Disputes concerning performance in Communication studies: theoretical challenges, methodological drifts[1]

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Abstract

This paper discusses the term "performance" in media and Communication studies, by means of a critical and theoretical background review. We start with a conceptual reconstitution of the term in its strands in Anglo-Saxon and French Humanities in order to present its development in the Brazilian Studies context, especially regarding issues such as music and entertainment, fandoms and social network websites. We argue that performance studies are relevant to understand human actions, as well as their mediations with the bodies, apparatuses, environments, materialities and audiences in contemporary everyday life. However, we indicate the need to re-discuss the concept for the analysis of different objects and environments which are mediated by communication technologies, and point to the possibility of understanding performance as a research method.
Keywords: Performance. Communication. Method. Entertainment. Digital Culture.

Introduction

Delving into the concept of performance in the contemporary media context seems to be increasingly relevant. Bringing up the idea of performance means facing the problems of visibility in a time which the metaphor of theatricality is present in face of the

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constant evocations of the body via photographs, selfies, appearances on social network websites. We live in a deeply self-aware, reflective world (GIDDENS, 2002), obsessed with simulations and theatricalities in all social spheres. Theatricality, then, becomes a sort of way of perceiving the actions, having spread from the field of Arts to that of the Social Sciences, influencing the ways we understand human actions. Thinking about performances means, necessarily, to open up to the act, the action, the theatrical, to what one does, how it is done and in which context. Part of what we call self-consciousness of actions means acknowledging that such actions are performed "for someone", for a visible or invisible "other", an "imagined – or at least intended – audience", as proposed by Boyd (2011) in her analysis of performances on social network websites.

It is noted that several currents of Anthropology, Linguistics, Sociology, Gender Studies and Communication Studies, among others, have drawn on the term performance[2] to understand dynamics of identity construction and sociability, be it on the individual or collective level, of everyday nature or one-off and "rare" events, sacred or profane, short-lived or long-lasting, involving "ordinary" or noted subjects, and mediated by Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to a greater or lesser degree. However, precisely because of its broad appropriation, it becomes clear that it is not only an important concept to understand the relationship between behaviours and actions with mediations in their most varied instances and media environments, but also that it is necessary to theoretically delimit the concept and point out the specificities of the phenomena under observation.

Thus, this article is divided into two main parts, besides this introduction and the final remarks: in the first part we do a brief literature review regarding the use of the term "performance" in French and Anglo-Saxon works – in which its epistemological bases were defined and later extended for the understanding of other conjunctures, such as the Latin American one, on which we discuss. In the second part, in turn, we propose that the very notion of performance can be taken as a method for analysis of phenomena of great significance to the Communication field, such as those related to the sphere of music and social relations mediated by social network websites. Rather than a rigid methodological proposition with delimited formulas of application, however, this is a becoming-proposal.

Discussing performance in the French and Anglo-Saxon contexts

Ethnolinguist Richard Bauman names as "consciousness of duplicity" the self-consciousness of the performance, since "the actual execution of an action is placed in mental comparison with an ideal, a potential or a remembered original model of that action" (BAUMAN, 1986, p.18 – Our translation). The act of comparing actions is carried out by

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2   It is important to consider that the term performativity, although important, ends up being discussed more in relation to gender studies, mainly from Butler's proposition (2010). In this paper we will not engage in the debate about performativity, as it falls out of the scope of our concerns. However, for future studies this is one of the methodological pathways that we intend to follow.

observers of the action, acknowledging that performance is always "for someone, some audience that recognizes and validates it as performance even when, as is occasionally the case, that audience is the self." (BAUMAN, 1986, p.19 – Our translation).

Beyond the disciplinarization – existing and raised here – of the idea of performance, we propose to consider performance, as suggested by Taylor (2013), as "an episteme, a way of knowing", not simply – although also as – an object of analysis. "We learn and transmit knowledge through embodied action, through cultural agency, and by making choices" (TAYLOR, 2013, p.17 – Our translation). In this sense, the author draws methodological drafts to delimit performance as a way of knowing the phenomena. "By situating myself as one more social actor in the scenarios I analyse, I hope to position my personal and theoretical investment in the arguments. I chose not to smooth out the differences in tone, but rather let them speak" (TAYLOR, 2013, p.36 – Our translation) in a constant activation between what is shown, how it is shown, what I see and how I see it.

