, his own destiny, his own vulnerability” (197).

These three different narratives seem to confirm two things: the outstanding performance of Cieslak as the Prince, and that Grotowski’s concept of a “holy” actor had in Cieslak its avatar. Also, it is possible to assume that thanks to Cieslak’s acting, Grotowski’s methodology proved to be effective, and other practitioners could replicate it. Nevertheless, written or verbal accounts of a performance have severe limitations in transmitting what Cieslak performance looked like, what kind of physical and vocal score he created, and how he gave life to the character of the Prince by outwardly expressing his inner physical actions based on episodes of his own life. These kinds of questions cannot be answered through figurative language and expressions like “A sort of psychic
illumination”, or “His actions are extreme, but controlled like a musical score”, or “I saw a man who had discovered his own completeness.” No, verbal metaphors are not enough to understand and visualize what happened in the little environmental stage in Opole in 1965. Being absent at the theatrical event, theatre theorists, professors, and practitioners need more than words to understand Grotowskian theatre. They need to see the spectral evidence derived from the actual performance.

A spectral image of Cieslak, the neither present nor absent “in the flesh” (Derrida, Archive 84), appears before us through sets of images of Ryszard Cieslak as the Constant Prince, photographed by Max Waldman.

The pictures have ignited the imagination of generations of absent spectators who can now match these to the verbal figures created with the intention of describing the actual performance. Interestingly, it is because of the celebrative written word given by

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2 Waldman’s pictures of Cieslak are not records from the stage performance but made in the controlled environment of his photograph study. Because of that, Harry Lane, in his essay Afterword: The Uses of Theatrical Photographs says that they are “completely unreliable as records of what the stage and actions might have looked like from the audience seating” (Lane 3).
critics and theorists in favor of the performance that these photographs are so meaningful and became historically significant. The word validated the image. Paradoxically, Taviani\textsuperscript{3} says that the photographs became “part of the system of the production, something on the edge of theatre. For ‘something had happened’ and the photos testified to that happening, bearing witness rather than documenting. Because of The Constant Prince, what Grotowski had to say about actors became believable” (191). In this sense, the photos not only testify of the historical event but also support, in some way, all that has have been said about the performance. The image validates the word. Thus, while the spectral images become visible evidence that supports both the performance and the commentaries and analysis of the performance, the verbal narratives are the linguistic evidence that supports the spectral images.

Nevertheless, in the intent of acquiring a deeper perception and conception of what happened in Opole in 1966, the spectral presence of Cieslak in those photos and the written narratives created from the performance are not sufficient to satisfy the craving left by the anxiety provoked by the ephemeral existence of the performance and our absence from such a historical event. We need more, another fleshier spectral apparition, a more complete archive.

There is a film of The Constant Prince, which according to Taviani consists of a 16 mm feature, shot probably in 1963, in black and white, by an unknown camera

\textsuperscript{3} Ferdinando Taviani is a prominent expert on Commedia dell’ Arte. His books on the subject include The Fascination of Theatre: Commedia dell’ Arte and the Baroque Age and (in collaboration with Mirella Schino) The Secret of Commedia dell’ Arte. He specializes in the study of the social and cultural conditions affecting the European actor from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century and the problems of contemporary group theatre. In addition to his work as a historian, he has been active as adviser, dramaturg, and playwright for both traditional and group theatre. He has closely followed the activities of Odin Teatret since 1969, writing The Book of Odin in 1975. His more recent work includes Uomini di scena, uomini di libro: Introduzione all letteratura teatrale italiana del Novencento (Il Mulino 1995). (Source: Schechner 1997 xix)
operator with a fixed camera (496). As a viewer of this film Taviani can say now, for example, that “Stefan Brecht was right when he suggested that Cieslak’s movements, facial expressions, and tones did ‘not express thoughts or external sensations but only emotional and volitional states of the spirit’, and that he expressed these estates naturally, “as though the body were just the organ of spirit throughout” (201). Here we have two important theatre theorists, Stefan Brecht and Ferdinand Taviani, sharing the same impressions and thoughts about Cieslak’s performance. However, interestingly enough, the first one was among the audience in an actual performance of *The Constant Prince* and the second one only had access to the audiovisual archive of the same production.

Although Brecht’s subjective comment about Cieslak performance is very difficult to grasp without knowing the actual performance, for Taviani such perception makes sense watching the film and he agrees with him. What is implicit here is that, after the conclusion (and disappearance) of a performance, the film archive becomes a valid territory for discussing the performance by individuals who were not able to be present at the live performance. While demonstrating that a theorist can, through watching an audiovisual record, validate an analysis written by a critic or scholar that actually attended the performance, it is also possible to infer that an absent theorist can eventually challenge the same analysis. In this way a film permits a rupture of the undisputable chronological hierarchy that the present analyst holds in relation to the absent one, making possible subsequent debates in searching for a better understanding of the performance.

The audiovisual document of a performance becomes more than mere memorabilia when it is used to discuss and analyze the performance in the context of
other kind of artifacts. Imagine having a video from the Oresteia from the first half of the fourth century B.C. to examine as a document: the function of the Chorus, music, acting techniques, audience response, the use of masks, costume, etc. would be elucidated, eradicating former speculative closures supported by other accessible archival artifacts. Its informational richness, its equivalent temporality to that of the actual performance, and its equivalence in sound and image to the performance, are some of the characteristics that make the moving image the natural substitute of the performance once this is gone. In other words, while other archival sub-products generated by the theatrical project (programs, photographs, dramatic text, director’s book, etc.) are linked to the performance generically\(^4\), there is a specific and unique indexical link between the moving image and its model, that is a specific performance.

Thus, when I say that the moving image substitutes the actual performance, I am saying that it substitutes one specific show among the continuum of performances publicly performed in its life span. On the other hand, the audiovisual record of a performance is necessarily made contemporaneously to the performance (the actual event is happening in front of the camera, so the camera and the event coincide in time and space). Other related archives cannot fulfill such condition, except by sound records or photographic archives. The dramaturgy of the performance is made, for instance, previous to the opening night, evaluative documentation (post mortem) is made after the season is finished, and a review of the production after its presentation. Thus, the film testifies, “that the thing has been there” (Barthes 76), that is to say, reports actuality and “offer[s] aural and visual likenesses or representations” of the historical world (Nichols

\(^4\) I am saying these archives are generic to the performance because they are not created in relation to a specific show but in relation to the whole theatrical production.
5). It is possible to say also that the informational density contained in the film is qualitatively superior to that contained in other kinds of repositories. The music, spoken word, movements, blocking, costumes, lighting scheme, color, makeup, and spectator presence and to some extent his/her responses to the show, can be informed by the film. From a film, for example, it is possible to some degree to write down the dramatic text (without stage directions, or possible cuttings), capture still images of the play, and isolate the sound track of the production.

The opportunity that the audiovisual archive presents of subsequent archive retrievals is related to its multimedia condition. The audiovisual record has the capability of reuniting a plurality of sources of information: sound, moving and still images, logos (spoken words), as well as a huge gamut of paralinguistic information and data linked to other expressive systems (lighting, costumes, etc). Film is a multimedia expressive system, like theatre is. The cinematic formulation of a performance is causally and existentially connected to the performance and, at the end, because it is its closet representation, becomes its proper substitute.

Nevertheless, it is an important fact to stress that in analyzing an audiovisual record the scholars or the practitioners need to take into account the whole body of archives available for the performance. How is it possible to understand the ecstatic still image of Cieslak-Prince lying on his knees without, for example, considering Grotowski’s concept of the holy actor, self-sacrifice, and self-penetration (Grotowski 43, 44), or without religious Greco’s paintings of San Sebastian and Jesus? How is it possible to grasp the essence of Grotowski’s theory without the empirical experience of attending
his productions or, at least, watching their audiovisual records? After the performance of

_The Constant Prince_ Josef Kelera declared:

> In the actor’s creation, the essential elements of Grotowski’s theory take precise forms which can be verified not merely in the demonstration of his method, but also in the beautiful fruits it produces (Grotowski 109).

The audiovisual archive is not visible evidence _per se_ but becomes such in relation to other archives that either engendered it or were born from the performance. The universe of archives, texts, and intertexts are in mutual dependence. Cieslak’s photos are meaningless without a frame of reference made from additional information and complemental archives: captions, its contextualization with respect to the play, the production, underlying theories of acting, religious iconography, actor’s interviews, films, and other archives. Through isolating different parts you prohibit understanding the whole, as well as the meaning of the part. In studying performance, the logos require the image and the image demands the word.

Based on the rationale expressed above, I propose that the existence of an audiovisual record of a performance is essential, although not enough to the endeavor of studying a theatre production after its disappearance. Once the performance is definitely gone, a body of archives and memories, which will speak of it from its particular condition and nature, will constitute the continued life of a performance. Although signifying the death of the performance, the material that reaches the conventional category of archive also promises the possibility of reviving it through its spectral aftermath. The archive is the eidolon (the spectral image) that helps to maintain the memory of the performance alive. The theatre scholars and the practitioners interested in
knowing “what happened” and how the theatrical event looked like can access the archive and methodologically analyze it.

However, like the Rosetta Stone, whose hieroglyphic and demotic inscriptions were deciphered by comparing them to the Greek translation, the archive of a performance must be contextualized and correlated to other existent archives in order to reconstruct the meaning and the form of the original live performance. The totality of documents collected from the proto-performance process (derived from the dramaturgic work, for example), the public performance process (photographs, or films made of one or several successive performances, for instance) and the aftermath of it (reviews, essays, interviews, etc), conforms a corpus that can also be called The Archive of the performance. In this sense, The Archive can be conceived as a system where all of its components –archival subsystems and documents- are mutually dependent. The Archive, the whole, must be then conceptualized as synergetic in its nature, so that the more correlated the archives the researcher has at his/her disposal, the more complete the understanding of a past performance can be.

**Discursive narratives**

I put forward the idea that the total constellation of documents, or The Archive of the performance, is woven through *discursive narratives*, which can be aimed to either reconstruct and interpret the original performance (in the traditional position of history), or define within the documentary material itself unities, totalities, series, and relations (Foucault 6). I am going to explain this concept of discursive narratives using the example of Harvey Young essay *The Black Body as Souvenir in American Lynching.*
One of the epigraphs Harvey Young chose for his essay about how people used physical remnants of lynched African Americans as souvenirs and fetishes states: “Flesh can house no memory of bone. Only bone speaks memory of flesh” (639). In this context, such remains (besides embodying “the past in the present”(642) as souvenirs, and providing magical power on behalf of their possessors) become the site where “disappearance negotiates, perhaps becomes, materiality”(655) that restores, to some extent, the original performed event of the lynching. In such circumstances, the ephemeral event that occurred in the past (represented in the epigram by \textit{flesh}) is recovered, and remembered through its more lasting remnants that defy, and reify, disappeared occurrences.

In a close reading however, the trope “Flesh can house no memory of bone. Only bone speaks memory of flesh,” skips something essential to any remains that aspire to reach the category of a “speaking” document: its ontological attachment to narration, which gives meaning, and then categorical existence to the remains as an archival document. Any documental material becomes evidence only through verbal, visual, embodied, and/or written narratives that contextualize, interpret, and resituate it in the present. Likewise, any narrative links to the document are sustained by the document(s) itself. If the bone can speak memory of flesh only through narratives, then these narratives can be only justified by the physical presence of the bone. In other words, narratives are the mouthpieces of any preserved document, without which a narrative cannot exist.

Generically, a document is a physical remain, detritus of memory, which refers to, and potentially informs of, a larger event developed in the past. It is through these traces
that the event, once it is definitely gone, can be partially accessed. In some sense, the remnant is synchronic to both parts; the past event that provoked it, and the interpretative work that can be done with it in the present through narratives. The possibility of synchronizing past and present by means of narrating the remains are implicit in Young’s next remark:

The souvenir saves the past and represents it in the present. It records the \textit{that which was} into a material object that can be referenced and revisited over time. In contrast, the present, the \textit{that which is now}, existing just beyond ourselves, resists both objectification and commodification because its ongoing status disallows the creation of an entrapping retrospective narrative. This retrospective narrative, when attached to the souvenir, fixes the past and thus renders it unchanging. It also creates the possibility of historical revision in that the narrative itself determines the meaning of the keepsake (642).

This synchronism between past and present is made possible not only by the existence of the material remains, but also by the presence of discursive narratives attached to them. Narrative and document are related in such a way that the first defines interpretatively the second and vice versa. What sustains the notion that a body part functions as a fetish for someone is a discursive structure, and what supports such discursive structure is the fetish itself. In other words, it is the subject, through language or other performative acts, that defines the object as having magical properties, and it is the object that permits the very existence of the discourse.

This ontological relationship between the document and its narration, previously discussed in relation to the set of images, or visual remains, of Ryszard Cieslak as the Constant Prince, is also applicable to any archival vestige and its possible narratives. If the remnant capacity of rendering partial information of the past is related to specific
interpretative narratives (and such narratives are ontologically related to the remnant),
then narratives are partial interpretations of the past constructed through the remnant.

The ontological unity between the archive and the performance, like the seedling
to the seed, implies also an indexical connection between both systems due to the
undeniable relationship of contiguity that The Archive maintains with the performance.
This observation is furthered by retaking the trope of signifier/signified. If an archival
artifact represents the signifier, and its narrative becomes its possible signified, then all
denotative meanings (derived from the artifact itself) and connotative meanings (derived
from the relation of the artifact with other documents) expressed in such narrative can
become new archival artifacts, which can be considered as new signifiers. In other words,
a direct document of the performance, like an audiovisual record of it, can engender a
new document, (for example, a critical analysis of the performance) which could then
become the source for further analysis, and subsequently could be used to elaborate the
concept of a new performance, and so on and on. Where a signifier (document 1) incites a
signified (document 2), the last (document 2) can provoke a new signifier or narrative
(document 3). In this sense The Archive must be considered as a dynamic and always
growing system whose thickness allows (following Foucault) the documentary material
to internally establish new unities, totalities, series, and relations.

Towards an holistic repository

The multiplicative capacity of these documents requires the archivist to
distinguish between the artifacts that are immediate and immanent to the performance
and those that are derivative or by products of it. Without attempting a stratification of
the documents (placing some in a more relevant position that others) I want to suggest as a basic criterion the classification of the archives according to their status as Primary or Secondary sources. I call the Primary archival sources all those documents created or consulted synchronically to the performance process, that is to say, from the proto-performance to the aftermath. In the proto-performance stage, such documents could include: The Directors’ book, costume and setting designs, audiovisual archives of rehearsals, etc. During the aftermath Primary sources might be material such as the director’s evaluation, actor’s interviews, etc., and also artifacts that give immediate accounts of the performance (audiovisual records of the performance, photographs, and audio records). Secondary archival sources would include any material that emerges from Primary sources, such as essays, spectator’s opinions, reviews, and other subsequent products.

In dealing with Primary source archives it is useful to distinguish documents according to the intrinsic amount of information they hold. The informational thickness is obviously not the same in all the documents, such as comparing a drawing of a costume and the actual piece of clothing already complete, or a photograph portraying a specific moment of the performance to the audiovisual record of the whole performance. Ryszard Cieslak’s photograph as the Prince shows the scholar a still fragment of his performance, which illustrates, for instance, how the actor uses precarious balance, asymmetrical composition, and concentration of energy in his characterization. In spite of these possible extrapolations the scholar could make, there is nothing in the photograph that can inform the viewer about his voice, his respiratory patrons, and the next position in such physical sequence. On the other hand, a sound record of his vocal deliverance can
inform the auditor on his speech pattern, the lines, pitch, quality, and intensity, or loudness, and resonators involved, but can not tell anything about what is happening with his body language in that moment.

Interestingly, documents with more informational saturation are those that include temporal variables. Thus, a written text (such as the annotated script held by the director or the stage manager) is filled with more information that an artifact (such as a prop, a program, or a still picture). Following this logic I argue that, among the Primary archival sources, the audiovisual record of a performance contains more information, and therefore is the most complete of the spectral archives derived from the performance. This kind of archive presents several advantages in regard to other primary archival sources. The synchronism between sound and moving image, the fact that the audiovisual record replicates the exact duration of the factual event, plus a series of capabilities that the audiovisual technologies currently allow in order to repeat, amplify, freeze, and slow the images, among others, makes this type of archive the most complete in informing about the theatrical event.

Based on these versatile characteristics of the film medium, I have proposed that once the performance vanishes, it should be substituted by its correspondent moving image, which in such circumstances becomes the new referent in studying the performance. Nevertheless, as I have also said, due to the fact that the moving image alone does not constitute evidence of the original performance, it requires complemental archives (which individually considered do not constitute evidence as well) in order to effectively inform it. Such conception leads me to propose the elaboration of a holistic
repository where all the available archives originated from the performance can converge in order to constitute The Archive of the performance.
Chapter Three: Theoretical Framework

In this chapter I am defining and discussing the concept of archive, its functionality, and its relation it maintains with the performance. In doing that, I will briefly review some of the discussions theater, and documentary theorists, have proposed on the issue of documenting performance in order to place my own theoretical propositions in perspective.

The concept of Archive

The Oxford Dictionary defines archive as “a collection of historical documents or records providing information about a place, institution, or group of people”. It also uses the term in relation to the place where “historical documents or records are kept”. This dual concept of archive, as the document itself and the place where such document is kept, is also stressed in the definitions provided by The Merriam-Webster Dictionary, according to which the word archive indicates “a place in which public records or historical documents are preserved; also: the material preserved”. Thus, the term archive refers to either the documents or the place where such documents are stored. The new technologies, such as the Internet, are currently contesting this dichotomous conception of the archive allowing the repository and the information to exist as one indivisible entity.

Nevertheless, it is not only the Internet where repository and content coincide. As I stated in my Introduction, a performance is a site where certain “archival material” (embodied actions) are systemically, and then synergically, operating with other expressive systems. A performance is an integral body, a whole entity where all of its

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1 Interestingly, in Spanish such oxymoron does not exist, the archive is always the cluster of documents or artifacts that are stored in some repository or site, which need to be specified.
components are operating together in order to convey aesthetical, political, metaphysical and sensorial meanings; meanings impossible to transmit if any of those parts are missing. Remove Princess Margarita from Velasquez’ *Las Meninas* and the intended original meaning and form would be drastically altered from the original painting. Accelerate the proper velocity of projection of Griffith’s *The Birth of a Nation*, and something meant to be serious will turn to be comical. There is of course some archival material that could be considered less important to the production, such as filmic material taken from a rehearsal session at the beginning of the proto-performance process. Even though such material probably does not reflect the final “finished” performance, if it is used as a promotional clip of the future performance, then it will shape the viewer’s expectations and notions about the show. In other words, this peripheral archive becomes epistemologically related to the performance. Think also, for example, the role that another document (such as a program or a lobby display) could play in the audience’s perception of the performance they are attending.

It is at the moment when the performance is definitely gone, that all the internal and external archival material, linked to the performance, acquire their status as that which will “speak” about and for, that performance. Diana Taylor expresses clearly this condition:

> Archival memory works across distance, over time and space; investigators can go back to reexamine an ancient manuscript, letters find their addresses through time and place, and computer discs at time cough up lost files with right software. The fact that archival memories succeeds in separating the source of “knowledge” from the knower—in time and/or space- leads to comments, such as de Certeau’s, that it is “expansionist” and “immunized against alterity” (19).
I need to be careful with this quote, however, since Taylor uses it in the context of her critique of the tendency scholars have to privilege archival informational sources (written texts) over the *repertoire* (the system of embodied memories through actions, or human behaviors that are not reducible to language) (28). Taylor argues that these embodied expressions as an important and unique way people produce and transmit cultural knowledge, as well as invaluable informational sources (24).

