

# Theoretical Approaches to Study Theatricality in Media Performances:

**Dramas, scripts, actions**

# Abordagens Teóricas para Estudo da Teatralidade em Performances Midiáticas:

**Dramas, roteiros, ações**

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This article proposes to consider the concept of performance in the contemporary media context, as it is necessary to confront the problems of visibility at a time in which, in the face of constant activations of the body via photographs, selfies, and appearances on social networks, values emerge in the experiences that synthesize ways of living in a codified world. Media performances are bodily activations of individuals in media environments involving the development of a “theatrical life” in high visibility contexts and the construction of networks of biographic meaning, e.g., the experienced and the reported, in quotidian dynamics. Media performances, insofar as they are projected for the Other, form speculative

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spaces of exhibition, articulating pleasure and interaction but also surveillance, control and punishment. They imply values linked to narcissism and individualism but also to togetherness and closeness, fostering media intersections and ties between common life, the culture and entertainment industries, and transnational media conglomerates.

Performance, however, is understood in two senses: an object that is speculated on and that introduces research problems in the field of communication, and also as a set of interdisciplinary knowledge that crosses areas of knowledge like Anthropology, Sociology, Psychology, and Theater Arts, etc., and those it is affiliated with.<sup>1</sup> The notion of Performance already includes a wide range of reflections in the field of Communication in Brazil: from the studies on the theatricality of the self (SIBILIA, 2008), to a debate surrounding digital social networks stemming from modern values like consistency and rationality (SÁ and POLIVANOV, 2012), to the performances of taste on social networks (AMARAL, 2014) and the ways that fans stage affections (AMARAL and MONTEIRO, 2013 and SÁ, 2016), to cite just a few of the important works. It appears to be relevant to make new theoretical movements in the attempt to facilitate conceptual reorganizations and methodological advances. One of the primary tools of questioning the conceptual norms in a field involves the debate and incorporation of conceptual vocabulary that calls inclinations/leanings stemming from new objects and questions into discussion.

With the basic assumption that the concept of Performance — already widely used in Communication — derives most centrally from the studies of Psychology, it is fitting to consider the bibliography that has already addressed the dimension of the “self” and the “Other” in media environments. In a paper from 1934, “Mind, Self and Society,” George Mead (1934) discusses the creation space between the “self” and the “Other” from the perspective of the regulation of “social institutions” and proposes that what we understand as the “self” is actually a response that individuals give to life in society arising from the consensual criterion of evaluation and expressiveness. The author suggests that the paradox between the “self” and the “Other” constructs a space for choices, stagings, and expressions that negotiate with established and “accepted” widespread patterns and, consequently, will be repositioned in a new context. In spite of not specifically addressing the media tendencies in the systems

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1 To better clarify the different uses of the senses of performance, we write “Performance” capitalized, when referring to the field of knowledge, and “performance” uncapitalized when referring to observable objects.

of representation, the author is understood to be referring to the media when discussing the mediations between individuals and social institutions.

Goffman (1969) moves to listing the roles, representations and tendencies of the “self” in daily life, drawing on theater metaphors to incorporate a more theatrical vocabulary in Performance and Communication studies. For the author, the individual presents themselves by playing roles in quotidian situations, taking on a position of constant negotiation with the different environments and rationales of staging involved. In summary, Mead is referring to creation spaces, environments, and movements surrounding consensual dynamics, while Goffman ties performatic practices themselves to the performed roles and their insertion into the construction of values and stigmas around the individuals. Both authors are fundamental to understanding ideas about control, image management and the structural dimensions of performances, as can be seen in the subsequent works by Sibilia (2010 and 2015) and Bruno (2008) and the entire foundation of what is represented in a criticism of the control over the actions of individuals, the enterprise of private life, the instruction methods of the staging of the self, and the performance of the self in daily life.

Sustaining this hypothesis and attempting to open up routes for the discussion surrounding the expressive forms of the performative dimension and its experiences in daily life, we use the tradition of theater studies in a movement to reestablish the theoretical bases where the debate about Performance was constructed in order to question its uses. The idea of theatricality emerges from the foundational concept of the theatrical nature of social phenomena; it emerged simultaneously with the idea of literariness (from the field of literature), with the purpose of defining the particularity or specificity of theater to differentiate it from other performance arts (FÉRAL, 2015, p. 81). Beyond its uses in theater theory, the concept of theatricality has spread in the attempt to find common parameters in staging contexts, whether it be from individual or collective practices or in theories on acting or aesthetics.