The author's premise seems to be to think the performance as an imbrication between languages and its presentations, situations and contexts of appearances and the dynamics of visuality and enjoyment. By claiming the performance as a "way of knowing", therefore, a field of knowledge, Taylor (2013) acknowledges that "open-endedness and multivocality of performance studies is an administrative challenge" (p. 36 – Our translation), in that the disciplinary boundaries are constantly stirred and reviewed, limited and extended. Understanding the different articulations and phenomena related to performance is a field of knowledge that requires methods on the specificity of its objects. We have here, therefore, the construction of performance studies in its interdisciplinary status[3].

A first movement necessary for the recognition of the complexity of the term comes from the different uses of the word "performance". Many of these uses point to complex layers of referencialities, often contradictory, sometimes complementary, producing a game supported by scattered fragments of the uses and their resignifications. If we consider its French etymological matrix, "performance" derives from "*parfournir*", which means "to provide", "to complete", "to execute", in the conception rescued by anthropologist Victor Turner. Under this name, performance comes under the notion of visuality, execution. Or, more detained, as a sort of layer of transparency capable of "revealing the deeper aspects of cultural belief" (TURNER, 1982, p.9).

This first conception seems to guide a certain look on both performing practices and cultural symptoms, learning, understanding of cultural making from the subjects' bodies and actions. There was, however, a certain refusal at first of the principle of simulation, of theatricality and of "truth" (always in quotes) that can reveal to be an objection around

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3   It is no coincidence that Diana Taylor, as well as Richard Schechner, among other important authors of this field, are founders and integrate the Graduate Program in Performance Studies at New York University (NYU), United States, which uses interdisciplinary methodological approach (in both theoretical and practical terms).

theatricality as components, evocations and possibilities of the real. Although a dance, a ritual and a manifestation require a separation or a framing that differentiate them from other social practices around them, that does not imply that the performance is not a comment, a fabrication, a look on the real.

From French, the term was incorporated by English in the 16th century (TAYLOR, 2013) as a sort of evaluative provision on the scenic and body practices. From Aristotle, through Shakespeare, Calderón de la Barca, Artaud and Grotowski, the conception of performance in the tradition of the English language goes back to the idea of theatrical assessment, indication of practice around the potential, talent and commitment to staging. This idea of assessment around individuals' body and scenic skills spreads itself in the countless uses of the notion of performance: from the field of business, through politics, sports and everything that involves assessment of the expressive relation of the body with any competence[4].

We rescue here the movement proposed by Turner (1982) of debating also the "untranslatable" nature of the term performance, defying disciplinary and geographical barriers, but also denying universality and transparency. "Performances may not give us access and insight into another culture, allowing us to see it in depth, but they certainly tell us a great deal about our desire for access, and reflect the politics of our interpretations" (TURNER, 1982, p.12).

These different origins of the term "performance" point to different conceptual uses of the word in fields of knowledge. If we think of the key to the French origin of the term performance, we can point to a theatrical perspective of the term: the culture is an arena in which social actors play with their dramas in search of meanings for existence. Individuals are subject to their dramas; they argue, challenge, achieve, standardize cultural practices, i.e., not simply adapt to the systems, they build them. In the daily dramas, there is recognition of behaviours, practices, victories, defeats, movements of self-preservation, confront, refusal and adhesion. The drama of everyday life makes up from recreational and aesthetic components of social events.

Canadian sociologist Erving Goffman's perspective is often brought up as one of the most notable examples of such dramaturgical perspective. The author uses theatrical metaphors throughout his work *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*[5] to designate the modes through which the social actors *stage* their own characteristics to an *audience* in an attempt to manage or manipulate the impression they wish to make, albeit always subject

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4   Schechner (2013) points out – albeit following a categorization open to criticism – that performances may occur in eight types of situations, sometimes intertwined, sometimes separately: in everyday life, in the arts, in sports and other types of mass entertainment, in business, in technology, in sex, in rituals and in action (*in play*).