Although I agree with her concern, my perspective does not consider the archive as something separate from the performative acts, but as fundamentally linked to them. While Taylor recognizes the archive and the *repertoire* as two different entities working in tandem as complementary sources of information for the historian (21), I consider the archive as an essential component of the *repertoire*, ontologically and dialectically related to it. *Rabinal Achi*, for instance, the only pre-Columbus play performed in Mayan language, and currently staged in Guatemala, owes its existence to Manuel Perez’s handwritten copy (1913) and adaptation from Charles Ettiene Brasseur’s compilation. Brasseur, a French missionary and ethnographer who specialized in the prehistory of Central America and Mexico, wrote down the story by hearing the lines spoken from memory in the 1860’s. In this case, an archival document (the dramatic text) is in fact the device that allows restoring an embodied tradition that has been traced back to the 4th century in Mayan culture.

Here, the repertoire is the direct product of performing available documentation. In other words, the contemporary version of *Rabinal Achi* represents the embodiment and verbalization of a written text. This text is the written transcription of oral narrations.

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2 Within this system of embodied memories, Taylor includes ephemeral human manifestations such as “performances, gestures, orality, dance movements, singing”, and all those acts “usually thought of as ephemeral, nonreproducible knowledge.” (20).
preserved through the ages by storytellers, who received their knowledge from their ancestors, who actually saw the original performance. Since the performance of *Rabinal Achí* includes the written word as speaking lines, it is possible to state that the document is embedded in the performance, forming part of it: the archive and the repertoire, in this sense, are one. Based on this argument, I think that it is possible to assert that while the performance is alive, it contains and at the same time, interprets aesthetically and semantically the archive (although it is also true that the archive informs about the performance).

Based on the rationale expressed above, the inherent question is what happens to the archive when the performance finally disappears? The most obvious answer would be that the archival components of the performance would remain to testify of the absent performance. Nevertheless, such a possibility could never occur without the mediation of someone who has the power and the authority to do just that. The process of archivization is immanently linked to the selective decision of what documents should be put into archive, or similarly, what to leave out. To archive is a question of power.

Jacques Derrida in his *Archive Fever*, and also Diana Taylor, show the relation between archive and authority by tracing the etymological development of the term from the Greek word *arkhe*, which refers to the dual meaning of *commencement* and the *commandment*. These meanings are related to both the notions of origin, and the idea of exercising a dominating influence over others. They trace the origin of “archive” from the Greek word *arkeion*: “initially a house, a domicile, an address, the residence of the superior magistrates, the *archeons*, those who commanded” (Derrida 2). Based on this original meaning Taylor (like Derrida) concludes: “By shifting the dictionary entries into
a syntactical arrangement, we might conclude that the archival, from the beginning, sustain power.” (19)

As both authors make clear, the ancestral symbiotic relationship between power and archive is currently operating at any level where the decision of preserving must be made. The inherent relationship between power and archivization not only supports the idea that discriminatory or selective acts of archivization are exerted by those who have a hegemonic (political, ideological, economical or even technological) influence over the archive, but also that such hegemony is related to a topology (the specific structures built for storing the archive such as museums, libraries, computers, web sites, etc). I will return on the importance of the topos with more detail soon in this chapter.

Framed within these considerations, I believe that any hypothetical archival model cannot be discussed outside of the context of institutional framework that supports it, regulates its access and uses, and decides (by virtue of its faculties and power) what or what not will be put in it. The archive cannot be considered as something independent from the structure (repository) that contains it, determines what can be included and shapes its content (Archive Fever 17).

The Functions of the Archive

If the existence of archived documents requires an act of agreement by those who hold the power to decide which ones will be preserved (and how), then there should be a purpose for such endeavor. Why do people and their institutions select and keep archives? To this essential question the frequent answer is: to provide evidential material through which the historian is able to reconstruct the past. Philip Auslander clearly ascribes to this perspective when analyzing the work of the art performer Vito Acconci...
when he says: “the photos Acconci produced serve the traditional functions of performance documentation: they provide evidence that he actually performed the piece and allow us to reconstruct his performance.” (84). The attempt to completely reconstruct a past event through pertinent documentation will always provide a partial retrieval of the original event. However, such an endeavor will provide answers that will also serve to contest, complement, or support previous interpretations. The possibility of reconstructing aspects of past events constitutes, with all its limitations, a real force that motivates the authority that filters, alters, and even destructs the archival material that could potentially be put into archive more or less unmediated. Think for example the massive destruction of incriminatory documents the South American military repressive regimes performed during the 70s and 80s, in order to eliminate traces of their crimes against their political adversaries. The missing archives have prevented historians from discovering the final destiny of thousands of people killed by the dictatorships, and have provided the perpetrators the legal alibis necessary to escape being punished for their crimes.

Foucault, in his book *The Archeology of Knowledge*, reminds us that history has altered its traditional position in relation to the documentation: in no longer just deciphers the traces left by men as an attempt to reconstruct the past. Instead, he states that in our time history “has taken as its primary task, not the interpretation of the document, nor the attempt to decide whether it is telling the truth or what is its expressive value, but to work on it from within and to develop it” (6). Foucault’s conviction is that for history, the document is no longer “an inert material through which it tries to reconstitute what men have done or said, the events of which only traces remains”, but the attempt to “define
within the documentary material itself unities, totalities, series, relations” (6). It is this notion of the archive as a set of relations inextricably linked among documents that will inform my work, providing the theoretical foundation of my notion that the audiovisual record of a performance does not represent evidence by itself, nor can it be independently considered, but becomes such by working in tandem with the mass of documentation linked to the performance. Following to this view, I also suggest that the systems of documents that “belong” to a particular performance are also linked diachronically and synchronically to other performances, and therefore to other archives, which at first glance could appear unrelated.

If I wanted to illustrate the notion of archive in documenting performance the way I consider it in my work, I would use the basic Saussure’s dyad signifier/signified, where the material remains of a performance, a polyphony of documents, would be the signifier and the meanings of such signs systems would be the signified. Within this trope, I would say that not just one archival artifact sustains many possible syntagmatic relations with any other documents derived from the performance, and that these relations are not necessarily linearly arranged. Also, I would have to say that any artifact of the system is related paradigmatically to external documents that belong to different performances.

Following this logic, I could assert that, based on the multiple arrangements, series, levels, and relations between varied archival artifacts of a disappeared performance, I could speculate about the meanings the original performance intended to convey, to visualize its overall structure as theatrical device, and compare these findings to other productions through their own remains. In doing so, I believe I would be opening the way for, using Foucault’s words again: “the proliferation of discontinuities in the
history of ideas, and the emergence of long periods in history proper…to define the elements proper to each series, to fix its boundaries, to reveal its own specific type of relations, to formulate its laws, and describes the relation between different series” (7) of performances, in order to visualize the limits of theatrical models, the point of inflexion, in what, transposed to the realm of theatre, Foucault would call a general history of theatre.

Replacing the idea that the document is an inert and isolated artifact for the idea that the document is contemplated as rhizomatically related to other documents within and outside the archival system of a specific performance provides, from my point of view, a new context to think and work on theatre archives. Also, this perspective make visible the necessity of rethinking the kind of repositories the archival material should be gathered in to facilitate their analysis in multiple levels, and encourage the multiple relations the historian could establish among them.

Jacques Derrida, in his book *Archive Fever. A Freudian Impression* stresses the symbiotic relation between the structure of the repository and its content:

> The archive, as printing, writing, prosthesis, or hypomnesic technique in general is not only the place for stocking and for conserving an archivable content of the past which would exist in any case, such as, without the archive, one still believes it was or will have been. No, the technical structure of the archiving archive also determines the

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3 I am using the word *rhizomatically* as an adverb of rhizome, in the sense that Deleuze and Guattari, in their book *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, use it. In doing so, I am proposing that the archive components are linked to one another according to the principles the authors established for this kind of system. In other words, it could be said the elements of the archival system obey the principles of connection and heterogeneity, so that they can be related to other archival systems. Also they obey the principle of multiplicity, which implies that the documents do not sustain an object-subject relation. If one of the documents is removed from the system (by censorship or physical destruction), the historiographical discourse built by the historian when the removed artifact belonged to the archival system will operate as substitute of the document itself (Principle of asignifying rupture). If a new document is discovered it will be integrated to the system and connected to the current archival components. The archival system allows different entry points in analyzing the performance, and favors the connections between other archival systems and their components (Principle of cartography and decalcomania). (8-16)
structure of the archivable content even in its very coming into existence and in its relationship to the future. This is also our political experience of the so-called news media (Derrida 16-17).

Marlene Manoff, in her essay *Theories of the Archive from Across the Disciplines*, says that one of Derrida’s most valuable contributions to archive theory is the above named notion that “the structure of archive determines what can be archived” (Manoff 11) and, she adds, “that history and memory are shaped by the technical methods of what he calls ‘archivization’ ”(11). This last concept has special relevance when considering what kind of repository to use in relation to a particular archivable event.

At this point, Derrida speculates about what would have been the “geo-technological” (16) impact of the psychoanalytic archive if Freud, and the scientific community of his time, “had had access to MCI or AT&T telephonic credit cards, portable recorders, computers, printers, faxes, televisions, teleconferences, and above all E-mail.” He answers that such technological conditions “would have transformed this history from top to bottom and in the most initial inside of its production, in its very event” (16). The availability, in a particular historical period, of certain technological means shapes the events, the circulation of knowledge, and then predisposes new theoretical synthesis by the community of practitioners and theorists involved in such dynamics.

Archival technology, and its direct correlation with archival content, determines what, how much, and through which means such information can be accessed, connected, shared, and retrieved. This determination means that it will have a direct impact on what can be studied, and subsequently, what can be known. This axiom, extrapolated to the arena of theatre archives, indicates that among the available storage technologies those repositories that permit the interplay of multiple archives should be privileged over those
that belong to a lesser order regarding their archive capabilities. According to this reasoning, in the current technological landscape, multimedia digital technologies emerge as the best receptacle for audiovisual record of the performance. In the attempt to found a general history of theatre, the electronic archive fits with Foucault’s notion of documents, and the rhizomic ways that the historian is supposed to work with them.

**Archive and its Modes of Representation**

The archive does not speak for itself; it needs to be read, decodified, related, contrasted, and re-contextualized by someone: the historians, the politicians, the theorists, etc. I contend that the interpretative act upon the archive serves at least three main purposes: 1) to produce historiographical material, 2) to be performed, and 3) to perform.

In relation to the first purpose, historiography, I am going to start by saying something obvious but not less meaningful: All written history has been written by someone. Such statement encloses for me one of the meanings of historiography: the writing of history from the particular point of view of someone, the historian. Historiography in this sense is a phenomenological act where the historian, taking information from archival documents constructs an interpretative historical discourse. Historiography can then also be labeled as a “storyography”. There is no such a thing as “the history”, but there are as many histories as historians have written them. The written history is always an act of subjectivity. Alun Munslow citing Keith Jenking’s concept of history, says that it “is a discourse about, but different from, the past” (142). It is precisely the differential between the past and the written version of it what allows the historian to exercise her/his “historical imagination” (133) in order to fill the gaps, and
discontinuities left by available material evidence. Like a novelist that can use historical information in the context of fictional narratives, the historian inserts ficcion in his/her interpretative account of historical information. Cervantes’ *The Quixote* is not history; it is a novel, not because it is exempt of factual information, but because the historical facts narrated in it are far surpassed by fictional ones. Leaving aside the question of stylistic differences between the novel and the historical text, “storyography” and historiography hold a mathematical differential: the relative weight of facts and fictive data that both the history text and the novel claim.

Quoting de Certeau, Jose Rabasa states that historiography, literally “‘history and writing’”, contains “‘within its own name the paradox—almost an oxymoron—of a relation established between two antonymic terms, between the real and discourse,’” concluding then that “this definition enables us to understand the real as a product of discourse, rather than as an adequation of writing to a preexistent object” (8). In other words, reality is constructed in the drift of writing. Reality cannot exit independently from who is expressing it through language. Reality is not independent from the observer.

While it is easy to fuse Cervantes with his literary creation of the Quixote and eventually to distinguish fictional from bits of factual data contained in the novel, it is more difficult to distinguish the fictional that inhabits in a historian’s literary work. Just as *The Quixote* suspends our skepticism and disbelief as part of the novelistic game, the historian’s work tends to suspend the readers’ criticism and skepticism in relation to the fictional components contained in the historical script. Discourses of sobriety impose a certain aura of authority over the readers (or hearers) and obscure the paradox all historiography bears.
Considering the ideas expressed above, it is possible to attest that the historian, as a historiographer, “performs” through writing the documentation available to him/her. Historiography, it could be said then, is the performing of documentation through interpretative writing. Also, it could be said that this historiographical performance is not just influenced by the historian’s bias, but also by the archivist, who, in his/her role as a selector, determines what documentation to put into archive, what was destroyed by omission or act, or what was left temporarily out. The historian, at the end, will write his/her vision of history based on what he/she is able to access from these filtered archives.

Besides the historian’s historiographical performance, there is another way of performing documents, which is what the artists in general and the theatre practitioners in particular, do when using documental material to construct a piece of art or a theatrical production. The extensive use of documentary footage in productions currently labeled Multimedia Theatre is a common practice that can be traced back to the beginning of the 20th century. If we consider the narratives contained in the Bible as material with historical value, then some medieval *autos sacramentales* could be considered as repertoires found in documental material as well. The work of Anna Deavere Smith based on interviews to protagonists or witnesses of the Los Angeles riot in 1991 are clear examples of the use of documental sources that become performances.

The third function of archival documents is the document as performance. Philip Auslander has recently enunciated this concept in his essay *The Performativity of Performance Documentation*. Taking Austin’s notion of performative utterances as different from constative utterances, and analyzing Vito Acconti’s performance *Photo*
Auslander argues that this work, and other audiovisual documents of a performance, are constituted as such through the performativity of their documentation:

I am suggesting that performances documents are not analogous to constatives, but to performatives: in other words, the act of documenting an event as a performance is what constitutes it as such. Documentation does not simply generate image/statements that describe an autonomous performance and state that it occurred: it produces and event as a performance and, as Frazer Ward suggest, the performer as “artist” (5).

Auslander’s articulation of the act of documenting as a performative one, moves forward earlier debates by theoreticians like Anabelle Melzer, Patrice Pavis, Denise Varney, Matthew Reason, Gay McAuley, Diana Taylor and others about the interferences, losses, and gains of documenting the performance audiovisually. What started as a question about how audiovisual documentation of a performance is a neutral medium of preserving objectively the original performance in electronic formats, evolved into a now-accepted notion that the video or filmic documentation is always altering, and interpreting the subject that has been recorded.

Melzer, for example, cites “the ‘losses’ in the move from stage to screen” in terms of the technical resolution, faithfulness to the original, objectivity, liveness, presence, and lack of audience, among others (152). Her idea of minimizing such losses by improving technical issues (image definition, conscious use of visual cues in order to convey the sense of three dimensionality of the theatrical space, etc), improving the “translation” (266), or professionalizing the video making process (268-275) underline the idea that audiovisual documenting is altering the subject, and producing a new semiotic, independent system.

Because of this, theorists have seen the need to systematize the “semiotics of watching” (Varney 95). In the same way as the literate theatergoer understands, more or
less, the codes and conventions implicit in a particular performance, the viewer of a
documented performance is required to know how “to read” the moving image on screen.
McAuley says, for instance, that it will be helpful to the “users of the recording to explain
in and up-front what principles governed the recording format, choice of camera position,
movement or lack of it” (24). And then he remarks that the viewer’s responsibility is “to
interpret the information contained in the documents” (24). In this vein, Varney and
Fensham say, after affirming that the video “like performance, is ‘an object’ able to
produce meanings”, that the viewer needs to develop reading skills, which they call
“videocy” They also argue that the video of a performance “is not constructed only by the
traces of the performance; it maps the viewing of the performance through the eye of the
camera-person and by extension through the eyes of the researcher or researchers” (94).

From my point of view, I think that all these early discussions on the topic of
distortion, betrayal, losses, accuracy, creational, and the re-creational capabilities of the
audiovisual documenting, are properly closed through Auslander’s suggestion of the
performativity quality of performance documentation. Diana Taylor summarizes well the
conclusion theatre and performance theorists have arrived to concerning the nature of
audiovisual documentation of a performance:

The live performance can never be captured or transmitted through the
archive. A video of a performance is not a performance, though it often
comes to replace the performance as a thing in itself (the video is part of
the archive; what it represents is part of the repertoire) (20).

**Documentary Theory**

Taylor’s book *The Archive and the Repertoire. Performing Cultural Memory in
the Americas* is, as far I know, the only book in the field of theatre and performance that
analyzes extensively the issue of performance and the archive. Other critical sources come from essays or brief references from theorists such as the ones I cited before, as well as comments practitioners like Peter Brook and Eugenio Barba have made on the topic. While informed by all of them, my thesis will also take into account some ideas coming from the field of film, and specifically from Documentary Theory\textsuperscript{4}.

Film functionality as art and/or mimetic and documentary reflection of reality has been debated since the debut of the medium at the end of the nineteenth century. The formalist paradigm, sustained by theorists such as Sergei Eisenstein, Vsevolod Pudovkin\textsuperscript{5}, Vertov, and Rudolf Arnheim, promotes film as an art and not just a direct recording of the historical world. For them, the filmmaker, as an artist, must stylistically transcend, reorganize, and recreate reality. Holding a different point of view, some film theorists propose that film is meant to reproduce the real world displayed before the camera. It is precisely this perspective, known as the non-fictional or documentary genre that is informing the current practice of audiovisual performance documentation. Although the theatrical performance usually presents a fictional world ruled by theatrical conventions\textsuperscript{6}, the production itself, as event, is an entity that occupies a place in the historical world. In such condition, it could be the proper subject of a documentary work.

\textsuperscript{4} I am using the term ‘documentary’, or non-fiction cinema as a specific genre film as distinct –but closely related- to fiction film.
\textsuperscript{5} Eisenstein and Pudovkin transformed the new technical resources of film into a new art through the technique of montage, or “the art of combining pieces of film or shots into larger units”. (Braudy and Cohen 1)
\textsuperscript{6} There are theatrical events that have been suddenly disrupted by situations that could be recognized as nonfictionals. One notable example is, for instance, the situation of Michel Richards on stage during his performance in The Laugh Factory in November 2006. I will come back to this event in this thesis as an interesting example of audiovisual documentation of a performance, where neither the performer was performing the planned script, nor the filmmaker was appointed to record the event, but it was a spectator of the show.
Non-fictional films and the first notions of documentary theory can be traced back to 1898, when Boleslaw Matuszewski published in Paris his book *La Photographie animee, ce qu’elle est, ce qu’elle doit etre* (*Animated Photography: what it is, what it should be*). There, Matuszewski saw film “as an instructional medium, documenting history, daily life, artistic performances, even medical procedures (Winston 8).” The advent of synchronized sound at the end of the 1920s evoked more elaborated responses to the formalist argument in the sense that the film images “ought to reveal reality whole, not cut it [through montage] into tiny bits” (Braudy and Cohen 2).