Since the transition from the 19th to the 20th century, theatricality has questioned the limits of the stage and the scene, expanded the theatrical nature of phenomena to include daily life and fostered what Josette Féral calls the “condition of the rise of the theatrical” (p. 82), i.e., the ideas of theater framing and frameworks from diverse types of phenomena. Féral takes up Bernard Dort’s line of questioning from his 1971 essay “The Sociological Condition of Theatrical Mise en Scène” in his book “Théâtre réel” from the premise that the “theatrical” results not only in the changes in an artistic field but also in the changes that

affect the social fabric. In other words, the theatrical status of social phenomena becomes understood by the lenses and terminologies from the theatrical field, bequeathing the area of Applied Social Sciences with a vocabulary expansion that permeates studies in Anthropology (beginning with the idea of social drama, widely used by Victor Turner), Social Psychology (coming from Goffman's principle studies on the "invention of the self in daily life), and urban studies with communicational intersections beginning with the innumerable uses of the term "scene": "cultural scene" as used by Straw (2002 and 2015), "music scene" as used by Janotti and Sá (2015), etc. What is observed, from both the semantic and theoretical points of view, is that terms like "drama," "staging" and "scene" are used as resources to frame the media and social phenomena, in an attempt to operate a narrative with interpretative ends.

The theatrical frameworks of social phenomena are thus expressed as the changes themselves that occur in societies, affecting the theatrical status of actions, what we frame as performatic and what we judge to be the field of the strictly theatrical and/or the social. Beginning with the idea of *mise en scène*, Bernard Dort reiterates that the frames with which we view the social are always reordered by what we consider theatrical and that these dimensions of theatricality may be spatial and temporal variables. Using Dort's assertion, we develop our principal argument that maintains the importance of reestablishing the uses of the idea of theatricality to address media phenomena. In the era of connection and experiences on digital social networks, there is a path that goes "from the hidden interior to the visible behavior," as Sibilia affirms, and this is one of the main foundations of the integration of fiction and theatricality in the contemporary social fabric that the media is a part of. At the same time that it integrates fiction into the social fabric, the idea of theatricality modulates the idea of Performance insofar as the term also is linked to the "qualities of performance" or the "poetic activities centered on the gesture, body in movement, the necessary exposure of the gaze of the other that grants social existence" (SIBILIA, 2008).

The notion of theatricality emerges, however, as a tool to understand the actions of individuals in a world that is profoundly self-conscious, reflective and obsessed with simulations and stagings across all social spheres. Theatricality becomes a lens through which we see the Other, in its dramatic relation to life and in the face of innumerable possibilities of staging on digital social networks. Theatricality is the dramatic spectrum that involves staging, whether it be by the arrangement of the bodies placed on stage, or by the poetics of the space where the action occurs, delivering a display of power games over truthfulness and, consequently, the experience of individuals. Theatricality, referred to in this article as

based on Féral's conceptual proposal, appears on two fronts: 1. material, the way that bodies and spaces become visible and presentable to individuals in media contexts, the way in which this appearance constitutes an episteme through which we see and are seen, judged and are judged, understand and are understood; 2. experiential, or how the practical aspects of theatricality work in performance contexts on digital social networks, from engagement and from the dynamic present in the means and different ways of triggering affection in profoundly self-referential environments.

The focus of the studies on theatricality is always action, understanding this as the disruption of immobility, the gesture of activity that unleashes a process of communication through which diverse forms of engagement are constructed. Action is the material quality where hypotheses about the origin of gesture and the possible effects and intentions originate, building a set of variables — starting with an individual's position, as available in a media environment — that are constructed as motors and hypotheses of investigation. The different ways of facing theatrical actions have spread through from the Arts to the Social Sciences, acting on the ways that human actions are understood.

Theatricality also involves the idea of the intangibility of actions. Ambiguity and doubt integrate the mobilizing capacity of actions, denying the possibility of seeking the certainty, origin, or ontology of the acts. The actions on digital social networks are performative layers that display, in themselves, their theatricality. It is the introduction of a value system on the actions of individuals in public spaces that resemble those established by the rationales of entertainment and the media. This focus on the actions and surfaces of the actions directs us to the reflection on what is established in Discourse Theory as the study of enunciation scenes. Subsequently, we propose to address articulations surrounding what media performances “make us see”: a murky set of possibilities in the “search for truth” of the actions that compel us to adhere to the theatricality of the acts.

### **Theatricality in enunciation scenes**

Discussing theatricality means deepening Performance studies by more deliberately opening it to the act, the action, and the theatrical — that which does, how it is done, and in what context (AMARAL, POLIVANOV and SOARES, 2018). Part of what is called the self-consciousness of actions means recognizing that such actions are made “for someone”, for the visible or invisible Other, an “imagined audience” or

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“intended audience”, when considering the performances on social networking sites. The attempt is to understand dynamics of construction of identity and sociality, which can be individual or collective, on a scale from daily routine to unique events, sacred or profane, ephemeral or long-lasting, involving common individuals or celebrities and more or less mediated by information and communication technologies (ICTs). The idea of theatricality aids methodologically in the discussion on performance in the media, which more emphatically highlights the dramatic aspects of performances in media environments. Theatricality allows us to visualize the dramaturgical dimension of performances, their scripts and possible experiences.