5   Recently, the popularity of this work and the discussion about performance strayed outside the academic field and was mentioned in dialogues of two episodes of the first season of the sitcom Mindhunter (2017), produced and distributed by Netflix. The series addresses the constitution of a division of the FBI in the 1970s that begins to investigate the behaviour of perpetrators of heinous crimes that later came to be called serial killers. It is possible to note the relevance and popularity reached by the author/work when it is being quoted in a product of pop culture.

to disruptions and failures. Terms like "front", "setting", "performers", "characters", "part", "show" and even "performance" are used by the author to give account of the dynamics of self-presentation of subjects in different social contexts.

However, the author also beckons – albeit not in depth – to how these cultural practices are registered on the bodies, through language or clothing, for example. In fact, on the last pages of his book, Goffman abandons the theatrical metaphor:

> In developing the conceptual framework employed in this report, some language of the stage was used. I spoke of performers and audiences; of routines and parts (...) Now it should be admitted that this attempt to press a mere analogy so far was in part a rhetoric and a manoeuvre. (...) This report is not concerned with aspects of theatre that creep into everyday life. It is concerned with the structure of social encounters (...) [which involve] the use of real techniques, (...) by which everyday people sustain their real social situations" (GOFFMAN, 2009, p.232-233 – Our translation).

And, by abandoning such language the author makes it clear that – unlike some interpretations of Brazilian and foreign studies and research on performance and identity – there *is not* a distinction between the "masks" that we use in daily life and so-called authentic *selves* covered by them. That is, he rejects the idea that the performance game refers to a certain way of identity "falsehood". Moving in the opposite direction, Goffman (2009) understands that everything we are and have are masks – they are, precisely, the performances. In that sense, it is essential to reflect on how we construct and present ourselves to "others" as credible, authentic figures.

It is from this crossroad that the conceptual uses of performance emerge in the English language tradition, along with that which focuses on a sort of performing function of communication, from the speech act theory – a more than timely proposal by Austin (1988) who wonders: is it possible to act with words?

In this perspective, from the uses, creations and presentations of the language, acts are performed. This dramatization is constantly executed and evaluated, investing, then, in values such as authenticity, verisimilitude or sincerity[6]. Ingenious ways to use the language point to notions of authenticity in evaluative games of seeing and existing socially. In this sense, premises of the drama in everyday life are increased of emphasis on body and gesture appearances, pointing to agenda-settings around cultural practices. Zumthor (2007), certainly one of the most revered authors in the studies of performance in Communication, also bases his arguments on this approximation between the notions of performance and orality. He states that:

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6   About the debate on the notion of sincerity in media performances, Janotti Jr. and Soares (2014) draw a theoretical trajectory around the dichotomies authenticity *versus* sincerity, sense *versus* presence.

> Performance is the complex action through which a poetic message is simultaneously transmitted and perceived, here and now. Speaker, receiver, circumstances (no matter whether or not the text represents them, by other way, through linguistic means) are concretely confronted, indisputable. In a performance, the two axes of communication intersect: the one that links the speaker to the author and the one through which situation and tradition are united (ZUMTHOR, 2007, p.31 – Our translation).

Zumthor (2007) sounds ingenious by engaging us in the game of performance: of approximation, of approach, of appeal, of provocation of the other, of request, in itself indifferent to the production of meaning. Departing from the French and Anglo-Saxon notions, we move on in the next item to the meanings of performance in the Latin American context and in Brazilian communicative thinking.

For a sense of the term performance in the Latin American context

In her quest for debating performance in Latin America, Taylor (2013) circumscribes the discomfort with the term "performance" in Latin American context from the idea that both in Spanish and Portuguese the word takes a linguistic "disguise" which invites speakers to think through English language, evoking both the presence of an anglophone culture in these countries and the reification of the idea of "performing arts", like that linked to the *happening* and the history of the body in performing and visual arts. However, Taylor (2013) points out to four terms that are frequently used as "possible translations", however precarious and unfinished, of the idea of performance in Latin America – from the disputes over the word in French and English traditions:

1) theatricality;
2) spectacle;
3) action;
4) representation.