Andre Bazin championed the perspective (that harmonizes with the extended idea among theatre theorists) that the theatrical performance ought to be recorded while respecting its unity, and temporal and spatial duration. Bazin’s composition-in-depth stresses the idea that the visible and audible “real” world is recorded and presented ideally without editing. As a result, composition with the camera and the staged action brings “the spectator into a relation with the image closer that which he enjoys with reality” (50). Bazin’s realistic aesthetic is rooted in what he considers as the “objective” nature of photography, which “bears the mechanical trace of its referents” (Cohen and Braudy 272). Siegfried Kracauer, also thinks that film is an extension of photography and that they share the common attribute of “record[ing] and reveal[ing] physical reality” (272).

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7 Edward Sheriff Curtis in 1914 defined his film *In the Land of the Headhunters*, as a documentary material, and documentary work, and a “definition of the documentary film stressing authenticity” (Winston 9). In 1926 John Grierson reviewed Robert Flaherty’s *Moana* as a film with “documentary value”, and his words, although not being the first reference to this film gender, have usually been accredited as “being the first occasion on which the word ‘documentary’ was applied” (8).

8 Paolo Cherchi Usai in his book *Burning Passions* states the year 1926 “marks the beginning of the history of sound cinema in the current sense of the term. (Usai 1994: 16)

9 Melzer, for example, considers that one of the indisputable conditions in documenting performances is that the film must be shot in performance and “in the original setting”. (152)
Theatre theorists, when thinking about filming theatre, have been more or less skeptical about the capacity of film to address reality, as well as presenting theatre as a subject belonging to the historical world. Documentary theory, however, has largely debated the promises of documentary as faithful representation of reality, and the interpretative and distorted “noise” documentary film imposes when addressing the historical world. Bill Nichols expresses well this duality:

Documentary engages with the world by representing it, and it does so in three ways. First, documentaries offer us a likeness or depiction of the world that bears a recognizable familiarity. Through the capacity of film, and audiotape, to record situations and events with considerable fidelity, we see in documentaries people, places, and things that we might also see for ourselves, outside the cinema. This quality alone often provides a basis for belief: we see what was there before the camera’ it must be true. This remarkable power of the photographic image cannot be underestimated even though it is subject to qualification because (1) an image cannot tell everything we want to know about what happened and (2) images can altered both during and after the fact by both conventional and digital means (Nichols 3).

Nichols’ view is representative of what other influential theorists in the field of documentary theory, like Michael Renov and Brian Winston, think about the issue. For example, Renov in his book Theorizing Documentary stresses the fictive components all documentary will contain:

Nonfiction contains any number of ‘fictive’ elements, moments at which presumably objective representation of the world encounters the necessity of creative intervention…[ ] the use of telephoto or wide-angle lenses which squeeze or distort space, the use of editing to make time contract, expand, or become rhythmic. In every case, elements of style, structure, and expositional strategy draw upon preexistent construct, or schemas, to establish meanings and effects for audiences (2).

For his part, Winston (speaking about Grierson’s definition of documentary) sees the contradiction or mutual exclusion of the terms “actuality” and “creative transformation.” He says that “[Grierson] defines documentary therefore as ‘the creative
treatment of actuality’ and thereby created a problem” (Rotha 2). However, one does not have to be too much of a skeptic to spot the obvious contradiction in this formulation. The supposition that any ‘actuality’ is left after ‘creative treatment’ can now be seen as being “at best and at worst a mark of duplicity”(Winston 12). Based on this rationale, one can grasp that there is only one possible answer to solve this oxymoron: nonfiction film is always an interpretation of reality and there is always some kind of mediation.

Nevertheless, this realization does not deny the indexical connection that the resultant image holds with the individual object that posed before the camera, that is to say its referent. That fact has important implications when facing the task of filming performance and sheds more light on (if not definitely clarifies) the discussion among theatre theorists about neutrality, authenticity, and subjectivity of the audiovisual archive in relation to the model performance.

It is important to recognize, however, that in the realm of film the indexical connection between the real thing and its image has been challenged by digital technologies and their capacity to recreate images that look and comport like those belonging to the historical world, but that do not have, in fact, any real referent (Prince 273). I believe that the extensive utilization of virtual imagining in cinema, although troubling to classical film theory in relation to its notions of indexicality, should not affect the status of audiovisual documentation of the theatrical performance. Since the making of an audiovisual record of a performance is necessarily contemporaneous to it, then the existence of the document implies the existence of the performance in the real world. Digital imagining, however, can be eventually used to alter the matrix of a filmed performance, introducing for instance scenes that never existed in the original production,
or altering lighting, setting, and composition of a scene, etc. Once the performance is
definitely gone, an altered audiovisual record can claim to be the “faithful” moving image
of the performance.

In such circumstance, the inability to distinguish between the faked digital
audiovisual record and its original would make it impossible to discern which one has the
preeminence of authenticity (in fact, it could be alleged that the original record is the
altered document in respect to another). In this scenario, complementary archival
material, such as programs, reviews, interviews, etc, can eventually provide the necessary
evidence to authenticate the visual information contained in a record as a non-faked
document. This idea supports, from another point of view, what Paolo Cherchi Usai has
said in his book *The Death of Cinema:* that the moving image cannot be considered itself
as evidence but it needs to be supported by other complementary archives. (30)

Documentary theorists make only rare and always tangential references to
theatrical performance as a documentary subject. Similarly, theatre theorists make rare
allusion to documentary theory when discussing the audiovisual documenting of a
performance, and the problems that it entails. Given that in the documentary realm
theatre performance represents just one of innumerable possible subjects to be addressed,
such lack of concern is understandable, but not in theatre where documenting
performance implies the necessary use of techniques, technologies, principles, and the
craft of filmmakers. Documentary has a long-standing vocation for representing the
visible world and exposing, exploring, questioning, interpreting, and analyzing cultural,
social, historical, and political events. Being that the historical world is its generic
subject, documentary prescribes different modalities, styles, and techniques in addressing
and treating actuality. These methodologies of addressing reality are concomitant and recognizable in any audiovisual record made of a performance. In other words, when documenting a theatre production, the stylistics and technical procedures will fall into at least one category that documentary theory describes as the possible modalities of documenting events belonging to the historical world, among them the performance.


It is precisely the last, the observational mode, which theatre practitioners and scholars usually think of as the proper way of documenting performance due to its promises of scientific objectivity in knowing the historical event. The observational mode is a formal discourse where the style is second to content. Here, the filmmaker exists as an omniscient presence that presents the subject (performance) without forming part of it. In undertaking the performance as a documentary subject the filmmaker does not consider it as being reenacted to the camera, since all performance, by definition, is always reenacted to a live audience, not to the camera.
As I already said, theatre scholarship can be enriched by film and documentary theory in understanding how its community of theorists have been dealing with the status of reality, the modalities of recording actuality and how it is performed by the filmmaker who attempts to capture the event developed before the camera. The concept of archival artifacts as rhizomatically related implies, in my perspective, to dissolve disciplinary frontiers, establishing connections (practically and theoretically) in a world where the topic of archivization is being systematically interrogated across discrete disciplines.

For me, the field of Performance Studies (with the broad spectrum of disciplines it summons, including theatre performance and film, and the multifarious methodologies it borrows from them) is a good starting point to promote an interdisciplinary work. Performance Studies is a way of thinking of discrete cultural phenomenon labeled as performances from a rhizomatous perspective, stressing them in their interconnectedness, pluri-dimensionality, and dependence. My work will be informed by this perspective and way of thinking in the hope that I can give a refreshing, dynamic, and plural concept of the archive in general, and the audiovisual documentation of the performance in particular.
Chapter Four: The Model Performance

In this chapter I introduce the trope of the Model Performance (MP) in order to problematize the assumed stable nature of the performance. The MP helps demonstrate that, rather than being stable, a performance is an evolvable entity that is impossible to document through its whole process. The MP, as a construct, allows me to formulate five orientations the archivist could take into account when deciding which, among the successive shows a production performs, should be audiovisually documented.

Given the vast number of theatrical productions that are staged worldwide each year, the impossibility of documenting all of them is immediately evident. It becomes necessary to develop some criteria in order to select what will be archived. Nevertheless, the dilemma of selectivity does not end after deciding what, among the immense universe of theatrical production available, to put into the archive, or, in the words of Featherstone, in determining “what one dare to leave out” (161). Once choosing a specific production, the predicament persists in relation to which one, among all the successive shows performed during its cycle of life, will be recorded. If, as I have stated before as one of the postulates of this thesis, the audiovisual archive becomes a primary substitute of the performance after its disappearance, then it is essential to decide which among all the successive performances that compose a theatrical production must be filmed. I will use the neologism Model Performance (MP) to name the most representative performance in a cycle of public shows that a theatrical production undergoes during its lifetime. Let me digress from a more complete analysis of what the MP is, and take this simple definition to explore its implications when deciding to record a show.
I recognize the troubling aspect of proposing the existence of an ideal performance that can be recorded, and I need to justify it a little. Directors that follow the entire cycle of presentations usually signal some of them as the best (or the worst) expressing through these, or other adjectives, which ones have fulfilled (or not) their expectation on how the performance should work. I think that such expressions demonstrate the existence of an ideal performance that exists, at least, in the subjective realm of the director’s mind, and could operate as the benchmark of the actual performances. If it were possible to record all the shows, a director would probably point out the best one to preserve, and the problem of selection would be easily solved. In the practical world however, such an opportunity rarely happens, so the archivists need other alternatives.

Another option, and a more secure one in terms of the quality of the result, could be to record the performance in a film session devoted specifically to do that. In a controlled situation like this, both the director of the production and the filmmaker could coordinate opinions in order to discern when a scene needs to be repeated to get the best shot of the best performance. Nevertheless some theatre theorists, oppose this practice, arguing that the performance is denaturalized and decontextualized from the space and condition the production was meant to be performed in, that is, as a continuous show with live audience in a regular run¹.

¹Purists like Bart Geeraedits, a Dutch theatre dramaturg, for example said that: “One should use one single camera, which takes only one shot during the performance...” (Melzer: Best Betrayal, Part 2, 271. Others, like Annabelle Melzer are more flexible affirming that the performance must be recorded in its original setting with or without audience: The only limitation upon the documenting process that seems to me indisputable alongside varying intentions, is that the film be shot, in the original setting —that is, not shifted to a studio.” (Melzer: Best Betrayal, Part 1, 152)
The fact is that, whether for ideological, financial, or practical reason, the performances are usually recorded during their normal run in a regular season. In these circumstances, and since it is practically impossible to anticipate what the result of the next show will be, the recording of a performance seems to be a blind date, and a risky task. It is in reference of such a dilemma that I discuss my notion of a MP.

I have transposed the idea of MP from Cherchi Usai’s concept of Model Image, which he applies in the realm of film. In his book *The Death of Cinema* he says that the Model Image is a mythical entity, “a potential image that never can be constructed but that has its closer representation in the matrices and the print before it has been projected for the first time” (Usai 71). He states that once the print runs through projectors, several factors lead to its transformation and physical decay, such as malfunction of the apparatus, scratches or tears on the print caused by the projecting machine or its operator, and curling of the film base as the result of a too intense exposure to the light sources.

In other words, once a film copy is made, and successively projected onto the screen, the next screening will always be slightly different from the previous ones due to the physical transformations that it undergoes in the process of being projected (ergo; film, like theater, is ephemeral, though differing in its longevity). Thus, the viewer can see the same exact image only one time. At the end, the more projected a film, the farther the distance of its moving image from its Model Image. In theatre however, the problem of an “ideal” theatrical performance is far more significant since successive shows of a production differ from each other to a far greater degree than the tiny

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2 Although, according to Usai, “no viewer can claim to have seen a moving image in its entirety”. (Usai: 49).

3 The physical decay a film print undergoes due to its successive projection is been challenged by the digital image, which can be retrieved over and over without losses.
variations in print quality Usai describes. Thus, paraphrasing Usai’s trope: no one spectator can claim to see the same performance twice.

I want to state here that introducing the notion of a MP, besides giving the archivist specific criteria to decide which show to record, gives value to the problematizing of the nature of the object the archivist is dealing with: the performance. I propose that the notion of a MP questions the nature of a performance in at least four ways:

First, the notion of a MP underlines the fact that when we are thinking about a theatrical production as a unique and fixed entity, we really mean a sequential and dynamic cluster of shows that are defined by differences, mutabilities, and doses of more or less controlled uncertainties. In this sense, the notion of a performance as a closed unique system is a construction that normalizes actual differences from one show to another. Second, the notion of a MP entails the necessity of choosing among alternative shows, and that the act of recording implies a selection that is leaving out other possibilities. Therefore, the concept of a MP stresses the fact that it is impossible to record the performance in its evolvable process. The archivist is getting just a moment in the continuum defined by all the shows that compose what Schechner calls “a coherent public performance” (Performance 204) within the performance process understood as a time-space sequence.

Third, the scholar theorizing on a recorded performance should be aware that the object of his/her analysis, besides being a mediated sub-product of the performance analysis, is a sample, a finite part taken from a larger whole of sequential shows we call the production. Finally, the arbitrary act of recording this, and not another showing,
demands the archivist to ponder which choice would be better in order to properly
document it. In other words, favoring a specific show for recording, more than a technical
decision, is an ideological one.

**Type of show**

It could be argued that the changes a performance undergoes from one night to the
next are marginal, but such observation should not be made without first examining what
kind of theatre performance is going to be recorded. Is it a session of Improv-Theatre, or
a show that synchronizes live performance with multimedia? Is it a monologue with
instances where the monologist interacts with his/her audience, a Commedia dell’arte
scenario, or a more stable theatre production where the actors, and the whole expressive
systems implicated, supposedly behave in the same way each night?

In the case where the performance is meant to change each night, such as in
Improv-Theatre, Forum Theatre or other popular productions where the audience’s
reactions are integrated as a part of the theatrical experience, the archivist who has no
chance to record all the performances must choose one and sacrifice the rest. These two
theatre modalities function as open systems that consistently adapt to their social and
historical milieus from their particular ideological and aesthetic platforms. These theatres
privilege their encounter with their audiences, not just as part of a ritualistic or *ludic*
celebration, but primarily because they are built on a constantly searching and restless
journey of social and individual discovery. The intrinsic dynamic of this category of
theatre makes it difficult to decide which among all the performances of a production is
the most representative. In such a circumstance, a scholar examining a unique audiovisual
document of one show should be aware of this characteristic in order to validate his/her analysis as made from a specific, and by definition, different show in a cycle of performances. Thus, the analytical outcome of one scholar should be necessarily different from that which another scholar would do from a different showing of the same production.

On the other hand, if a production consists of a multimedia work where the human presence has been minimized in benefit of audiovisual or mechanical expressive means, then the archivist could be almost sure that the production will not have noticeable variation from night to night. Since programmable expressive devices (such as lighting, sound, moving image, and others) are, if they do not fail for some reason, reliable technologies that function the same each time, then the factor of change will be in relation to the marginal human participation on stage. In such conditions, the changes in form and meaning of the production will be predictably at a minimum, enabling the archivist to choose to record any of the shows in the cycle without major worries. In this case, the sample will be, to some extent, representative of the whole production.

Nevertheless, the certainties and accuracy that are expected in multimedia productions, where the machinery could be their central protagonist, are less in productions where the actor is in charge of shaping and conveying the meaning of the show. In this theatre, which is the most common in Western contemporary productions, the accurate repeatability of a show from one night to another will be variable, depending on a series of factors such as: the nature of the company, the actor’s craft and discipline, the extension of the rehearsals in the proto-performance process, and the number of shows the production plans to have. It will also depend on the ways the company faces
the unpredictable process of public presentations, which will largely depend on the
director of the show.

**The mutability of performance**

Although all these variables deserve a deeper consideration, I will review them
summarily. There are theatre companies where the creative process and the improvement
of a production are not just confined to the proto-performance phase, but where these
impulses for perfection and innovation remain during the cycle of public presentations,
under the guidance of the director of the show. Such methodology recognizes that the
performance is never a finished work, and that the production is being tested each night
in the always changing interaction with live audiences, and the historical world
surrounding it. In this kind of work, the first public presentation will be notoriously
different from the last, complicating the archivist decision of what show should be
documented. Other theatre companies work assuming that the production acquires its
definitive form once they have finished the proto-performance process. In this view, the
production becomes a closed system where no further changes are allowed. Usually, in
this kind of project, the director leaves the production after the opening night, and a team
of preservers (composed of stage manager, or rehearsal directors) is assembled in order to
safeguard the product as it was originally conceived.

I think these productions also undergo visible changes from one performance to
the next, although the overall shape of the show is usually preserved in its original form.
Although the team of safeguards is certainly struggling against entropic forces that can
harm or distort the show, changes are operating at the level of acting, which will have an
impact in the originally intended fabric of meanings. Even though this phenomenon is hard to explain, directors know very well how the actors tend to change their original scores in order to create, from their point of view, more compelling, funnier, and more dramatic, levels to their characters and their acting. Productions with unwanted changes, like the aforementioned, bewilder the archivist in charge of making decisions of which show to document. The task of identifying the MP is not simple if the archivist takes into account the mutations that a performance undergoes from the opening night to the closing one. Which one is the most representative of the production in order to put it into the archive? My experience as a theatre practitioner suggests that the differences between one performance and the next, even in a very disciplined production, can be so radical that it is worthy to apply specific criteria and effort in deciding which one deserves to be recorded. In such conditions, the archivist must anticipate the problem by offering concrete courses of action.

Disciplined and crafted actors are capable of enacting complex vocal, emotional and physical routines accurately. These sequences, known as scores, are thoroughly prepared during the rehearsal process to become the concrete visible life of a character within the performance. According to Stanislavskian and Grotowskian acting methods, the performer makes an extensive use of introspective techniques in order to find analogous personal experiences to that of the character (Stanislavsky) or even non-analogue personal experiences, which will underline the life of the character via montage (Grotowski). These acting methodologies permit the to actor reenact, in a very precise

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4 Christopher Clark, who directed Shakespeare’s *Much ado about nothing* with the Provo Theatre Company in 2006, told me, after attending the closing night, that he was amazed by the so many things the actors were doing, which he never indicated as the director of the show. (Based on a personal conversation between Christopher Clark and the author, after the closing night of the production on February 25, 2006, in Provo Utah).
way, his/her score over and over without losing the vitality and organicity\(^5\) due to the act of repetition. It was not until Stanislavski’s “method” (and the related works of Meyerhold, Grotowski, and Barba) that sets of reliable and transmissible acting techniques were available to Western actors. An actor who masters these acting methodologies will be able to repeat a score in an almost identical way each time s/he performs it.

The “audiovisual reconstruction of the performance” (Grotowski Sourcebook 496) of *The Constant Prince* illustrates how Grotowskian acting method gave the actors of the Theatre Laboratorium techniques that allowed them to design replicable stable scores. This audiovisual document was actually a product of editing where the images (shot from a performance in 1965) and the soundtrack (recorded in 1967 from the same production) were synchronized by the Department of Theatre Performance Studies at the University of Rome in 1974, under the supervision of Ryszard Cieslak, who performed the main character of the production. Surprisingly, the soundtrack and the images matched perfectly, which could mean that Cieslak’s respective performances as the Prince were practically identical after two years.

Nevertheless, in spite of this outstanding result, there are several reasons that argue that Cieslak’s performances could not be alleged as identical. First, despite the remarkable correspondence between the sound and the physical score, insufficient evidence exists to determine the precise physical score of Cieslak’s performance in 1965,

\[\text{5 Here I am using the noun}\ \text{organicity}\ \text{to denote a harmonious relationship between the score and the inner personal associations the actor is using during his/her performance. In practical terms, I could say that there will be an organic acting when the spectator thinks, or believes that the physical actions the actor conveys (score) are internally motivated. Interestingly, the Alba Emoting System, developed by Susana Bloch to trigger emotions through pure physical and respiratory patterns, is devoid of personal associations. The technique provokes at will a real emotional response by the subject simply following precise gestures and respiratory scores. Is there organicity in such response?}\]
and what was Cieslak’s precise vocal score in 1967. Second, Grotowski directed several revised versions of the same production during almost four years in which the play was performed. So, although Cieslak’s scores had been identical, the overall production could have been different. Third, in order to avoid mechanical repetition in an actor’s score, and consequently loss of organicity, Grotowski’s method of physical actions relies on the continuous enrichment and further explorations of the personal memories that the actor is using as a support of his/her physical actions.

Ryszard Cieslak made an interesting remark where, through a metaphor, he harmonizes the apparent paradox of changing within a fixed (stable) score.

The score is like a glass inside which a candle is burning. The glass is solid; it is there, you can depend on it. It contains and guides the flame. But it is not the flame. The flame is my inner process each night. The flame is what illuminates the score, what the spectator see through the score. The flame is alive…so my inner life varies from night to night, from moment to moment… I want only to be receptive to what will happens if I am secure in my score, knowing that even if I feel a minimum, the glass will not break, the objective structure worked out over the months will help me through. But when a night comes that I can glow, shine, live, reveal –I am ready for it by not anticipating it. The score remains the same, but everything is different because I am different (The Grotowski Sourcebook 201).

According to this statement quoted by Taviani when discussing the work of Cieslak, it is possible to assume that Cieslak’s memories were always mutating from one performance to another, affecting and differentiating one performance from the rest. Besides, although theatre is an art made of repetitions, and such repetitions are made in controllable conditions, the many factors involved in a production—from technical to more subjective components like spectators, and actors—are permanently mediating in order to make each performance different, whether subtle or obvious. On the other hand, the active and permanent presence of the director and his/her acknowledgment that the
performance is always a work in progress introduces an important variable in the metamorphic process of a performance. Under these premises, it becomes clear that in this kind of productions, like the others outlined before, the life of a performance is also made of repetitions and differences, of borders of internal and external mutations (in form and spirit), reflecting an evolutionary and organic process. Between the first and the final public appearance there will be noticeable, visible differences comparable to differences between an adolescent man and his later, adult self. Knowing this, the question remains of which performance is the most representative, the MP, in its evolutionary process, the first, the last, or any of those in between?

I think that, so far, I have given enough evidence of how the notion of a MP problematizes and reveals the always-changing nature of a theatre production during its span of public life. Now I want to undertake the task of answering the question above by giving some clues that the archivist could take into consideration when deciding which show to record:

I would like to suggest that the first step an archivist should take is to narrow its object of study by determining the kind of performance is going to be documented, and diagnosing the level of “changeability” the show will probably undergo during the cycle of public performance. Under this criterion it will become clear that in a performance that is expected to change, such as Improv-Theatre or a piece of Forum Theatre, the chosen sample could be withdrawn from any of the shows performed. In this case, the index of “changeability” will be high, and the MP concept will be satisfied through all of the shows staged. If the production promises to be one with a low level of “changeability”, such as a Multimedia production where the main protagonist could be the medias rather
than the actor, then the archivist decision would be similar to that of the former case, that is to say, the MP for documenting could be any of the shows. For theatre productions whose range of changeability is between the two cases named above, the decision is more complex.

**Level of changeability and the synergetic nature of the archive**

In order to get a better understanding of the level of changeability of a performance I think that it is necessary to go inside the performance as a system in order to explore its components and its tendency to vary. In order to do that, I would like to suggest a model expressed through the following function:

$$P(x) \ f(a, s, d, l, E, ts, n)$$

Thus, $P(x)$ is a function of $a, s, d, l, n$ and $E$, where: $P(x)$ is a specific production, $a$ represents the variable actor(s), $s$ the spectators, $d$ the director, $l$ the physical locus or space, $E$ the expressive systems involved in the production (lighting, setting, sound, etc), $ts$ the theatrical “stop-gaps” embodied in agents (rehearsal directors and stage managers), and $n$ the times that the production is performed during its span of life. In a performance all these variables are interacting mutually so that if one of them changes, all the rest are somehow affected, which impacts the final outcome.

Speaking about his Royal Shakespeare Company’s production of *King Lear*, director Peter Brook tells in his book *The Empty Space* that after a process of continual

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*A function is in Mathematics a relation or expression involving one or more variables, which are mutually related.*
improving of the production during its tour through Europe the quality of the
performance decreased dramatically during its exhibition in USA. He says:

The production was steadily improving and the best performances lay
between Budapest and Moscow... I was forced to go back to England
and only caught up with the company a few weeks later in Philadelphia.
To my surprise and dismay, much of the quality had gone from their
acting. I wanted to blame the actors, but it was clear that they were
trying as hard as they could. It was the relation with the audience that
had changed... The audience was composed largely of people who
were not interested in the play (21-22).

From this quote it is possible to extract two important conclusions. First, Brook’s King
Lear was an unpolished work when it reached the stage. The fact that it was improving
during the process of performances testifies of its permanent metamorphosis. Second, a
single component of the function, the spectators, can impact negatively (or positively) on
the actor’s performance and then on the whole production. Even if the spectator does not
have the power to change the play objectively (as it could be the case in Boal’s Theatre
Forum, for example), it stills modifies it with its presence. Their emotional responses,
cultural background, range of age, special emplacement, and number (among other
factors) all have a critical influence on how the performance is represented on a particular
evening, and reaffirm the idea that the presence of the audience is a crucial component of
the performance. Besides, since a theatre production reflects and discusses the
contingences of its own time, the changes in the external world will affect the
significance and relevance a production could have had in a particular moment.\footnote{Think for example the relevance, and significance a light Broadway comedy with a happy ending could have had after the attack to the Twin Towers on September 11, in New York.}

Expressive systems ($E$) like lighting, setting, costumes, and sound are probably
the most stable components of the function, and their impact on changing a performance
is related to certain mistakes that sometimes happen during the process. Thus,
occasionally a wrong cue, for example, could affect the pace, the sense of unity, and the fluency of the performance. Technologies like computerized lighting boards and sound consoles have made these systems very reliable. The role played by the technological expressive systems due to their stability, could be labeled as the fixed marks in the route of a performance. The element indicated as $l$ (locus or space) will affect the function if the performance is presented in a different locus where acoustic phenomenon, shape of the room, size, etc, could have a noticeable impact on actors’ vocals, pre-expressive and expressive techniques, as well as other components of the function. The $l$ factor would compound for a touring show. In relation to the number of times that a production is performed ($n$) the proper axiom for this element could be the more performances the more the changes that it undergoes. Nonetheless, it is possible to expect that the same cast of actors performing the same production for a long period of time will tend to stabilize the scores and levels of interaction among them.

The presence of the director ($d$) during the performance process is a key anti-entropic element in order to maintain the system within the original conception and improve it during the process. In companies where the members have a strong ideological and artistic commitment, and a long-term project, the figure of the director is essential to its identity as group. Grotowski, Stanislawsky, Chaikin, Brecht, Brook, and Barba, to name some conspicuous ones, were the primary force that shaped and moved forward long processes of theatrical discovery and productivity. Their function as directors does not finish after the opening night but follows all the way through the performance process and the aftermath. Eugenio Barba, for example, following the example of Jerzy
Grotowski, invariably is present at each performance, watching it from the audience and taking notes in order to continue discussion with the company after the performance.

Rehearsal directors, trainers, and stage managers (ts) constitute another anti-entropic agent. Not having the moral and artistic presence of a director, they collaborate in order to maintain the original canon established by the director. These substitute figures of the director are, as I have already said before, essential in commercial theatres where the director abandons the production after its opening night. They, in their role of preserving an original model, represent the status quo of the performance.

Considering the number of variables that assure the mutation of a performance during its process of public presentations, it is possible to conclude that, in a strict sense, a material Model Performance does not exist. Even in the hypothetical case that the last run through before the opening night of the play was the exact equivalent to the production that the director had in mind, the first public exhibition the performance would be reframed by the presence of the audience and other components of the function of P(x). The concept of a Model Performance in theatre is then equivalent to that which Cherchi Usai holds in relation to the moving image, that is to say, an idealistic entity “a potential image that can never be constructed but that has its closer representation in the matrices and the print before it has been projected for the first time” (Usai 71).

Transposed to the realm of theatre, the MP is the definitive performance, the superlative, and the most representative. In other words, the MP is an illusion that could have just been imagined by the director’s mind, but never actually realized. Nevertheless, as I stated early in this chapter, the notion of a MP is a construct, a useful abstraction,
which as such can be satisfied by ideological criteria. The process of selecting the objects to be documented or the traces to be included into archives is always an ideological act.

Having stated the impossibility of having a MP, the problem of selecting the ‘proper’ performance to be recorded still persists, since it is practically impossible to record the performance in its metamorphic trajectory from its first exhibition to the last. Strictly speaking, as I said before, there is not an entity that we could identify as “the production” due to the many exhibitions a production has. The first exhibition of a performance is different from the next and the relation between both is similar, but not equal. In this sense, the relation of unity between all the performances can be defined by their equivalence, and specifically by their transitivity. In other words, if the performance exhibited on day 1 (P1) is similar to that on day 2 (P2), and (P2) is similar to the last exhibition (Px), then (P1) is similar to (Px). Thus, the notion (illusion) of unity that we usually give to the production during the whole period of exhibition is based on similarities (differences); therefore, if we want to have a complete record of the production an archive must be created that holds an exhibition of each performance, which is impracticable. So, if an archivist documents only one performance he/she is, in fact, eliminating or denying the differences. If a critic analyzes (P1), and another analyzes (Px), then their conclusions will be different due to the addition of differences between the first and the last performance (a not infrequent fact in the world of theatrical reviews).

In such a circumstance, I ask again, which one among all the performances in cycle is the most representative? Which one is the referential performance? In one sense, here we face the same kind of problem that Levi-Strauss confronted when he recognizes that the Bororo myth—chosen among other myths as a key myth—deserves
“no more than any other its referential privilege” (Derrida 184). So, it is possible to affirm that choosing a specific and unique performance ranged between (P1) and (Px) is interesting “not because [of its] typical, but rather because of its irregular position within the group” (Levi-Strauss 184), that is to say its difference. Considering that, any performance ranging between (P1) and (Px) can equally and indifferently be selected.

Nevertheless, I think that there is a better option in the process of selecting the right performance to be recorded. If the MP is that where the difference between the ideal production visualized by the director and the actual performance is equal to zero, then between (P1) and (Px) there must be one that is closer to that condition. I propose the following five orientations, which could help in making a decision of what show to document audiovisually.

**Orientations guiding the selection of the MP**

These five are, more than postulates, simple orientations or criteria to be followed by those interested in making an informed decision of documenting a show audiovisually:

1. If the director remains supervising and changing (improving) the performances through the entire process of public exhibition (as Barba and other directors do) then it can be assumed that the director recognizes that the final ideal shape which s/he visualized has not been reached, and, consequently s/he needs to move it towards the Model Performance (the ideal performance). Following this logic, the last performances will be the closest expression to the MP, and one of them could be the chosen to be recorded.
2. If the director abandons or does not have any control over the project after the first public performance, then the first public exhibition must be recorded. This postulate assumes that if the director is absent during the performance process, then the production will tend to change to directions others than those that conduct to the MP (related to the director’s ideal conception). The entropic phenomenon of degradation of the performance (positive entropy) will occur in spite of the efforts deployed by the preservers whose main responsibility is to preserve the external form of the show intact.

3. If the chosen performance to be recorded satisfies any of the two conditions expressed above, that is to say, the last performances for a production supervised by the original director, and the first one for a production preserved by stop-gaps team, then the recorded performance could be considered as the closest representation to the ideal MP.

4. In the case of performances that have a high rate of changeability, like Improv-Theatre and Boal modalities such as Forum Theatre, Invisible Theatre, Image Theatre, etc. where the circumstances determine the outcome, any of the shows could be considered as representative. In this kind of theatre, the archivist could document any of the shows.
5. Productions where the index of changeability is low, like in some Multimedia shows, where the presence of actors on stage has been minimized, the archivist could opt for documenting any of the shows.

My analysis, prompted by the notion of a MP, demonstrates that it is not always the same to document this or that show, and I gave some guidelines for discerning the dilemma. The concept of a Model Performance is an abstraction which assumes that performance has its existence in the master creative mind of the director—conceived here as the main force who undertakes the “aesthetical and organizational responsibility for the production by choosing the actors, interpreting the text and using available stage potential” (Pavis 104). The idea of a MP, however, helps the archivist to discriminate which among all the successive performances that compose a theatrical production should be audiovisually documented. It is also important that thinking about a MP confirms the idea that, in theatre, “twice-behaved behavior” are repetitions made of differences, which implies that these “physical or verbal actions that are not-for-the-first time, prepared, or rehearsed” (Performance 22) leave possibilities for change. No matter how structured an actor’s performance could be, as Ceislak reminds us, “when a night comes that I can glow, shine, live, reveal –I am ready for it by not anticipating it. The score remains the same, but everything is different because I am different.”

A theatre production is, in Taylor’s sense, part of the repertoire system where the embodied actions “do not remain the same” (20). Once a live performance is, in the digital era, transposed to a digital media it becomes fixed, and its changeability is stopped. Defined by binary codes, the moving image of a show perpetuates it as it was
recorded, and erases any possibility of change in the successive exhibitions, except for external digital manipulation. What is in stake here is the fact that a digital record homogenizes and normalizes the live performance made of differences, and by this means democratizes the sight of the viewer. Different viewers and different scholars will see the same moving image made of the original performance. Although the interpretations of such images will differ from one viewer to another, the visual stimulus will remain the same for all of them.

In his article *Efermaele: That Which Will Be Said Afterwards*, Eugenio Barba antagonizes with storing a performance in the stable digital system: “In the age of electronic memory, of films, and of reproducibility, theatre performance also defines itself through the work of living memory, which is not museum but metamorphosis” (78). In this sense, the audiovisual document operates against the always-changing nature of a performance that remains metamorphosing in the memory of the audience.

When the performance no long maintains a presence in the historical world, it is preserved through material and immaterial traces that range from audiovisual documents, costumes, photographs, reviews, etc to the phenomenological impressions carved in the spectator’s mind and memory. Nevertheless, all human memory, all remains, all resemblance, all materiality linked to the original performance will follow the same entropic destiny of its model: they will undergo an eventual disappearance. Sharing the same final fate, the only difference could be found in their longevity. This opens the task of the archivist and the conservator beyond just discovering the best and lasting repository for the archives in order to preserve these as long as possible, but also utilizing state-of-the-art encoding and retrieving technologies.
Living memory is one of the most fragile and at the same time most complex forms of performance archivization. Underestimated by the archivist for being unreliable and intangible, the spectator’s memory is an important role in contextualizing the performance once it is gone. Critics, historians, and theorists interested in studying theatrical performance rely first and foremost on fallible human memories—especially as preserved in written texts—to reconstruct vanished theatrical texts. Since they are principally writing to an absent audience, they need to recall the performative event in order to give the reader a proper background for their analysis. Since human memory relies on faulty mental mechanisms for encoding, storing or retrieving, complementary archives play an important role in remembering. Notes, photographs, and videos of the performance are good mnemonic tools for a consistent review, and a *posteriori* debate over the performance. Where human memory of the performance is another way of validating hard archives (like films, the dramatic play, prompts books, pictures, etc.) memories are inserted in the circuit of mutual validation that isolated archives cannot provide by themselves.

In this circuit of validation, the role of archival material and living memory is testifying of the performance once it has disappeared. The transient status of a performance, that is to say, the inevitability of its eventual disappearance, can be thoroughly tied to the notions of ephemerality. Nevertheless, the very production and preservation of archival material related to a performance from its inception to the last public exhibition, and consequent post mortem elaboration of its secondary archives, are closely related to its eventual end. While ephemerality is linked to the idea of disappearance, physical remnants are synonymous with persistence and the preservation
of the ephemeral. In other words, while the archives of a performance represent its 
*spectral* lasting extension in the historical world, at the same time they represent an
affirmation of its loss.

In this context, the moving image of a show represents the ideological filter made
by an archivist, which leaves aside other possible moving images taken from different
shows during the cycle of public presentations. Also, it means the aesthetic and
ideological mediation of the filmmaker. Now the scholar is able to analyze the document
as much as s/he wants, and discus it while knowing that others scholar could have access
to the same biased artifact, which represents just one show, one sample among several.

Choosing a specific performance automatically discards the peculiar differences
of the rest, and condemns these to oblivion. However, when archivists, theatre
practitioners and theorists regard the performance as an important but subsidiary part of a
bigger conglomerate of complementary archives that a performance leaves behind, such
arbitrariness is diminished. When contextualizing an isolated performance with other
primary or secondary archival documents that exist in relation to the whole production,
the chosen performance to be recorded acquires the status of representativeness. The
director’s book, the prompt book, designs, records of briefing sessions, photographs and
other kind of archives, all speak about the overall conception of the production, crossing
transversally and diachronically over the entire production.

Thus, a film of a performance properly correlated with these diverse pre-, during,
and post-production battery of documents helps to synchronize all the discrete
performances of the cycle with the chosen one. The audiovisual artifact of the
performance, put systemically along with other available archives, legitimizes the chosen
one as surrogating all the shows of the production that were not recorded. In doing so, the recorded performance acquires a condition that could be illustrated through the trope Meyerhold used in his essay “The Fairground Booth,” where he states that the Arlecchino’s mask “enables the spectator to see not only the actual Arlecchino before him but all the Arlecchinos who live in his memory. Through the mask the spectator sees every person who bears the merest resemblance to the character” (Gerould 409).
Chapter Five: Performing the Audiovisual Document

In this last chapter I am going to explore the transformation process a seminal text can undergo when transposed to different semiotic systems. In this context, my overall proposition for the chapter states that the performance dictates, on its own, formal demands over the expressive means of film, tipping the scale in favor of the observational mode of documentation. In analyzing textual transformations I hope to show how each discrete archival document of the performance, which includes the audiovisual record of it, needs complemental information provided by other archival artifacts, in order to acquire the status of visible evidence. Using an inductive methodology, I analyze three audiovisual documents where, I think, the processes of textual transformation are rich enough to extrapolate more general axioms linked to the related topics of adaptation and archivization of theatrical performance.

First, I use Anna Deavere Smith’s theatrical work—specifically *Fires in the Mirror*—as a vehicle to explore the link between performance and the historical world. I also examine the successive transformations from proto-performative instances (interviews, compilation, selection, rehearsals, etc) to the aftermath (film, spectators memories, lectures, etc) that a seminal factual event undergoes during the performance process.