Theatricality and spectacle would capture the constructed and all-encompassing nature of performance, in the many ways that social behaviour can be seen as performance and the values/valences that are at stake. Action and representation belong to the sphere of individual interventions and competencies, political act or intervention, to the extent that, as Taylor states, "*acción* seems more directed and intentional, and thus less socially and politically embroiled than performing, which evokes both the prohibition and the potential for transgression" (TAYLOR, 2013, p.42 – Our translation). The notion of representation conjures up notions of mimesis, "of a break between the 'real' and its representation" (TAYLOR, 2013, p.42 – Our translation), from a political sphere connected to belonging and visibility.

Taylor's (2013) contribution is original and searches Latin American indigenous tradition (*nauatle*, *quéchua* and *aimara*) for the correspondent to "performance". The word "*olin*", which means "engine of life" is the "possible candidate" in the author's opinion. "*Olin* is the engine behind everything that happens in life, the repeated movement of the sun, stars, earth, the living beings. Everything repeats, in a movement that is the very choreography of life" (TAYLOR, 2013, p.43 – Our translation), but "*olin* also means the borderline between life and death, that keeps the living beings, or, more metaphysically, the line of transition between the earthly realm and the divine" (TAYLOR, 2013, p.43 – Our translation). From this perspective, choreographic movements of life are both social and political, natural and performed, with no distinction between them. The term attracts Taylor as it seems to set aside the compartmentalization of social practices in Western societies, questioning taxonomies and pointing to other possible interpretations. It is precisely this openness that allows us to think of performance as a central concept for the field of Communication from a methodological problematization, as we will see in the next section.

Performance as a method in the Communication field

It is important to discuss the idea of performance from the methodological point of view as some studies, especially in the tradition of Visual Arts, claim the character of unity and of non-reproducible event of performance. "Is performance that which disappears, or that which persists, transmitted through an archival system of transfer or through the repertoire only?" (TAYLOR, 2013, p.18 – Our translation). This impasse is frequent in uses of the concept of performance.

We are facing two natures of research: one that operates on the notion of performance in archive, i.e., performative acts recorded on media, recoverable from the material storage of these records; and another one that considers performance in repertoire, i.e., that which "disappears", registered in the memory of the living, performance as the result of a transient being-together[7]. Here, performance is the object/process of analysis, in its many practices and events – dance, theatre, rituals, concerts, political rallies, funerals – involving theatrical behaviours, rehearsed or conventional/appropriate for the occasion.

The idea of performance, therefore, deals with traditions of Anthropology, Visual Arts, Linguistics, among others. We propose here an intersection with the field of Communication via two themes/objects in which we focus: music and social network websites, sometimes both. The core of the debate over performance, in the field of Communication, is the idea of incorporation, repetition, reiteration. Gestures inhabit bodies, trigger memories, put experiences into perspective. What does the body make visible?

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7   Though reinforcing the idea that there are two different "types" of performance, the archive and the repertoire, or at least one that would come before the other, Schechner (2013) understands that all and any performance is, at the same time, a restored behaviour (learned, observed, socially embedded), previously experienced, and unique, singular, as in that context of fruition can never repeat itself, be it a "live" performance or a recorded one.

Taylor (2013) calls attention to the notion of "embodied performance", that is, "the tangible dimension of the acts that play a central role in conserving memory and consolidating identities in literate, semiliterate, and digital societies" (p.21). Performances are, therefore, vital acts of transfer, allowing the co-construction of knowledge, memory and a sense of social identity. Artist Joseph Roach (1996) recognizes the mimetic and mnemonic nature of performances. However, in an almost twist to Psychoanalysis, he points out to the performative becoming:

> Performance genealogies draw on the idea of expressive movements as mnemonic reserves, including patterned movements made and remembered by bodies, residual movements retained implicitly in images or words (or in the silences between them), and imaginary movements dreamed in minds, not prior to language but constitutive of it (ROACH, 1996, p.26).

Thus, we call attention to the fact that investigating performances demands: a) not only a close look to the symbolic sphere, to what certain performative acts conjure up as "production of meaning", but also to the non-hermeneutic sphere, which involves materialities of the body and objects affecting and producing presence, using Gumbrecht's terms (2010), even though such presence can be "archived" on media and bodies, acquiring new layers. And b) the understanding that this is a never-ending process, always under construction. Though certain performative acts and their records – such as music concerts and theatrical presentations – can bring an idea of termination or conclusion, they are not contained, causing affectations, reverberations and reworkings even after its supposed end and which certainly begins before its start[8]. The engine of life, of performance, does not cease.