Second, taking as a reference the audiovisual document of Ailey production *Revelations*, that the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre has been performing for more than forty years, I illustrate how a film made from the original work choreographed by Ailey has served as a model for the further staging of the same work. In this context I will discuss how the audiovisual archive of the show becomes the source for a new
performance which, although claiming to keep the same original chorographical score, looses the significance and relevance the production had when staged for the first time in the sixties.

In so doing, I hope to provide a concrete example that challenges the idea that the ontological relationship between performance and its documentation necessarily implies the precedence of the performance over the archive. Through this case of study I also discuss Taylor’s statement that “Dances change over time, even though generations of dancers (and even individual dancers) swear they’re always the same. But even though the embodiment changes, the meaning might very well remain the same.” (20). I think that in the case of Revelations, exactly the opposite could be argued: that while the embodiment might very well remain the same, the meaning changes over time.

Finally, my third example analyzes the 2 minute and 55 second audiovisual document of Michael Richards performing in the Laugh Factory in November 2006 as it can be retrieved from the digital repository of YouTube. Through this case I want to demonstrate how it is possible to do a valid critical analysis from a casual, and even ill crafted, audiovisual record of a performance. The episode Richards was involved in was recorded by a member of the audience with a cell phone—a transitory repository—before becoming published in the popular web site of YouTube—a digital repository—where the document remains stored until now. As an absent spectator the clip allows me to reflect upon the event in a way that had been impossible without the audiovisual document. I also illustrate what I think is a notable case where older archival sources can erupt surprisingly during a performative session. As Richards revisits the sites of black lynching and slavery through his words and behaviors, the past intrudes in a
contemporary setting mixing time and space both diachronically and synchronically. In this way Richards’ performance constitutes for both the present and the absent audiences a link that operates as a hypertext to one of the darkest episodes of U.S. American history.

One more thing: as I unfold my analysis of these three performative examples, it will become evident that I am continuously referring to complementary primary and secondary sources, to support my claims. I think the extensive use of a variety of archival sources by scholars not only illustrates, but also demonstrates, the rhizomatic interlocking of different sites to show the theoretical validity of their claims. My work here is a palpable demonstration that an isolated archive, whatever it could be, is never enough evidence to advocate for a theoretical claim. This shows the necessity of building an archive system that relates different kinds of documents.

Fires in the Mirror

From a semiotic standpoint, Marco De Marinis says that the term text “designates not only coherent and complete series of linguistic statements, whether oral or written, but also every unit of discourse, whether verbal, nonverbal, or mixed, that results from the coexistence of several codes” (Performance 193). According to this understanding, a photograph, a film, a performance, and a play can be considered as texts, that is, as semiotic systems whose internal elements (signs) are ordered in such a particular way that it is possible to distinguish one from another. A seminal text can be adapted differently according to specific codes that define the semiotic system. Cervantes’ The Quixote has been adapted to different art forms such as stage musicals, films, ballets,
puppets, etc. Not only that, *The Quixote* also transmigrated to another apocryphal novel, Avellaneda’s *Quixote*. Specific aspects of the novel have also been represented, creating one of the vastest gallery of images (pictorially, sculpturally and digitally) that a literary text has ever produced. Thus, the original text becomes the pretext for a new text in either the same or in different semiotic systems. A text, however, can undergo adaptations in a successive series of transformation. In other words, a seminal text can be the source for a new text that, in its turn, becomes a pretext for another new text. In the context of my overall thesis of constructing a holistic archive, this notion is very important because it implies that, in a sequence of transformations, the final product is “genealogically” related to a seminal text. No matter what modes of adaptation the artist uses, whether borrowing, intersection, or fidelity of transformation (Andrew)\(^1\), transposing an original text always links the final product to its source. In other words, there will always be

\(^1\) I am taking this classification from the field of film theory. According to Dudle Andrew, there are three fundamental modes of adaptation: borrowing, intersection, and fidelity of transformation. Succinctly, the most frequent mode of adaptation in the film industry is borrowing where the artist uses “the material, idea, or form” (Braudy and Cohen 463) of a previous prestigious and usually successful text. The second mode of adaptation, intersection, is where the specificity of a referential text is confronted with the specificity of the cinema as a separate mechanism or language. Here the filmmaker presents “the otherness and distinctiveness of the original text, initiating a dialectical interplay between the aesthetic forms of one period with the cinematic forms of our (his/her) own period” (464). Ruiz’ film *The Time Regained*, could be an example of this mode. The Bergsonian concept of time as a constant flux that Proust “intersects” in his internal dialogue with the past, and the deep exploration that he does of the psyche, subconscious motivations, and the irrationality of human behavior, is confronted and intersected by the surrealistic and frequent absurdist vision of Ruiz, who utilizes the uniqueness of his cinematic language in such a way that the viewer can penetrate and observe Proust’s biographic novel “as seen by cinema” (463). The third mode of adaptation proposed by Andrew is transforming sources, which assumes that the task of adaptation is “the reproduction in cinema of something essential about the original text”. Such desire is conventionally discussed in relation to the notions of fidelity to the “letter” of the original text, which can be emulated in mechanical manners -characters and their interrelation, geographical, sociological, and cultural context of the fiction, and the narrational aspects-, and fidelity to the “spirit” of the text -values, imagery, rhythm, and tone- which must be created as a stylistic equivalent in film. While transposing the figurative world expressed in a text (geographical, or character descriptions, for instance) into the figurative world in a film (concrete embodiment of a character according with the textual description) is a viable practice, the finding of stylistic equivalents from intangible traits expressed in an original text would be a difficult, if not an impossible task.
relations of equivalence between the new text and its pretext. Transposing this notion to the specific realm of theatre, a play can become the pretext for a theatrical performance, which becomes a pretext for an audiovisual document of it. Therefore, the final product of this threefold chain of transformation—the respective film—is necessarily linked to the seminal text. Thus, if the play is the pretext for the performance, and the performance is the pretextual source to the film, then the film is linked to the play. In such condition, and in order to create a complete archive of the performance, the holistic repository must necessarily include all these three texts. A general formula for this axiom may be expressed as follows:

Let $T_s$ be the seminal text, $t_1$ the first adaptation of $T_s$, and $t_2$ the adaptation of $t_1$, and so on. Therefore, in the sequential order, $T_n$ represents any number of transformations in the succession. Graphically, the succession could be expressed as:

$$T_s \rightarrow t_1 \rightarrow t_2 \rightarrow t_3 \rightarrow \ldots \rightarrow T_n$$

Where, if $T_s$ is linked pretextually to $t_1$, and $t_1$ is linked to $t_2$, then $T_s$ is linked to $T_n$.

It can be objected that such a linear and associative sequence cannot express the complexities involved in the process of transformation and construction of new creations. That questioning is totally valid. Theatrical productions, like The Reduced Shakespearean Company’s *The Complete Work of William Shakespeare* are based on multiple seminal referents, in this case, discrete plays by Shakespeare. However, although such a condition makes the archivist’s task of gathering a comprehensive compilation of archives linked to the sequence of adaptations more difficult, the idea that the archive of a performance must be inclusive is still valid.
An example of the successive transformations that a seminal text can undergo when migrating from one semiotic system to another can be found in Anna Deavere Smith’s *Fires in the Mirror*, part of a series of performance pieces called “On the Road: A Search for American Character.” These discrete notes comprise the preface of one of the twenty-six characters that Anna Deavere Smith compiled in her dramatic text *Fires in the Mirror* that had its world premiere at the New York Shakespeare festival in New York City on May 1, 1992:

11:00 A.M. Wednesday, November 13, 1991. A very sunny and large, elegant living room in a large apartment near the Brooklyn Museum. Mr. Sherman is sitting in an armchair near an enormous bouquet of flowers for the birth of his first child. He wears sweats, and a bright orange long-sleeved tee shirt. Smiles frequently, upbeat, Impassioned. Fingers his wedding ring. Each phrase builds on the next, pauses are all sustained intensity, never lets up. Full. Lots of volume, clear enunciation, teeth, and tongue very involved in his speech. Good-humored, seems to like the act of speech (63).

The staging, directed by Christopher Ashley, is a collage of characters predominantly based on verbatim excerpts from hundreds of interviews conducted by Smith around the xenophobic violence between Lubavitchers and African Americans on August 19, 1991, in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn. The riots, ignited by two related incidents that caused the death of a seven-year-old black boy and a 29-year-old Hasidic scholar, were the outcome of long-standing tension between the two disparate cultural groups. Smith’s theatrical work seeks to reflect and contrast different voices, points of view and experiences among opponents, victims and bystanders who are reunited sequentially on a common space, the stage, and in one body, that of Anna Deavere Smith. In that way, she examines the social tensions among minority groups and celebrates human diversity while showing their essential commonalities. Smith’s
commitment to understanding the idiosyncrasy and the American identity is portrayed not only through her trans-racial performance, but through sharing (confronting) it with a variety of spectators who also come from the gregarious space where racial, ethnic, economic, religious, and sexual categories tested tolerance, acceptance, and collaboration in the differences.

In Smith’s theatrical work there is a clear and observable link between performance and the historical world, and the status of reality and its coexistence with fictional elaborations. Cornel West expresses this relation:

_Fires in the Mirror_ is a testimony to how art can take us beyond ourselves as we examine ourselves even in an ugly moment of xenophobic frenzy (xviii).

Theater is always political and reflective (in both senses of the word: as a mirror and as critical thinking of the actual world) of what is happening in the historical world. Even Broadway productions that usually avoid addressing divisive or troubling issues related to their historical context are, by omission, highlighting them. Theatre is also interpretative, and then partial, in its exhibition of the issues and topics extracted from actuality. Theatre is not a Comte’s system that tries to apply mathematical methodologies in effort to understand social phenomena. Theatre is not a thermometer of the society; it is the fever, and the aftermath that recalls that fever. Smith’s works have nothing to do with the causes of and the gory riots in Brooklyn 1991, and Los Angeles 1993. Smith’s work has to do with their recall, with memory, and reflection about how and why these events happened.

_Fires in the Mirror_ is more than its performative expression on stage. It is a complex process from which emerged several products, from its inception (her
interviews) to current lectures where she presents fragments of the performance. Together it could be considered as a complete archival system. *Fires in the Mirror* (and her subsequent production *Twilights: Los Angeles*), finally became a film or part of a lecture after following a series of transformations from one semiotic system to another. The sequence of adaptations could be summarized as follows:

1. **Historical Event.** The actual riots in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn.

2. **Audio Archive.** Anna Deavere Smith’s interviews to protagonists, witnesses, and scholars. The opinions are tape-recorded, creating an audio archive of the storytellers.

3. **What is left out.** Smith’s selection process of 29 interviews out the total collection of completed interviews.

4. **Dramatic Text.** Selection of verbatim excerpts and their consequent compilation into an episodic dramatic text organized in seven thematic groups: Identity (3 cuttings), Mirrors (1), Hair (3 cuttings), Race (1), Rhythm (1), Seven verses (5), Crown Heights and Brooklyn August 1991 (15).

5. **Performance.** *Fires in the Mirror*’s theatrical production. One-woman show performed by Anna Deavere Smith. The staging also uses photograph archives linked to the riot projected onto a screen placed onstage.

6. **Audiovisual Record.** Film version of the stage production, directed by George C. Wolfe (1993). It includes documentary footage related to the riot.

7. **Other Performances.** Anna Deavere Smith’s lectures (workshops, etc.) where she occasionally performs some of the characters from *Fires in the Mirror,* and other productions.
In this sequence of transformations where $T_n = 7$, $T_s$ is the riot in Brooklyn in 1991, $t_5$ is the performance, and $t_6$ is the filmic version of the performance. Following the series underlines what I stated in my theoretical model above. First, all the specific texts are but pretexts for a new production enclosed in his own semiotic language, in this case: film, performance, play, and verbal systems. Second, $t_7$ is linked to $T_s$ through the performance, the film, the play, etc. All these products have a relationship of mutual dependence. Each product is genetically related to their predecessor. Each transformation contains more or less traces from other components of the succession and enriches them through its own novelty. In the realm of the artistic specificities it is a requirement that one system (i.e. theatre) be ontologically different from another (i.e. film), so that when choosing to artistically codify a text (i.e. an actual event) the outcome will be qualitatively different. Because of that, for example, a reader will go to the movies to see the filmic version of $W;t$, after reading the play and attending its staging. The three versions, in their own repository, give complementary information of the same pretext and the artistic and archival specificities are made of the differences. Consequently, in order to create a representative archival system of Anna Deavere Smith’s series *Fires in the Mirror*, it is necessary to encompass all the derivative artistic products, along with their respective created archival artifacts.

The confrontational episodes among Jews, African-Americans, and the police in Crown Heights in 1991, the live interviews conducted by Smith, the *Fires in the Mirror* performance, and the talk back that follows its public presentation are all gone, as their transitory condition imposes. The evidence these facts had during their concrete occurrence now rely on derivative constructions contained in live or complemental
memories. These complemental memories are embodied either by persons who knew or
experienced the events directly or indirectly, or by external archival vessels such as
photographs, TV programs, footage, dramatic text, and sound tapes retrieved from the
real events.

From another perspective, the original incidents in Crown Heights provoked, or
even better, put in motion a series of related occurrences that expanded the original event
into a broad gamut of reactions and sub-products that permeated different layers of the
American society and the world. Under this point of view, the theatrical work created by
Anna Deavere Smith epitomizes the sequence described above, representing one of the
multiple vectors put into motion by the disruptive events in Brooklyn. In following this
particular vector, we have, at one extreme, the real event, and at the other end, the filmic
version of *Fires in the Mirror* performance. Everything in between, including the film,
represents an interpretative version of the real event, or an interpretation of
interpretations. The mutations undergone by the facts can be narrated (traced) through the
transposition of the information from one semiotic system to another.

The interviews conducted by Smith tape recorded memories and verbal
explanations about the event as they were either recalled or as they were intellectually
elaborated by the interviewers. Afterward, the recollected audio archive was arranged
(adapted) as a dramatic text, which contains just a fraction of the hundreds of interviews
made. The selection and cutting from the original audio records were then put in a
particular succession of episodes grouped in seven thematic unities: *Identity, Mirrors,
Hair, Race, Rhythm, Seven Verses,* and *Crown Heights.* Each thematic unity gives
different points of view regarding the central theme of the performance: the riot and its
racial, religious and political connotations. Also, the order of the unities seems to follow a sort of emotional climatic structure, as the closing character for *Fires in the Mirror*, Carmel Cato (father of Gavin Cato, the seven year-old boy killed in Heights Crown) gives a touching reflection of the facts at the end of the performance.  

In the phase of staging the play Smith, as a performer, enacts these monologues, feeding her creation off of at least two sources: the written script connected to the actual voices recorded during the interviews, and the actress’s memories of the physicality, gestures, attitudes and manners of the actual interviewers. Smith’s methodology of building a character comes from the acting tradition called “psychological realism” where the character is modeled according to the equivalences between the external models and the performer’s self. Her proposal relies on the hypothesis that the character’s psychological reality can be found by inhabiting that character’s words:

> If we were to inhabit the speech pattern of another, and walk in the speech of another, we could find the individuality of the other and experience that individuality viscerally (xxvii).

Since Smith is portraying characters that are based on real people, the fictive body that she presents to the audience is retrieved (represented) during the performative situation primarily through reproducing the vocal patterns of the model. In the aural realm, Smith is, in some way, a living archival medium who reproduces the pitch, quality, intensity,

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2 The same structure is replicated in *Twilight: Los Angeles*, with a Korean woman who laments the assassination of her husband, while reflecting on the meaning of the verdict in favor of the Afro-American and other minorities.

3 Anna Deavere Smith is African American. That fact has serious connotations and permeates the performance since in Heights Crown one of the ethnic group involved was African American. The theatrical style of the staging and the film exposes her skin color while she is performing Jews, Centro American, white and blacks. A white actress, performing this play would carry different racial connotations in each word that she delivered. Since a male actor could also perform this play, the meaning of the play also would be altered. Smith’s body, and another performer’s body, also constitutes a text, so then a possible pretext.
and resonance of a particular model *persona*[^1]. It is from the domain of language that the performer accesses the emotional and physical domains. But Smith, in her idea of taking the other—instead of the self as the psychological realism technique predicates—as a frame of reference in order to “become” the other, also uses complementary archival information contained in the living repository of memory:

> Learning about the other by being the other requires the use of all aspects of memory, the memory of the body, mind, and heart, as well as words (xxvii).

Smith does a theatrical approach to her characters. Departing from the initial Stanislavsky’s inner technique, or at least, combining it with external techniques (Vakhtangov, Chekhov, Brecht, and the last Stanislavsky’s method of physical actions), permits her, and the audience, to be more empathically detached and critically interested in the issues addressed. The alienation effect sought by Smith is coherent with the aims of her theatrical research.

The performatve articulation of all these memories—audiotapes, dramatic text, and living memories—whose immediate referent is the universe of selected interviews, and who have their *locus nascent* in the episodes of Height Crown, takes place in Smith body in her role as a performer. The body then, becomes a new type of repository, a living archive whose visual and audible reality is verifiable during the performance on stage. Schechner describes the results of Anna Deavere Smith’s method:

> The result is something more than imitation or impersonation. Smith’s own body-spirit becomes a site for the playing out of many of the conflicts troubling American society, especially those about race, ethnicity, and neighborhood. Smith is actually very like a dhalang. Like

[^1]: From Latin, *persona* is a mask worn by an actor, character, and probably also related to the Latin word *sonare*: to sound.
a dhalang, Smith takes into herself the events of the community. She gives back to the community both, the “facts” and her own inimitable interpretation… Smith is to some degree possessed by those she represents. (Performances 174)

In her function as a performer, I repeat, Smith herself could be considered as a living ephemeral archive that is accessible during the performative act. Possessed “by those she represents”, she to some extent both imitates the models (selected interviewers), and personates them, in order to give “back to the community” the compressed, edited, and interpreted facts, ideas, and emotions which belong to those she speaks and reenacts for.

Smith’s theatrical version of the testimonies she recollects is, at the end, a version of a version of fragments of what really occurred during the riots in Brooklyn in 1991. Smith’s performance on the historical reality is a subjective third hand evidence of the historical world. Taking the interviewer’s voices (in form and in content), body patterns, and emotional responses, and consequently theatrically articulating all these raw materials, Smith creates a new world that, while fictional in its mode of representation, is, at the same time, real. In this sense, her theatrical work creates an interesting mixture between the personal view (through her acting technique elections, theatrical style, etc) and the collective version (her voice is the voice of her interviewers) of reality.

The possible transformations that the original facts undergo when transposed from one semiotic system to another, or better yet, from one archival repository to another, have no known end. A picture taken from a protagonist of any historical event will occupy a place in the memory of those who watch it. The picture of a Vietnamese Buddhist monk who burned himself to death in an act of protest against the Diem

5 The dhalang is a puppeteer and a storyteller who operate the puppets while narrating the story of a Javanese wayang kulit performance (shadow theatre). The dhalang is also recognized by audience members as a religious leader, or shaman, who communicates with the spirit world during the wayang kulit performance.
government in June 1963, for instance, was published in almost every important newspaper around the world. Millions of people had access to the perturbing image. Nowadays, the same photograph traveling through servers and Internet websites would expand its access dramatically. Nevertheless, a relevant picture not only leaves its inscription in the memory of the users but it also allows its re-elaboration and recycling in other kinds of repositories. Articles, songs, pamphlets, lectures, documentaries, and theatre productions could be created around a single image until it comes to occupy a place in the collective memory. In this context, what Smith’s performance does, and what every public theatrical production does, is to increase the number of exposures that rescue the original historical event from collective oblivion, which is one of the functions of archiving.

Using the same logic, when a theatrical production is audiovisually recorded (transposed) to a new media or semiotic system, there are various consequences. First, it is creating a new and enduring repository to preserve the performance from its eventual disappearance. Second, the original performance has a comparable transformation through the metamorphosis of the dramatic text (if any) and the historical reality from that which the initial text in some way refers. Third, the potential audience is broader and more variable in relation to those who attend the theatre or read the play. Fourth, similar to the reader of the dramatic text the performance is based on, the potential viewer can access (retrieve) the film version any time after the performance vanishes from the historical world. Fifth, the film version or documentary belongs to the historical world in the same way that the performance was linked to the historical referent while it was publicly performed. Sixth, the viewers will basically have access to the same audiovisual
information. Except for the decay of the track, the quality of the image, or other physical
and technical factors (acid syndrome in film, for example, or definition quality due to the
kind of screen used, size, or quality of projectors), all the viewers see the same moving
image. These consequences open new possibilities in researching, in creating new texts,
and disseminating the theatrical work.

The longevity of the moving image surpasses that of a performance and the
expected span of life will be longer if the storage vessel is an acetate film, magnetic tape,
or digital format. This allows the ephemeral condition of a performance and its constant
change during the flux comprehended between P1, the first performance in the cycle of a
production, and Pn, the last one, to be overcome. The uniqueness of a performance, in the
sense that no one presentation will be equal to another, is substituted by the access to a
single moving image, since there is no possibility to see more than one filmic version of
the performance⁶.

*Fires in the Mirror*'s film version is an adaptation, in the Andrew’s mode of
fidelity of transformation, of the performance, not a filmic version of the dramatic text.
Shorter than its original model (26 out of 29 characters are portrayed), the film was shot
without spectators, with the cameras placed toward the stage from a hypothetical
spectator zone. Few panning or traveling shots are used during the film; the shots usually
switch from medium plane to close up. The actress is always talking to the camera,
addressing a virtual audience. Each episode is shot without cuts, but the transitions from
one scene to another are made through still photographs related to the topic discussed by
the character followed by the screen going black. Each scene is also titled before it starts.

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⁶ Although this idea is being currently challenged by the new digital technologies such as Blue Ray or
HDDVD, which allow the viewers access to multiple camera perspectives of the same scene.
When the character appears in the frame her/his name and social function is placed at the bottom of the screen. The order of characters proposed by the dramatic text has been altered, but the climatic emotional ending stays the same. In general, the camera is unobtrusive and the prevalence of medium and close up shots tends to highlight the face of the actress and her speeches (what she says and how). In the way it is shot, and how it presents the material, the film works as a documentary in the observational mode. It is a discourse of sobriety where the style is second to content and the filmmaker exists as an omniscient presence that presents Smith’s performance, while not forming part of it. This stylistic form is coherent not only with the journalistic and epic style of the performance, but also reinforces the sense of theatricality imposed by Smith on stage.7

Since the performance in its original, complete form ceased to be presented several years ago8, it is not possible to compare both film and stage performance. Nevertheless, the film permits archivists to extrapolate ideas of how the theatrical production was performed on stage because it strives to achieve a uniform presentation. Watching the film it becomes evident that the camera position is adapted to the performance and not vice versa in order to capture in detail the performers’ work. In the film, the subject is Anna Deavere Smith, who performs several discrete characters. Although there are several losses associated to transposing the performance to an audiovisual medium (such as immediacy, three-dimensionality, live presence, and communion among others) it is possible to affirm that the performance is still there. The

7 The journalistic style that Smith is dealing with in her theatrical production is related to the textual material performed, which is based on actual testimonies and opinions of the historical events in Crown Heights. On the other hand, the epic and theatricalism of her staging and performance have to do with her acting style, and staging style that renounce illusion and expose the artificial nature of performance (Brecht, Meyerhold). The film preserves the theatrical effect of her performance when it, for example, exposes Smith’s costume changes, theatrical setting and scenery without hiding its non naturalistic style.
8 Smith usually performs some of its characters during her lectures.
film of *Fires in the Mirror* is the spectral apparition of the performance as much as the King’s ghost is still Hamlet’s father.

**Revelations**

After a successful tour through Europe, Peter Brook’s *King Lear* (1962) went to the U.S.A. Forced to go back to England at the beginning of the tour, Brook joined the Royal Shakespeare Company in Philadelphia a few weeks later. Brook, in his book *The Empty Space* shares his impressions when he saw the performance again:

To my surprise and dismay, much of the quality had gone from their acting. I wanted to blame the actors, but it was clear that they were trying as hard as they could. It was the relation with the audience that had changed (21).

Desirous of a favorable response from their new American audiences, the actors of the RSC, without Brook’s directorial supervision, instinctively adapted their scores, underlying “everything in the play that could arrest the spectator” in order to revive the lost sense of communion and complicity that had been achieved in previous, successful performances (21). This experience illustrates well the shifting terrain where the theatrical performance moves during its life span, impacted by the nightly changing audiences, the cultural context, the agency of the actors, and the importance of the director’s guidance in order to maintain the original concept that gave life to a production.

Brook’s experience informs us of the entropic forces that are in play during the performance process, pushing to dissolve the original forms, concepts, and intentions that the creators sought. If Picasso’s *Guernica* changed according to the expectations and desires of the viewer that is looking at it, or according to the new environment (museums)
where the piece were exposed, it would not be *Guernica* any more, but something else. A performance is not a fixed product like a painting (which is, however, also always changing due to chemical processes and other entropic factors), but a living language that is able to change, to adapt, to improve (or worsen) its original form according to the circumstances, accidental events, external influences, and the desire of its creators. So, where is the equilibrium point? Where is the borderline that indicates the performance has mutated in such a way that it has become a different product than that which was originally designed? When is a performance distorting its original purpose, meaning, and overall form? When does a production lose the spirit that originally animated it? When does the performance, once decontextualized from its original environment, time, and intended audiences, become a piece of a museum, a monument, an archeological revival of a former live event?

Questions like these can be extrapolated analyzing the emblematic dance production: Alvin Ailey’s *Revelations*. Because of the staging of the performance is currently based on filmic material of one of the original Ailey’s shows, it provide a concrete example that challenges the idea that the ontological relationship between performance and its documentation necessarily implies the precedence of the performance over the archive. Also, I think that this production, because of its continuous public presentations during 46 years, can be particularly illustrative when exploring the issues of conceptual distortion, obsolescence, and physical transformation that a performance undergoes through its performative cycle.

Where theatre practice seems to be more tolerant and flexible in allowing the transformation of a production over the time, dance appears to present a more stable,
reliable area where the performances tend to perpetuate their original form over time.

Dance, unlike theatre, explicitly encourages a faithful reproduction of an original chorographical model. Thus, nowadays it is possible to see the choreographies of Cunningham, Petipa and Duncan performed by contemporary companies. Retrieved from audiovisual documents and dance notations, the realm of dance allows newcomers to replicate the choreographies created by their ancestors. What would, in theatre, be immediately sanctioned as plagiarism or lack of creativity by the part of the company and respective directors, in dance the practice of “literal” reproduction is a common procedure. Dance, in allowing the faithful reproduction of an original creation (the model contained in a film or video for example) is mimetic in the Platonic sense: an imitation of an imitation, the copy of a copy.

As I stated before one of the traditional functions of performance documentation is to provide evidence that a particular event was actually performed and to give the historian information to “reconstruct” the original performance historiographically. Nevertheless this reconstructive act is not only exerted by the scholar, but also by artists that want to “preserve” to the future generations of spectators and practitioners an original production. This museological practice is neatly present in the after-Ailey staging of Revelations where the model used to reproduce Ailey’s original choreography has been the audiovisual record of it. In other words, having an original, seminal performance Ts (Ailey’s staging of Revelations), it has been created a derivative semiotic system t1 (the film of Ts), which is been used as model to produce a new system, t2 (the re-staging of Ts) The question that is at stake here is how much of the original performance is really
preserved in subsequent versions in order to permit companies to call these reconstructions an actual product choreographed by the original creator of such work.

Is, as the program says, the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre’s (AAADT) performance of Revelations in 2006 a production actually choreographed by Ailey? Or is it another thing, another painting, that is very different from its model? I believe that these questions are necessary to clarify the nature of what the spectator is really receiving when attending a production labeled as Ailey’s “masterpiece Revelations, which brings the Company international acclaim”(AAADT Website). The audiovisual artifact (t1) is mediating between the source (Ts) and the subsequent performances (t2…n). This operation entails at least two important consequences: First, the audiovisual record of a performance allows generating others than verbal or written interpretative narratives about it (the outcome that an historian usually do when analyzing an historical document): It also permits to create three-dimensional, performative discourses. In other words, the film of a performance allows performing it.

Dwight Conquergood in his essay “Performance Studies: Intervention and radical research” has stated that performance studies “struggles to open the space between analysis and action, and to pull the pin on the binary opposition between theory and practice. This embrace of different ways of knowing is radical to the root of how knowledge is organized in the academy” (312). I argue the performing the documentary of a theatrical performance represents a possible embodiment of breaking the binary opposition signaled by Conquergood. Second, the re-staging of an original production through its archival audiovisual record is always a transformative act, never a faithful reconstruction of the seminal system.
Using *Revelations* as a case of study I want to explore the changes an original performance undergoes when it is re-staged using a film as a model. In so doing I will analyze two transformative instances: First, I will explore how the original ideology, intentions and meaning that Ailey imposed on his original creation could or could not still be present today. Second, I will speculate about the physical transformations that the performance could have undergone through time in order to determine whether or not the performance of *Revelation* could be, in the strictest sense, labeled as a suite choreographed by Ailey.

Ailey choreographed *Revelation* in 1960, which contextualizes his work within the ongoing struggle of the civil rights, women’s rights, and gay rights movements. *Revelation* was not an openly demagogical and subversive production that irrupted in the dance realm. Its strength relied on the novelty and originality of the choreography, the eclectic sound use of disparate dance techniques, and plots placed in a distant past (19th Century) which informed of black sensibility, religious disposition, and long suffering through spirituals (or sorrow songs). Thomas DeFranz in his *Dancing Revelations: Alvin Ailey's Embodiment of African American Culture*, quoted Ailey’s program notes for the Kaufmann Concert Hall performance in January 1960:

> This suite explores motivations and emotions of Negro religious music which, like its heir, the Blues, takes many forms — “true spirituals” with their sustained melodies, ring-shouts, song-sermons, gospel songs, and holy blues — songs of trouble, of love, of deliverance (3).

Ailey’s circumscription to black culture and history is complemented with a rich imagery linked to Ailey’s personal history. DeFranz refers to this micro history:

> In interviews conducted around the time of its premiere, Ailey called *Revelations* a “blood memory” piece, born of fragments from his Texas childhood: “These are dances and songs I feel very personally about—
they are intimately connected with my memories of the Baptist Church when I was a child in Texas —baptisms by tree-shrouded lakes, in a lake where an ancient alligator was supposed to have lived— the holy-rollers’ tambourines shrieking in the Texas night” (15).

Thus, *Revelations* conflates both the macro-history expressed according to an aesthetic of black Diaspora and the micro-histories of Ailey’s personal experiences and memories. Such double self-reference is, in spite of its apparent detachment from the political contingency of black struggle, strategically subversive in the sense of exposing on stage the absence of white hegemony (in dancers, themes, and music) and using their dance techniques in his own way (appropriation). Beyond the aesthetic qualities, novelty and impeccable techniques in which *Revelations* was performed, I think that the reason why this production catapulted the company to fame was its apparent innocuousness to the dominant system.

A demonstration of this belief can be found in the invitation the company received in 1962 to go on an extensive tour to the Far East, Southeast Asia and Australia as part of President John F. Kennedy's progressive "President's Special International Program for Cultural Presentations.” It also performed on the TV WCBS-TV television program *Lamp Unto My Feet* in March 1962, received grants from the Rockefeller Foundation (1968), and performed at the White House for President Johnson in 1968. If Alvin Ailey’s *Revelations* had been perceived as dangerous to the dominant system, these invitations would not have been extended. The central reason DeFranz gives as for the success of the company is the fact that they could expand their audience. He says:

For years American modern dance had searched for ways to connect with an expanded general audience. Ailey’s dance confirmed that folk materials, carefully mediated by principles of modern dance composition, could retain the immediacy of their sources in the transformation to concert dance. The largest implications of Ailey’s
success for concert dance lay in the expansion of the audience that could enjoy its performance and the expansion of themes available to choreographers working in this idiom (3).

Being in agreement with DeFranz regarding this reason, I argue that the expansion of the audience and the level of generalized acceptation Revelations received could be explained mainly by the positive reception the work had by the hegemonic white power, which perceived it as harmless.

A question lingering here is whether or not Ailey consciously sought to provoke political and artistic acceptance for his works and company. Probably not. However, he certainly knew what was going on and the political implications of being accepted (and promoted) by the mainstream world of dance, the political institutions, and the implications for the black movement during the 60s. He was not an activist in the sense of Baraka or Bullin. In Ailey’s public interventions, the incendiary ideas are absent from his discourses, which were characterized by moderation and politeness. However, Ailey was an activist in his own realm of dance, and his political objectives were accepted by doing quality dance.

DeFranz supports this idea when he says that one of Ailey’s primary concerns was being “an arts activist committed to developing an African American presence in concert dance” (xiii). Ailey’s discourses were deployed on stage through excellence, with a committed and technically sound black company. His political and racial strategy involved provoking changes first in the realm of the neighborhood of the black community dance and spectators, and then in the national and international milieu of dance. His notion that black dance could be autonomous, original and unique transcended the walls of race, with his company becoming synonymous with the idea of excellence everywhere.
Being pioneers in a land dominated by white dancers, and being in a political environment polluted with racism, it is easy to see the devotion and passion that engulfed all the members of the AAADT. Clearly the artistic phenomenon that the Ailey Company ignited was not just about dance, but also about race, identity and social change in the difficult days of the sixties. I wonder if the members of the current company could emulate such commitment and sense of social responsibility today. I wonder if they are doing more than only dancing on stage. I also wonder if the audiences in U.S.A. (and all over the world) recognize the traces of the original struggle that the Afro-American underwent in the days of slavery, and the intense days of the civil rights movement in the 60s. I do think that most of the original spirit, the essence and the ideological charge that the original Revelation was built on must be gone by now, leaving just the empty nutshell of the form.

Mimesis of a mimesis, imitation of an imitation of an imitation. The Orisi dancer is instructed by his/her master from infancy in order that the disciple can learn the essence and form of a dance. This training is experienced as a direct relationship between master and disciple where the secrets are transferred gradually according to the progress of the student. Ailey is gone, and his charismatic teaching and vision can not be replicated. I am not judging the methodologies of the AAADT, but comments like the one given by an old member of the company, Sarita Allen (cited by DeFrantz) worry me about the results in staging Revelation today.

They [young dancers] see a tape of an old performance and say, ‘Look at how low that leg is.’ . . . They don’t see the richness. . . . Alvin developed ‘Revelations’ on adults. . . . They were adults with deep emotions. Those emotions require time. The younger dancers haven’t suffered in the same way. In a way, that’s good. Times have changed. But there’s no way they can identify (238).
The new dancers of the company are putting their emphasis on the form detached from the emotive content and meaning the suit carried. DeFranz perception corroborates mine:

At times, the younger dancers performed elaborations of simple movements in *Revelations* as arrogant acts of appropriation — just because they could. The younger dancers took hold of Ailey’s original movement design and amplified portions of it, often creating their own distinct version of its contents (238).

I am not against adapting the original forms of the contents (one implies the other) to new contexts if the result is worth seeing and experiencing. Ailey himself was open to modifying his work when it was necessary and according to the peculiar physical and temperamental capacities and characteristics of new casts. I would call that process one of research and adaptation in order to create new and evolved versions from a seminal work. But if the methodology used in staging *Revelations* over and over consists of replicating a videographical model (from an audiovisual document of the original performance) then the product must be considered not as a research, but as a mimetic artifact at least two times removed from the original.

Undoubtedly it is possible to imitate the external form without problem. The young dancers of the company have a strong technical training that permits them to reproduce, and even improve the marks left by their predecessors. But I ask, is that dance or mere virtuosity? If the spectator of Brook’s *King Lear* in Philadelphia had the power to change the original performance, here in *Revelations* exists a new kind of agent, which I can call a dancer-viewer, that is changing the performance by doing a technical reading of the audiovisual record of it (the video), and not reproducing the original performance. Of course the artistic director of the piece can help to fill the emptiness of a pyrotechnical
performance (which is, in fact is one of his/her duties) but at the end the fundamental
question persists: what is the content the new director will put in?

In checking the several reviews that the performance of *Revelations* has received
during the last years, I noticed that almost no one makes references to the deep meanings
embedded in Ailey’s production. To quote some of them:

Reviewer: Mary Murfin Bayley, Seattle Times Homepage 20/03/06:
“Both programs closed with Ailey's timeless masterpiece, "Revelations." The dancers were compelling, from the gorgeous sculptural effects of "I Been 'Buked" to the haunting duet of "Fix Me, Jesus" to the solo "I Wanna be Ready." The whole company let it rip for "Rocka My Soul in the Bosom of Abraham," and the audience, too, had its soul rocked.”

Reviewer: Sarah Kaufman, Washington Post Staff Writer Thursday, February 9, 2006:
“Love and rivalry, the evening's themes, had their place in "Revelations" as well, as did the downy physical quality so clearly in evidence. This perennial Ailey finale was cast from strength throughout, particularly Amos J. Machanic Jr. in the "I Wanna Be Ready" solo. With the emollient use of their shoulders, Robinson, Dwana Adiaha Smallwood and Rushing made the "Wade in the Water" segment a glorious celebration of the rotator cuff. Robinson adds a dimension no one else does to this work, a thrillingly clear dramatic and spiritual motivation. She's got "it," that mysterious quality that sets a star apart. This program ended as it began, with Graf's display at the evening's outset matched by Robinson's at its close.

Reviewer: Roslyn Sulcas New York Times Homepage Published: December 9, 2005
The costumes (by Omatayo Wunmi Olaiya), the expressive outpouring of dance and sense of communal joy in movement give this section the feel of a tribute to Alvin Ailey's signature, "Revelations," the final work of the evening.

I think that when the roots of an original work are lost, metamorphosed into
another work it is fair to call it what it is: an adaptation of, a version of, or a work based
on. The re-enactment of an original production by using its filmic version as a model
always entails ideological and physical alterations. In other words, each new staging of
*Revelations*, in spite of its intention to be the original choreographic work of Alvin Ailey,
will always be transformed in content and form, and therefore deserving another more precise term; that of a document, a living artifact that reproduces mimetically a referent that is definitely gone, and non repeatable. *Revelations* in performance is the three-dimensional archive of a past event pretending to be, in a discursive level, the event itself.