Performance studies in Communication and Music fields

The proposal of performance studies at the intersection between communication and music apparently meets two methodological pathways:

1) one that comprehends the languages around archived performative acts, the ways these "official" and "unofficial" records – that is, those in accordance to the entertainment industry standards and those resulting from the fans' and music concert attendees' yearning for recordings – are presented[9];

2) one that conjures up a certain idea of performance as memory, as group identity or subject's singularity politics, or in the face of visibility politics (what is recorded, who is the registrant, for what purposes).

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8   Such process dimension of performance is perhaps clearer when one thinks of daily life performances, always unfinished, reinstated and rebuilt.

9   In this case here we reject the idea coming mainly from the Performing Arts and the Visual Arts that "performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representations" (PHELAN, 1993, p.32).

In the attempt to analyse and to apprehend these short-lived performative practices, one must resort to various focuses of analysis within the framework of the event and in order to affirm, in an ontological way, that it is a performance – what one society considers performance another might not consider. As Schechner (2006) argues, "one cannot determine what a performance 'is' without referring to specific cultural circumstances", since "from the perspective of cultural practice, some actions will be deemed performances and others not; and this will vary from culture to culture, from historical period to historical period" (p.38). Whose stories and memories become visible?

From this second meaning of performance, we resume Taylor's thought on the idea of events as performances to propose "methodological lens" for the music field. If events are performances, we could discuss what is performed in these spaces. Music events involve musical performances, of course, by artists who mobilize the audience around the live spectatorship (seeing and hearing), but not only. The event performs an intention of realization[10], be it public or private, which motivates its existence.

We could think of institutions performing ways of spacialising experiences with subjects, brands creating forms of embodiment in these spaces, games of hide-and-seek around the motivations of music events. But if events are performances, we are talking about, of course, of artists that plan, perform, and conduct concerts within a bounded and contextualized time-space. Such artists gather fans, attendees, curious observers and appreciators of music who, in turn, perform ways of being, enjoying and feeling the music, embodying resistance, obedience, citizenship, gender, ethnicity, among other aspects.

This practice of bodies performing in events works as a sort of epistemology that triggers the look on actions embodied in cultural practices associated with them. We are talking about the relationship between performance and everyday life, in their various meanings and cultural recontextualizations – reflecting historical specificities in the performances and enjoyments. Performances and events, in this sense, can be understood as social and communicative processes, as claimed by Frith (1996), that involve a complex network of human and nonhuman agents – such as artists, fans, critics, event producers, brands, musical instruments, venues, means of transportation, sound and visual reproduction apparatus, among so many others – in multiple relationships buildings and often meanings and values in continuous negotiation and dispute. It is our task to map and discuss such aspects from a vantage point that seeks to understand the specificities of music events as performances in *different social and cultural contexts*.

About this aspect we can consider the importance of the cultural context from where performances emerge to understand the tensions between bodies and political, geographical and aesthetic assemblages. In the research project "Political and Media Clashes of Pop Music

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10   Though certain intentions may not be achieved, as we discuss below.

Fans in Cuba", Soares (2016) reports the performative dimension of being a pop music fan (markedly Anglophile and linked to the United States imaginary – a historical political enemy of Cuba) in the Cuban context. The res-signification of the act of performing the fan part, ideas about subversion, boundaries between revealing/hiding the condition in a particular context, seem to translate the territorialisation of performances in its various cultural environments.

In another geographical context – Porto Alegre, capital city of Rio Grande do Sul – and in a different musical genre – the *gaúcho* rock[11] – it is possible to note that these contexts to which we refer have an impact and interfere on the result of performances analysed in researches carried out by Nunes (2016) – about rock live shows by the rock band Cachorro Grande – and the materialities of forms of production and discursivities in the scene of Porto Alegre city, based in aspects of low cost and "dirty" sounds, according to Amaral et al (2017). Both the analyses of different instances of performance production point out to identity aspects of rock *gaúcho* that are negotiated in discursive acts through interviews, song lyrics, photographs and a series of other aspects understood by authors as performances.