2 minutes 53 seconds: Michael Richard’s Performance in The Laugh Factory

Lawrence Mintz defines standup comedy as “an encounter between a single, standing performer behaving comically and/or saying funny things directly to an audience, unsupported by very much in the way of costume, prop, setting, or dramatic vehicle”(71). Although, as Mintz himself has pointed out this definition is a limiting one, it describes well the format within which the comedian Michael Richards (also known as Kramer) was expected to perform on the Laugh Factory stage in Los Angeles, on November 17, 2006. As widely reported in the media, during his performance the comedian exploded in anger hurling racial epithets to two African American members of the audience. As an absent spectator from the live event I will focus my analysis of the episode protagonized by Richards on a 2 minute and 53 second video clip obtained from an audience member who recorder the event using his/her cell phone and posted it on the celebrity gossip Web site TMZ.com and YouTube. Through this study case I want to demonstrate how it is possible to do a valid critical analysis from a casual, brief and even ill crafted, audiovisual record of a performance. My study of the incident will be informed by means of Patrick Johnson’s methodology of analyzing performance in its context, as he delineates in the following paragraph:

> These theorists’ conceptualization of performance directs our attention not only to what is said but also how something is said – a focus on
form and content – in order to better understand the semiotics of performance. This view of performance necessarily takes into account the physical setting in which performances occur, as well as the relationships between performer and audience and performer and self (11).

In doing so, I hope to understand the phenomenon systemically, taking into account the importance of the materiality of the performance, and its rendering through a digital audiovisual record in unveiling the incidence of race among their protagonists, the notions of standup comedy in the American canon and the monologist apparatus that circumscribes it.

The audiovisual record framed its subject on Richards on a raised stage as he starts his diatribes with an initial “Shut up!” against members of the audience placed somewhere on a raised level in the right area of the house, to the left of Richards’ hand as he faced the audience. Even though the camera is not showing the “hecklers” (the term that Richards himself and the media have called the two African Americans involved in the situation), it is possible to deduce that they were situated above the actor’s level by examining Richards’ body orientation and gestures during his initial tirades. As the episode evolves, it is possible also to observe that the “hecklers” abandoned the house through a door across from where they were sitting after the last interchange of diatribes took place. The video clearly registered what Richards said, and makes audible some vocal reactions among the audience, which ranged from expressions such as “Oh my god” when the word “nigger” is shouted by the performer, to groans, boos and nervous and festive laughs. Also, the images show people abandoning the house, although it is not possible to see if they were other African Americans or members of the audience in
The video fades out as Richards is abandoning the stage and a member of the Laugh Factory staff reaches the stage, apologizing to the audience.

Although the performative context where the incident took place is a crucial component of what happened in the Laugh Factory that night, I submit that the episode under analysis has distinctive characteristics that have to do with the fact that Richards’ behavior trespassed the codes of traditional standup comedy, and the endowments socially conferred to the comedians on stage. Unable to articulate a disruptive action by part of two African American members of the audience, the performer abandoned his role as a jester to begin racist diatribes that were considered inappropriate and censurable by the public in the house, the African-American community and part of the general American society. Most of my inferences made in my analysis are only possible because of the recording made of the performance—the audiovisual document, however rough, provides enough material for a historian, such as myself, to carefully examine the piece. I argue that the exclusive use of scriptocentric narratives produced around the event, like those founded in newspapers, are not enough to draw forth the kind of conclusions I am able to make using primary sources (the video of the performance) as my subject of study.

Standup comedy is primarily thought of as live spectacles which rely heavily on the sense of immediacy and some doses of improvisation (or a resemblance of) that help build the sense of spontaneity, interaction and freshness linked to this genre of monologues. Nevertheless, it is important to notice that professional standup comedy routines are *mise-en-scene* artifacts, circumscribed to a more or less complex theatrical apparatus, and canned scripts that are thoroughly rehearsed. Thus, improvisation,
spontaneity and freshness in this kind of stage work are usually technical constructions limited to a precise score. It is, however, in the live interaction with an audience that the standup performer opens some controlled possibilities (that I will call interstices) where the performer allows him/her self to legitimately improvise. In other words, it is not uncommon for the comedian to attempt to integrate into his/her score specific and potentially funny situations provoked by the audience that he/she can beneficially retort for the sake of the show.

Experienced performers know well the kind of audience responses they can expect from their public during the performances, and they usually have a cluster of alternative “spontaneous” scores to utilize answering them. The theatrical space is a controlled one, and it imposes on the audience (and the performer) explicit and implicit codes of behavior, ranging from turning off the cell phones to not taking pictures or filming, limiting their capacity of physical responses to the reduced space of a chair, and some other social conventions. The degree of predictability of the audience’s response is also clearly determined by the promises the show is granting to the people that decide to attend. Thus, a standup comedy show foreshadows moments of emotional distention and funny situations where the audience is allowed to laugh freely without troubling the performance.

The spectator then, goes to the theatre holding such an expectation, and his/her behavior will be circumscribed to that scenario: in a standup comedy show, the audience wants to laugh, and they will do it if the performer, as Mintz reminds us, behaves “comically” and/or he says “funny things.” In the interaction between the performer and the audience in this kind of staging, the mutually expected and proper audience response
to the comedian’s funny score should be laughing. In standup comedy laughing is the standard by which the effectiveness and quality of the show will be measured. In the “Laugh Factory,” the responsibility of the performer-worker is to make the spectator-consumer laugh.

It was, however, in the interstices the standup comedy allows, that is to say, the instances where the audience improvises saying or doing something out of its habitual response of laughing, that Michael Richards could not articulate his performance. Confounding the always precarious balance between the character and the self in this kind of performance, Richards went into another, unexpected site by a white, male, heterosexual American performer: the site of racism. Rather than wittily and funnily retorting the interstice provoked by an African-American member of the audience which shouted that Richards was not funny, the performer went to a barrage of racial epithets using an archaistic rhetoric that suddenly retrieved the scenarios of black lynching: “Fifty years ago we'd have you upside down with a f----g fork up your ass,” and the master-slave relationship: “Well, you interrupted me pal, that's what happens when you interrupt the white man.”

Based on the reaction by audience members, it is interesting to notice that it is when Richards enunciates the word *nigger* in the sequence “He's a nigger! He's a nigger! He's a nigger! A nigger, look, there's a nigger!” that the theatrical performance as such, loses its nature as a spectacle to become an extra theatrical incident. Although the performer had previously said evident racist phrases, the audience seems to take this more generically and still within the performative act. It is when the word “nigger” was
uttered by the performer that the illusion promulgated by the stage disappears to enter the
realm of the historical world, the here and now, with all its contingency and complexity,
and in a way that was considered inappropriate and offensive by the audience and the
general public of the American society.

Although comedians seem to be enjoying some social licenses that permit them
publicly to push the envelope beyond the limits usually prohibited to the “common”
citizens, Richards surpassed them to some extent. In what way did he transgress the
limits? Although the answer could seem obvious, stating that he made racist epithets
against African American people during his show, I think the answer is more complicated
than that, and the reasons involved can be summarized in the following phrase: Richards,
being a white American performer, shouted a racist tirade out of his role as a comedian in
a performance context.

In the realm of performance art (which, as Peterson affirms, standup comedy can
be considered akin to), the task of the performer is to perform him/her self in a public
space, tangling the personal to the theatrical, and the historical to the fictional, in order to
comment critically and aesthetically on the social and the individual world. It is in the
context of performative acts that Karen Finley, for example, can speak freely and
graphically about Laura Bush dreaming about having sex with Tony Blair in The Dreams
of Laura Bush (2006), without being socially punished. It is the category of
“performative act” and her condition as a white performer that empowers her to push the
envelope beyond the conventional accepted limits. But what would be the reaction of an
audience and the public media if rather than Blair, a white man, Laura Bush’s oneiric
sexual partner were Barack Obama, or Condoleezza Rice? In a performative situation,
there are consequences for a white performer that directly cites race (read as the “other”, or the non-white) in a highly racialized American society. As a modern jester of the American court, I hypothesize, the standup white male comedian is not allowed to trespass the limits of racial categories without being disempowered and punished.

Examining the work of monologic performances of white, male, heterosexual artists, Michael Peterson, in his book *Straight White Male: Performance Art Monologues* argues that, on stage, the performer has the capacity of breaking social taboos (34), subverting and transforming the status quo, and making masked culture visible (33). In spite of that assertion, Peterson also states that within the hegemonic discourse, besides construing nonwhites as having a race, and whites as universalized without racial mark, whiteness as such is constructed negatively. In other words, white men live, in opposition to other races, an unmarked condition that is so notably assumed by themselves and the others, that they do not need to vindicate their condition, and therefore, they become invisible. On stage, he says, whiteness “has a self-evident meaning that seems too accessible to any competent spectator” (151), so that the white performer (and thus the white spectator) “can rest easily about race, since it is so casually assumed to simply and unproblematically represent itself” (151).

Nevertheless, Peterson argues that the apparent low level of anxiety about race manifested by white monologists on stage is always politically problematic even when the monologues seem to be free from explicit racial references. He claims that white performance traditions, venues and audiences, are bounded by the “liberal and humanist assumptions” that dictate the notion that white performers “have nothing “to gain” from
noticing race”, so that “white silence about race simply rubber-stamps the status quo” (151).

It is in this line of thought that, for example, the standup performer Michael Richards’ overly racist diatribe during his show in the Laugh Factory at New York in November 2006, emerges as a notable anomaly. Richards’ outburst of anger after hearing from an African American that he was not funny invites to reflect seriously about the sense and level of power, licenses, racial embodiment, and social impact a performer has and can exert from the stage. It was not only the sequence of racist epithets Richard proclaimed on stage, which are not far from what could have been shouted during the black lynching episodes at the end of the 19th century or part of the 20th century in the United States, that impacted the audience, but the way how he said and embodied those tirades.

If a white performer has nothing to gain from noticing race, as Peterson reminds us (or to put it in an inverse way, a lot to lose from the professional and social point of view as the aftermaths of Richards’ episode clearly illustrates) one can legitimately ask him/herself what kind of mechanisms were operating in such a situation. One can also ask how the discursive space of theatrical performance, the theatrical or “monologist apparatus” (4), and the physicality inherent to all performative acts have the power of re-writing a new script, other than that which was originally memorized or learned.

I think that performance art is a site where not just socially accepted, cautious texts or otherwise planned subversive scripts can be performed, but also a site where archaistic discourses (that I could also call archival memories) are palimpsestically inscribed and recorded. I believe that these hidden scripts are sometimes exposed despite
ourselves, which would demonstrate their existence. Richards’ spontaneous, out of the script line; “that is what happens when you interrupt the white man, don’t you know?” enunciated in the Laugh Factory represents a dramatic evidence of the existence of alternative, sometimes subconscious, texts inhabiting, in their own ways, inside all of us.

I have argued that the existence of an audiovisual record of a performance does not represent evidence per se, but it becomes such through the concurrence of other archival artifacts. In a later interview with David Letterman on the Late Show, after Richards apologizes for his behavior, he perplexedly asks himself about the racial rage that inhabits him:

And I'll get to the force field of this hostility, why it's there, why the rage is in any of us, why the trash takes place, whether or not it's between me and a couple of hecklers in the audience or between this country and another nation, the rage…. But you can't you know it's, I don't I know people could, blacks could feel I'm not a racist, that's what so insane about this, and yet it's said, it comes through, it fires out of me and even now, in the passion that's here as I confront myself (Richards).

Richards’ appearance in Letterman show broadcasted on TV (and consequently made available for recording) operates as an additional document adding to the archive of materials that make up the event under analysis. Thus, the cell phone video published on YouTube is validated, and complemented by an additional archive that is now circulating in Internet.

If Richards made a big mistake by visiting the site of race in the way he did, he also blundered the path allowing his personal self (thought of as distinct from the performative embodiment of the self in a performance situation) to occupy the stage. Richards’ loss of his endowment as a jester occurred in the precise moment that the audience realized Richards the performer became Richards himself, uttering racist
diatribes. As the posted digital archive of the performance shows, the comedian’s entire body, his voice reaching the top, clearly demonstrated that he was not performing a state of rage, but that he was in a genuine state of anger that was visibly uncontrolled.

Kyle Doss, one of the “hecklers”, told TMZ, a highly visible celebrity news site, that he and some friends were in the cheap seats and that he was playfully harassing Richards (Doss). The tirade began after two of them shouted at Richards that he wasn’t funny. Richards told Letterman the episode in the next terms: “I lost my temper on stage. I was at a comedy club trying to do my act and I got heckled and I took it badly and went into a rage and said some pretty nasty things to some Afro-Americans, a lot of trash talk, and uh...” Richards was performing on a raised stage, above the level where the audience with the more expensive tickets is seated. Even though the raised stage has the function of allowing total visibility of the performer from any part of the house, this theatrical device operates also as an instrument that empowers the performer and gives him visual and physical control over the audience. Seated, the audience is caught in their chairs while the performer can move freely all over the stage and eventually “descend” toward the audience at his/her will. Interestingly, the “hecklers” were in the cheap part of the house, in this case located farther and higher from the stage. In other words, the “hecklers” looked at the performer from above.

Usually the hecklers operate from secure zones of the house, far from the stage. In a standup comedy the lights of the house are kept on in a level that the performer can see his/her audience, in order to interact with them and receive proper feedback during the show. In such a condition, the distance rather than a house in shadows gives the hecklers a secure place from where they can disrupt the act. In such a situation the performer on
stage loses his position of power in relation to the “hecklers”, becoming more vulnerable. Potential coercive actions by part of the performer to funnily punish the disrupting audience would require then not only witty verbal answers but also a shift in his/her physical presence in order to reach them. The audiovisual record of the incident shows the amplitude and exaggeration of Richards’ movements as he launched his utterances. His voice was projected over the top as he moved along the entire stage. The offensive language used by the performer was, it could be said, connected to his increased physicality.

The “hecklers” did not activate Richards’ wrath by saying offensives words. Nevertheless, what apparently triggered his rage was the phrase “you are not funny”. In a business where the quality of the performer is measured by the “quantity” and “quality” of laughs during a show, to be unfunny is death. The utterance “you are not funny” was, in that context, offensive to Richards and he could not retort the instance and turn it to his benefit. He acted, as the official statement the Laugh Factory published in its web site two days after the incident, unprofessionally. This post-performance secondary source I am citing here complements and expand the information that the audiovisual artifact contains by itself. Using this written narrative it is possible to infer that in losing his temper Richards lost his status as a comedian to become just Richards, the racist. The Laugh Factory’s public declaration makes it clear that they are referring to Richards not as a comedian but as himself:

This is a comedy club and while we have always supported the comics first amendment rights, we have done so with the understanding that they were exercising that right in an effort to be funny. We do not support or condone the inappropriate, hurtful and offensive comments that Mr. Richards made on Friday night at the Laugh Factory… Mr. Richards was scheduled to appear on Saturday night and had informed management of
his intention to apologize for his hurtful and unprofessional outburst from the previous night. He failed to do so and disappointed us. We have made it clear that Mr. Richards is no longer welcomed here. The Laugh Factory is a comedy club not a forum for personal attacks. (http://www.laughfactory.com/comedyclubpress/statement.html)

While the Laugh Factory statement reaffirms the idea that Richards fell down in his duties as a comedian, confusing the personal with the professional, Richards himself thinks that what happened that night was precisely the opposite, that is to say, that it was the character he was performing and not him who went into the verbal and physical rampage. Answering Letterman’s question about what would had been the nature of Richards’ response if the hecklers had been Caucasian or any other race, Richard said:

It may have happened. It may have happened. You know, I'm a performer. I push the envelope; I work in a very uncontrolled manner onstage. I do a lot of free association, it's spontaneous, I go into character.

From Diderot to Craig, from Meyerhold and Stanislavski to Grotowski, and from Barba to Susan Bloch, theorists and theatre practitioners have been trying to find acting techniques that offer the performer a secure way to articulate emotions on stage and articulate creatively its craft. Richards however, declares himself as a performer that works in a very uncontrolled manner, which is diametrically different from how “serious” and “conscious” performers work.

Using the Audiovisual Archive

In this chapter I charted, through Smith’s theatrical work with *Fires in the Mirror*, the prolific sequence of transformations that an event belonging to the historical world can undergo. I also compared the different semiotic systems used by Smith in her artistic journey—from meeting her interviewers to the film version of the performance—to the
notion of archive. These archives were contained in a variety of repositories: living memory, audiotapes, written words, photographs, performance, film, and Smith’s own body. Following Smith’s voyage it is possible to learn that ephemerality is not only synonymous with disappearance but also of change and transformation. When a performance is gone, its departure leaves enduring traces. These traces are not only, as Matthew Reason says, detritus (82), but exist as other presences and systems which occupy space and operate in the real world. Total disappearance is an illusion.

With Smith’s work it becomes clear that a performance (or a film of a performance) always lives in a social, cultural, and historical context, just like any other previous or posterior repository associated with it. In understanding a performance or its documentary expression, it is necessary to know the surrounding conditions that made possible its apparition, its context, and its before and after. A filmed performance is auto-referential, a close vessel, a found photograph without a date, name, or explanatory narration. I am in agreement with Cherchi Usai; the moving image does not constitute evidence by itself unless it has an intermediate who speaks for it:

Moving images produced outside the world of fiction give identity to the viewing experience as fragments of empirical evidence but they can prove nothing unless there is some explanation of what they are. Be it ever so eloquent, the moving image is like a witness who is unable to describe an event without an intermediary (The Death 31).

Studying a theatre documentary without considering its context is like scrutinizing an unearthed vase without excavating around it. The contemporary version of Ailey’s Revelation is a good example of how the meaning looses its power to become commoditized by new performer, as well as the new historical and social setting. This example demonstrates also how the monumenting of works, by archival or embodied
media, inevitably implies change, and transformation of an original model. More important however, is the palpable demonstration this work gives, in its successive versions, of how a live performance became an audiovisual archive, which in its turn becomes the source that informs new embodiments. Thus, the audiovisual artifact of an original performance perpetuates the source by means of the performances “defrosting” the static of an unchangeable audiovisual repository.

Finally, Michael Richards performance, audiovisually captured by a member of the audience with his/her cell phone, impacted American society by making evident that racial hatred is under the skin waiting for the right moment to emerge to enact discourses from one hundred years ago. These past archival scripts seem to inhabit us and are ready to be performed following a slight provocation. This amateur clip not only demonstrates how powerful an archival document could be, but shows its usefulness for scholarly discussion. It also proves that, beyond the formal aspects of a performance a well-crafted video can convey, most important are the interpretations and meanings the images can trigger and help to articulate.

On the other hand, these three examples underline the same essential idea, which is the nucleus of my thesis: creating an audiovisual theatre archive is more than making a film of a particular performance, it is creating a rhizome, or net, of related archives (preserved in different but complementary semiotic systems) which can be read (accessed) hypertextually. Making a theatrical archive is connecting isolated archival nodes synergistically. In other words, archiving performance is transforming the audiovisual material and other memories linked to the performance into evidence. The ability to transform it into evidence, whether true or false, is inherently linked to a
decision to preserve, alter or suppress the memory of the circumstances under which the image was produced. The loss of the moving image is the outcome of an ideology expressed by the very object that made it possible (Usai: 31).
Chapter Six: Conclusions

In a recent interview, the cellist Yo-Yo Ma said that in Baroque music, fiddling is an “oral tradition” that for centuries has been passed on from parent to child “pretty accurately without notation”, and that the physical techniques involved in playing such music has also been transmitted, while staying fairly constant. Then the musician adds something notable that parallels well with what Diana Taylor advocates for when stating that the repertoire enacts embodied memories. He says: “I cannot play the way they [Baroque players] do at least I actually change my way of playing physically as well as retune my ears.”\(^1\) In other words, in order to play Baroque music in a Baroque manner, Yo-Yo Ma has acquired the specific techniques commonly used by a genealogy of fiddlers. Even more, Ma performs Baroque music exclusively using a Davidov Stradivarius’ cello, crafted by Antonio Stradivarius in 1712. Such a fact is not a minor detail if we consider that the instrument itself is an artifact that is connected to a tradition of luthiers that can be traced back to the 16\(^{th}\) century in Europe.

Thus, Yo-Yo Ma performs written Baroque music, embodying specific Baroque techniques that have been transmitted by generations of players, using an instrument built with technology and knowledge from the Baroque period in Europe. As this example states aloud, musical knowledge has been transmitted through the centuries by two intertwined ways: through embodied techniques and oral instructions, and archival documents and artifacts. The archive and the repertoire are then ontologically tied. The materiality of embodied memories are bound together not as two different entities related each other, but existentially. Both are episteme and praxis, both forms of transmitting

\(^1\) The quotes are transcriptions the author made from an interview Yo-Yo Ma gave to NPR, in January 2007.
cultural memories. Stradivarius devised the modern shape of the violin, and created a standard for subsequent times.

So, was it the materiality of the violins and cellos what determined the technique of playing the instruments, or vice-versa? Is the performance prior to the archive, or vice-versa? I think that in this thesis I have given enough evidence and arguments to settle that the answer could be both. While sometimes the performance certainly precedes the creation of archival artifacts, there are others where the archive is what engenders the performance. On the other hand, in theatre at least, artistically performed artifacts always constitute and define the performance. Is not the program shaping the spectators’ mind previous to the show? Is not the script informing the orality of the performance? Certainly yes, so that the show and the archival material integrated as an expressive instrument in the core of the performance in order to express its meaning become one indivisible entity.

Now, we have a peculiar kind of document: the audiovisual record of a performance that is created at the same time the show is been performed. Not before, not after, but synchronically to the performance. Such an artifact, the Hamlet’s ghost of the performance, does not inform viewers about other shows of the same production, but just to that which is linked ontologically. In this sense, the documentary of a show highlights the absence of other shows of the same production. Therefore, the audiovisual document also reflects the experience the spectator has when watching the performance just one time, wrongly believing that the rest of the shows have been just the same. The record erases the differences by exalting only one show to the category of electronic memory,
taken from a variable and evolutionary constellation of shows, and denying the diversity of the production.

I discussed the evolvable nature of a theatre performance through the trope of a Model Performance. This theoretical construct, defined as the epitome or typical example of all the performances comprehended in the cycle of a theatrical production, demonstrated to be a useful method in highlighting the always changing nature of a performance, as well as proposing some orientations that the ideal archivist could follow in deciding what performance to document. The archivist, I suggested, needs first to know the type of performance s/he is dealing with, and to determine the level of “changeability” it presents. Regarding productions that, by their nature, happen to have high and low levels of metamorphosis, it will not matter which one to document. The issue is far more complex when the performance seems to be situated in between the extremes. In such cases I proposed criteria that are linked to the presence or absence of the assumed mastermind of the production: the director.

All the procedures and theoretical maneuvers I suggested when addressing the matter of documenting performances stress the ideological nature involved in the act of deciding what to leave in or out of the archive, and it is certainly the same for the decisions the archivist makes for any other archival artifact. As I defined The Archive of a performance as a system of discrete documents organized rhizomatically, the archivist has the power to regulate the size, the content, and the availability of such documents. The control of the archives is also ontologically linked to power, and their administration and levels of public accessibility could be a significant index to determine, as Derrida reminds us, totalitarian and democratic societies. Much of the dirty side of government
actions all over the world depends on the secrecy of classified information that the
authority is obligated to preserve for strategic or organizational reasons. Foucault calls
archive the “systems of statements” (128), that is to say discursive systems, narrations,
that construct and rule realities through what and how things can be said. The archivist is
the Lord Chamberlain of the documents, and the voice of the institution s/he belongs to is
shaping realities.

On the other hand, it is through the discourses that the archives are interpreted,
correlated, and connected synchronically and diachronically to other archives. I have
given various arguments supporting the idea and convenience of creating one holistic
repository that encompasses all the archives connected to the performance. I have said
that the universe of archives testifies of the performance and its ephemeral existence in
the historical world. Interestingly, the archives are created not only as a posterior way of
preserving the memory of the performance but also as a way of contextualizing it during
its very existence.

Even more, I think that the performance needs synchronic archives in order to be
situated and recognized in the historical world. Thus, discourses of sobriety (such as
programs, reviews, director’s book, displays in the theatre foyer, etc) not only speak of
the performance but also complement it by extending its presence and meaning beyond
the performative act itself. The discourses of sobriety built around the performance are,
figuratively speaking, the bottom line of the photograph. In other words, the
performance’s contemporary archives are useful and necessary in order to contextualize,
justify and complement a theatrical production. However, living memories play an
equivalent role to that of the archives in framing the performance.
Theatre productions are not born in a vacuum, but are created in a stream of previous performances that are still present through their spectral archives and the spectator’s memory. The corpus of archives rooted in the performance becomes a necessary attachment to it, becomes part of it. Archive and performance are symbiotically related, which allows the scholar, once the performance is over, the possibility of recalling it through their remnants. However, if the archive lives symbiotically with the performance, and is, at the end, the performance’s justification and validation, what happens to the archive when the performance disappears? My answer to this question is that the universe of archives left by the performance needs a valid substitute for it, a vicarious agent through which the archives can speak of the absent production.

In the realm of theatre, the performance is the leitmotif around which the archival material gravitates in order to justify and complement it. The performance is the referential semiotic system from where other semiotic systems (what we call archives) are rooted. Therefore, in relation to the archival system, the performance is the center. After its disappearance, however, a substitute is needed, another referent that is able to articulate the universe of the archives left by the performance. I suggested that the space left by the live performance could be partially filled by its audiovisual record. The informational richness that the audiovisual record represents, its equivalent temporality to that of the actual performance, and its multiple indexicality, and its equivalence in sound and image to the performance were some of the characteristics I cited to proclaim the moving image as the natural substitute for the performance once it is gone. The audiovisual record has the ontological capability of reuniting a plurality of sources of information: sound, moving and still images, logos (spoken words), as well as a huge
gamut of paralinguistic information and data linked to other expressive systems (lighting, costumes, etc). Film, like theatre, is a multimedia expressive system. The cinematic formulation of a performance is causally and existentially connected to the performance and, at the end, is its closet representation, and then its proper substitute.

Once the audiovisual archive of the performance is legitimized as its *post obitum* substitute, a new symbiotic relationship between it and the rest of the archives is established. I have reiteratively said that the moving image of a performance is not visible evidence of it on its own, but that it receives validation through the concurrence of other archives. Consequently, the gathering of archives around the substitute of the performance needs a repository capable of providing modes of interaction between the two.

While Derrida reminds us that the archive cannot be considered as something independent from the structure (repository) that contains it (which always determines what can be archived and aides in shaping its content), Foucault regards the archive as the material that the historian works on in order to define the elements proper to each series, to fix its boundaries, to reveal its own specific type of relations, to formulate its laws, and to describe the relationship between the different series (7). On the other hand, all through my thesis I have been dealing with the evolvable nature of a theatre production and the dynamic ontological relationship it sustains with a constellation of documents. Also, I have tried to substitute the idea of the document as an inert and isolated artifact with the consideration that it is rhisomatically related to the other documents that exist within and outside the archival system of a specific performance.
At this point the necessity of finding the kind of repositories that allow the archivist to gather a large and varied number of archival artifacts in order to facilitate their analysis in multiple levels, and the establishment of multiple relations among them becomes evident. Considering features like versatility, endurance, interactivity, organization, multimedia convergence, and actualization, the obvious option falls into the digital technologies, represented by their emblematic medium: the computer.

My concluding proposal then considers the computer as the proper system to administrate and preserve the multimedia archives derived from the performance. As I have stated in the body of my thesis, the performance archival artifact could be expandable by adding both new complemental evidence and new embodiments that eventually could engender more documents. The archive of a performance, or in other words, the organized cluster of pertinent documents, will occupy different layers, temporalities and spaces. While the computer’s interactive nature gives the user the capability to navigate through these different archival layers, its hypermedia quality allows the user to handle the diversity of formats through which the archive is represented in the digital world. In a hypermedia environment (like the WWW) the idea of a center is, of course, relative (mobile) since a user can start his/her navigation from a particular informational node and end in another without necessarily giving one priority over the others.

Nowadays the digital computer can be seen as a synthetic machine where all the audiovisual media, radio, cinema, TV, newspapers, painting, texts, and others media are converging in order to be administrated, disseminated, manipulated, and rethought. In

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2 Hypermedia is a technology that supports the linking of graphics, audio and video elements, and text. The World Wide Web is a good example of a complete hypermedia system.
that way, the new medium presents much of the cultural interface from the other media it has assimilated. Lev Manovich, in his essay *Cinema as a Cultural Interface*, claims that the cultural interface of computer media is nurtured and shaped by three key cultural forms: cinema, printed word, and the general-purpose human-computer interface (HCI). In this context he asserts that computer users are acquiring new cultural languages (like Hypertextual interfaces of digital technology) because they are able “to read” the codes of previous media. When analyzing the printed word, for example, the author says that the cultural interface of a digital computer inherits the principles of text organization developed by the human civilization throughout its existence, and that its cultural interface relies on our familiarity with the “page interface” whose more ancient referent is the papyrus roll. A concrete expression of the principle of text organization transposed to a digital media would be the visual representation of a blank page in the Microsoft Word program.

In relation to the influence exerted by cinema over the digital interface, Manovich states that computer technology extensively uses technical operations like zoom, tilt, pan and track in order to interact with data, virtual spaces and objects. The model of the virtual camera is extended to apply to navigation through any kind of information. Also, he says that the cinematic vision is triumphing over the print tradition, with the camera substituting for the page. The theorist points out video games as epitomical example of the influence of cinema over digital interfaces, since they have integrated cinematic language and several cinematographic techniques in their particular realm. These ideas corroborate the pertinence of choosing the computer and derived digital technologies (DVD, HD DVD, Blue-Ray, and the WWW, for example) as the synthetic medium. These mediums
not only include all of the functionality of other communication media, but also contain the codes and some of the conventions that belong to previous cultural forms of cinema, printed word, and the general-purpose human-computer interface.

Steve Dixon, who is currently using multimedia technology to document, present and analyze the stage performances he directs, clearly expresses the advantages of using the computer as a repository in terms of its multiple format convergence, velocity of data recovery, and interaction between formats:

Within a multimedia program, one is able to document and cross-reference a vast amount of data and then retrieve specific items within seconds. “Multimedia” also amalgamates and connects documentation in multiple formats – text, photograph, video, audio, artwork. In archiving performance, there is thus the flexibility to input a whole range of material: video and stills of discussions, rehearsals and performances; original music; artwork and designs for costumes and set; reflections, interviews, and statements from performers and audience members. Additionally, a range of different types of written text can be used: notes, source materials, newspaper reviews, and transcripts of the performed text (156).

The computer, with its hypertextual technologies, interactivity, interconnectivity, and its always-growing storage capacity, becomes a magnet for other media formats with which it, as Manovich has said, also maintains an ontological linkage. The process of obsolescence and consequent substitution of technologies has been dramatically accelerated by the pervasive presence of digital technologies, which have aligned all other mass media. Richard A. Lanham’s statement that the electronic text “marks the next major shift in information technology after the development of the printed book” (19), can also be said in regard to digital systems and their capture, reproduction and dissemination of audiovisual information. In this setting, the computer appears as a place
of gathering, administration, manipulation and diffusion of everything potentially transferable to binary codes.

Thus, all the information the computer receives, maintains and transfers (no matter if it is textual, aural or visual) is constituted by the same numerical unit of data.

Debray seizes the impact of binary technologies:

In the history of the image, the transition from the analogical to the numerical establishes a rupture equivalent, in its principles, to the atomic bomb in the weapon history, or to the genetic manipulation in Biology. Such transition to numerical binarisms, which impact to image, sound, and text, allows that the researcher, the technician, and the artist, were reunited around a common processor, becoming all of them Pythagorean (237).

Mike Featherstone in his essay *Archiving Cultures* remarks how the medium and repository, in their utopian condition, can be visualized in the technological horizon of the new digital technologies. He says: “The electronic archive offers new possibilities for speed, mobility and completeness of access to cultures which have become digitalized” (161). The sense of temporality and spatiality have been, one more time, modified since computational nodes can cover, and recover, audiovisual information from cyberspace in a matter of milliseconds. For the postmodern man, digitally equipped, actual travel is superfluous. As expressed by Borges: “Our century had inverted the story of Mohammed and the mountain; nowadays, the mountain came to the modern Mohammed” (2). The geographical territory becomes the screen.

If the archive is the site for the accumulation of records (Featherstone 1), then the computer is a new kind of repository. Working on the Internet, and because of its hypertextual technology, an informational starting point displayed on screen can trigger a flow of endless hypermedia related points of information that, at the same time, permit
access to more information, and so on. Pertinent text, image and sound can be organized on one or more screens and several strata coming from a constellation of databases can be displayed simultaneously. In order to uncover the successive layers contained in a pictorial or writing material of a palimpsest, it is necessary to destroy the precedent. However, using multimedia technology, several strata of informational hypermedia can exist or occur at the same space-time, being displayed on the screen without any losses. This formidable capacity of preservation, recovering, accessibility and management of information does not have its equivalent in the physical world. It may be that is the reason why the libraries are digitalizing their books and posting them in the web.

The computer, *the medium*, is the current Borges’ “inner sanctorum” (2) for the postmodern man, “as though in his castle, supplied with telephones, telegraphs, phonographs, wireless sets, motion-picture screens, slide projectors, glossaries, timetables, handbooks, bulletins…” (2), all is available to him/her in a “small iridescent sphere of almost unbearable brilliance”(7), the computer screen. The synthetic machine, *the archive*, is the historical world digitalized.

To recognize that the computer, with all its functionalities, is both the medium and the archive (and also the repository of the digital archive), is consistent with the idea expressed by Friedrich Kitller, that the “general digitalization of information and channels erases the difference between individual media” (Film Theory 914), and with Nicholas Negroponte’s aphorism that “the medium is not the message in the digital world, it is an embodiment of it. A message might have several embodiments automatically derivable from the same data” (914). Under this reasoning, Smith’s project *Fires in the Mirror*, has the ability to take the same message in its different stages of
embodiment (audio taped interviews, interview textual transcriptions, dramatic text, photographs and performance film) and converge it into a single medium. For example. Smith’s voice can, once digitalized, be “read” as an algorithm or be represented as a series of numbers or visual and colored sound waves.

Digital technology and its avatar, the computer, as the virtual place where archive and media coincide, permit the interaction, organization, hypermedia management and coexistence of diverse audiovisual formats, and their eventual retrieval without detrimental losses. Once the performance is gone, as I have stated before, its audiovisual representation (the documentary of the performance) becomes distanced from its original referent and looses its condition of being visible evidence of what had been present in the historical world. Because of that, it is necessary to perform a procedure of authentication—which also could be called a method of contextualization—of the moving image of the performance. Multimedia technology (where medium, archive and repository coincide) offers the ideal territory to contextualize the archive that became the substitute of the performance, and now the model-moving image.

The logical next chapter for this thesis would be the proposal of an archival hypermedia model. It is a territory that has been already explored in practical terms, but without the theoretical discussion a topic of this nature demands. Steve Dixon’s project Chameleon 2: Theatre in a Movie Screen, contained in a CD-ROM, is an interesting illustration of using multimedia technology to document, present and analyze

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3 In the digital realm a factual referent or model cannot exist at all. Jon Belton, in his essay Film: Psychology, Ideology and Technology, tells that Lucas’ film The Phantom Menace “had nearly 2,200 digitally generated shots, making 90 percent of the movie”, which means that just a remnant of 10 % of the moving image of the movie once was in front of the camera. (In Film Theory: 906)
performance. Steve Dixon⁴ is a theatre director and scholar whose current research
focuses on the use of new media in performance arts. His performance research company,
*The Chameleons Group*, established in 1994, has toured internationally with innovative
'film-theatre' productions where live actors work in front of large video screens,
interacting with film characters and their own recorded 'doubles', and appear to move
from the stage to the screen space. The company has produced two award-winning CD-
ROMs analyzing their work, and has also created high-tech interactive performances for
the Internet.

For example, Dixon’s project, in his hypertextual and hypermedia format
countextualizes the audiovisual record of *Chameleon 2: In Dreamtime*, is a production that
embodies the research undertaken by the company in the paradigm of multimedia theatre.
His work foreshadows the possibilities of this matter in an age where new, more powerful
and versatile recording systems, such as the Blue Ray and HDDVD, are on the market.
On the other hand, the explosive development that technologies such as the Internet are
currently having, is encouraging the localization of hypermedia archival material in
virtual sites that can be accessed from anywhere. YouTube is a good example of how
audiovisual material from all over the world can be gathered, disseminated and retrieved
by users from everywhere. Maybe the next building for an audiovisual theatre library will
be not topographically situated in a university or a public museum, but in a digital edifice
on the Internet.

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⁴ He has also made extensive publications on subjects including performance studies, film theory, digital
arts, Artificial Intelligence, and pedagogy. He serves as Associate Editor of *The International Journal of
Performance Arts and Digital Media* and Co-director of the AHRB-funded *Digital Performance Archive*,
which records and analyses international performance events that incorporate digital media. His book,
*Digital Performance: New Technologies in Theatre, Dance, Performance Art and Installation* (with Barry
Smith) published by MIT Press in 2006, is the most comprehensive study of the field to date.
An archival hypermedia model is the rhizomatic system that I have advocating for. There the repository, the digital document, and the medium of accessing and disseminating archival documents coincide. Digital technology permits the [hyper] linkage of primary and secondary archival material recollected from the proto-performance phase to the aftermath of it. Expressed in a variety of formats ranging from the moving image (film), visual documents (pictures, digital simulation and animation of lighting, costumes, makeup, etcetera), text (dramatic text, critical essays, reviews, weblogs), to audio records (soundtracks, recorded interviews), the archival material is ready to be used by the historians, archivists, theater scholar, practitioners, and other people interested in defining “within the documentary material itself unities, totalities, series, relations” (Foucault 6).

Such a polyphonic repository allows the documents be woven through not only textocentric narratives, but also through living performances created from the archive. A holistic and rhizomatic repository is compatible with the ideal pursued by performances studies scholarship that epitomizes the “text-performance hybridity.”…embracing both “written scholarship and creative work, papers and performances…challenging the hegemony of the text best by reconfiguring text and performances in horizontal, metonymic tension, not by replacing one hierarchy with another, the romance of performance for the authority of the text.” (Conquergood 318).

This is the time to begin to preserve our creative activity seriously and systematically. In doing so, future historians will be able to explore our work metahistorically, interpreting this legacy of documents and even questioning the interpretations we have made of them. Audiovisual archiving is an act devoted to the
present, which urges archivist to implement measures, policies and plans of documenting here and now. Any procrastination in doing that will result in the definite loss of valuable theatrical documentation.

Theatre is not a thermometer of society; it is the fever. The archive is the aftermath that recalls that fever.
Works Consulted


<http://www.analitica.com/bitbiotica/jjborges/library_babel.asp>


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