In addition, it is clear that such socially and culturally different geographical contexts gain today another dimension that causes new tensions in and about the performative acts: that of the virtual. Not only digital culture allows, for example, that nowadays pop music fans in Cuba have access to vast material (musical, visual, discursive, etc.) about their idols – even though Internet access is restricted in the Island[12] –, but also the very technological mediation causes affectations in the ways certain subjects, inserted in different geographical territories and common *online* spaces, perform their modes of musical enjoyment, for example. No wonder, Regev (2013) proposed the idea of "aesthetic cosmopolitanism" to understand how popular music cultures, mainly what the author calls "pop rock", are going through strong traversings because of the Internet, to the point of generating aesthetic proximity between them. According to the author:

> Affording fans unhindered intensive engagement with almost endless amounts of local and global music, participation in aesthetic cultures of pop-rock have become a full-fledged materialization of aesthetic cosmopolitanism (REGEV, 2013, p.137).

That does not mean, however, that the cultural specificities of social groups are getting lost on the digital culture. On the contrary, we argue that the very modes as the subjects appropriate spaces on the Internet (such as Facebook pages, YouTube channels

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11   Translator's note: *Gaúcho* refers to the locals and the local culture of Rio Grande do Sul state.
12   As Santos (2017) demonstrates, Cuba gained Internet access in 1996, restricted to collective spaces (such as workplaces and universities). Though nowadays the "computerization of Cuba" is "part of the government's policies to improve and diversify Internet access centres (...) to be connected" is "still complex, since access fees are high if compared with the people's average salary" (SANTOS, 2017, p.17).

and blogs), from their identity affiliations of territory, for example, tell us a lot about how they perform themselves and their tastes in the sphere of consumption, which leads us to the dimension of the expression of affective values through digital platforms.

Taste performance and the research on social network websites

Another aspect of analysis can be perceived, this way, in the studies that articulate the notion of taste performance, proposed by French musicologist Antoine Hennion, and audience behaviours – especially of music audience – in social network websites in which there are symbolic disputes and disagreements between fans and haters over certain genres or artists. In short, we agree with Pereira de Sá (2016) who states that "by taste performance I mean, in dialogue with Hennion (2001, 2002), the collective process dimension that involves the value expression of the affects" (PEREIRA DE SÁ, 2016, p.6).

This dimension of expression of values through affects, emotions and feelings contained in the notion of taste performance becomes a category of methodological analysis worth using for empirical analyses of clashes between fans and haters on the Internet, more specifically in social network websites, through a series of practices and tactics that have been mapped in previous studies, as in Amaral and Monteiro (2013), who analyse the clashes between rock and funk; in Amaral, Souza and Monteiro (2015), observing fans' activism strategies; in Amaral, Monteiro and Soares (2017), discussing the controversy on Twitter and in blogs around Adam Lambert's live performance as leader of the band Queen in Rock In Rio 2015; and even in the matter of use of self-irony and humour in identity self-presentation of an online subculture, as described by Amaral, Barbosa and Polivanov (2015).

Taste performance is discussed by Amaral (2016) as an operational definition that articulates the relationship between materialities and expression of affects on certain products in the media where transnational pop culture becomes central to the understanding of this form of pragmatic of taste proposed by Hennion (2010). This way, the performative dimension of *online* audiences, be they fans, amateurs, connoisseurs, anti-fans, trolls or haters, gains methodological importance, providing valuable clues about human behaviours in mediated environments. This dimension of performance, articulated with the notions of materialities of communication and the fan studies, as well as a triangulation between body and social/collective aspects were addressed as a proposal of methodological design by Amaral and Carlos (2016), especially as regards to gaps in audience studies to which the term reception seems not to give account. Thus, performance of taste, as well as the term "performance", can also be understood as a methodological guide to think about such phenomena, which finds a fertile field in studies produced in the Brazilian context.

In that sense, it is important to pay attention to the moment certain performative intentionalities are not met, being ruptured. Just like Goffman (2009) called our attention to the "involuntary gestures" that sometimes go unnoticed and brought up the expressions

transmitted (intentional) and those emitted (involuntary or unconscious), we argue that a proposal for the understanding of performance as method must also consider the *falts, the disarticulations* that occur in it, which affect the audience and the self-image that one wishes to build.[13] This process can occur both in taste performances of fans of a particular artist or genre, for example, when they are "tagged" on websites like Facebook in music events of genres that do not match their identity construction and it becomes visible to their network of friends[14], and in musical performances of artists, who often see themselves in situations as of fall on stage, unintentional exposure of parts of the body, among others, usually getting media visibility[15].

If performance is *olin* and does not cease, it must also be understood from its erasures, its disruptions, since the flow of life is marked by inconsistencies and unpredictable currents. Thus, the attempt to have a "expressive coherence" (PEREIRA DE SÁ; POLIVANOV, 2012) in the narratives of themselves and in the performances of taste is and can only be a fable, an unreachable search, but also guide symbolic and material disputes from the audiences of celebrities, artists and even "ordinary" people. In this way, we observe that the operationalization and the use of the term performance need to take into account such dimensions and questions.

Final remarks

Thinking about performance from the media traversing: their entrances and exits, but especially, the constancies of bodies in the media sphere. How such bodies put themselves in scene, what do they enact? The approach to performance in the field of Communication needs to recognise the very mediatic dynamics as a performative layer. The media are, in themselves, performative assemblages that indicate particular modes of act, look, interact, value.

Performances form the general texture of experience, to the extent that they are historical (articulated to the ways subjects deal with media scenarios, from radio to television, social network websites) and generate arrays of intensification that also need to be politically considered. How these bodies that we are engaging are part of complex media systems, their institutionalization, market and global dispositions? The perspective of performance in Communication needs, therefore, to face the common sense, since it is a condition of sharing and of experiences, of social life and of the spread/spreadable nature

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13   In the final report of research PIBIC CNPq/UFF, Polivanov, Figueiredo and Moraes (2017) investigated different cases of disruptions in identity performances in social network websites, among which we cite entrepreneur Bel Pesce who had her career affected by alleged improprieties in her autobiography, exposed in platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and blogs.

14   Polivanov (2014) reports that informants of her doctoral research, participants of the electronic music scene, controlled tagging function on Facebook, once they discarded a symbolic link of their profiles to events that would not be related to their "identities", such as those of *sertanejo* music.

15   See, for example, the cases of singers Madonna: < https://tinyurl.com/britawardsMadonna> and Anitta: <https://tinyurl.com/anittapremiomultishow>. Accessed on: November 5, 2017.

of networks dynamics. It is through common sense that we observe and are observed, we share and we are shared, and by sharing, we distinguish our life and the life of others. So, we play and we observe, we evaluate and we are evaluated, in a self-reflexive attitude that is constitutive of living in society. In this sense, performances in the media offer structures of the common, points of reference, of standing, of contemplation, of engagement and disengagement. These are issues that deal both with identities and differences.

The challenges of performance studies in Communication include overcoming the binary thinking (reality *versus* fiction) in the assemblages of bodies, since the texture of contemporary experiences concerns the existence of symbolic and self-referential spaces that offer possibilities of subjectivation, imaginative capacities and the recognition of one's own experience with the media as something to be debated and questioned.

When it comes to corporealities, ideas linked to the specificities of cultural experiences in the various cultures emerge. Paths to think singularities in the ways that cultures enact performative experiences in the media are open, especially that which appears to be excessively circumscribed to a context. One could not obliterate the importance of considering also the disturbing, the fantastical, in the desires and obsessions present in bodies in action – a task already debated at length by the precepts of psychoanalysis. We are talking about aesthetics, but also of ethics in the performances. The politics of everyday life, to which the media instrumentalise practices through looks, concepts, categories and technologies, contributing to approach or pull away, make distinctions and judgments, between the classification and the experience, the enjoyment of the sensitive and the appearances of the senses.

Beyond this more epistemological contribution of performance as method it also becomes necessary to consider – for future studies – ways of methodologically operationalizing our analyses of the so multifaceted and diverse communication objects and phenomena as the ones we approach in this article.

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