Reinstating the concept of theatricality and undertaking theoretical movements in the media debate implies recognizing the importance of a nomenclature already widely used in language and discourse theories: the scene. Though theatricality is part of the social fabric and thus the daily routine, thinking about the environments of the scenes, their framings, their ins-and-outs, and that which is enunciated invites us to recognize specific methods of appearing and convoking figures of enunciation. From the broad debate about enunciative scenes in Communication (FAUSTO NETO, 2007) and above all its analytical possibilities in the processes of mediatization, enunciative scenes stand out as specifications in the spaces of enunciation, or in environments characterized by the agency of individuals. It deals with specific configurations of enunciative agency for “the speaker” and “the spoken to.” In the enunciative scene “the speaker” or “the spoken to” are enunciative agencies, places composed of utterances that negotiate with the temporalities inscribed in the acts: at what time, under what circumstance such discourses emerge, opening space for the formation of strong speculative frames of engagement and adhesion by those who observe the enunciated. Thus, confining oneself to the scenes necessarily emphasizes considering the method of the composition of the intersections of specialities, temporalities, and theatricality of the individuals. These reflections lie close to the set of definitions of Performance in the studies on speaking, textuality, and poetics of speech in the work of Paul Zumthor (1993, 1997, 2000).

The enunciative scenes are important matrices for the discussion of Performance in dialogue with Language studies (AUSTIN, 1990), especially from Austin’s premise and debate on the “performative”<sup>2</sup>—

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2 The performative emerges in statements that, when made in the first person, in the affirmative and active voice, “carry out an action” (“to perform” means “to carry out”). “I declare the session open”; “I order you to leave”; “I forgive you” are statements that, at the exact moment they are made, carry out the indicated action. In this sense, saying something is doing something. Think of the performative status as an instance of theatricality in media performances on digital social networks: the start of relationships, the end of agreements, cutting ties, etc.

how words and actions establish social statuses, reactivate the quotidian experience, and create liminal<sup>3</sup> spaces in the relations between actions. The performative, as considered by Austin, is central in the debate on theatricality, insofar as it emphasizes the temporal and declarative aspect of the acts. The exchange of “I do” at a wedding, cutting a ribbon at a political ceremony, or countries declaring war are words that initiate actions and cause agency over the experience. In the context of digital social networks, the change of emotional status, the alignment of political beliefs, the criticism of cultural products and other performative inclinations initiate relational statuses among individuals: they draw people together or apart and cut ties of friendship and community. The performative status of actions on digital social networks creates liminal spaces in the social fabric, understanding liminality as a sphere bordering on rites of passage of the experienced and its relations with other social environments and the reordering of the mobilizations surrounding the individuals who are the protagonists of the performative.

Recognizing theatricality in the debate on enunciative scenes presupposes facing the different spaces and environments where these actions emerge from and how the speculation is part of the space itself. In the media environment, the idea of intention (which is so dear to the idea of theatricality) appears as a perspective which places us in the face of the removal of the transparency of actions. However, we should point out the connections between what is evident and an intentional-invisible that is made present by the appearance. Theatricality presupposes recognizing a certain “theater intention,” as Féral suggests, in which the event, the speculation and the performance appear tied together, triangulating ways of seeing and being seen. Féral highlights movements that incorporate this triangulation: the citation that emerges from the quotidian experience, the semiotization of the spaces, and the displacement of signs which make simulacra appear. Theatricality would therefore be in an intention of theater whose pact would need to be reiterated and constantly updated. It would not be inherent to the enunciative scenes, but rather, it would be operationalized through discursive organizations and foreseen pacts. Theatricality, thus, would neither be related to the nature of the object that invests (individual, space, event) nor strictly to the simulacra, illusion, appearance, or fiction. More than a property, it is a process, produced from the frameworks that

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3 The idea of liminality was widely debated, mainly in Anthropology, as corresponding to a moment on the edge of rites of passage: a ritual phase where the subjects present themselves as indeterminate, in a type of transitional process of social “death,” to next “be reborn” and reintegrate into the social structure. For more details: <http://ea.fffch.usp.br/conceito/liminaridade-e-communitas-victor-turner>.

create another space, becoming the space of the Other that gives way to the otherness of the individuals and to the emergence of the fiction.

I would like to identify with more detail what I call the media environment and to focus on the space specific to digital social networks and the call to “theatrical bios” (BARBA, 1994) in its implications of power and surveillance over individuals. In the experience on digital social networks, the simple exercise of looking at the action of the Other includes theatricality, putting the gestures of this Other in the speculative space. The split in the space<sup>4</sup> establishes an outside and an inside of theatricality, not only the emergence of a fracture in the space, a split in the real that invites a space of otherness, but the formation itself of this space through the eye of the viewer, a gaze that creates alterations in the qualitative relationships: “The other becomes an actor be it because they show that they represent or be it because the gaze of the viewer transforms them into an actor — in spite of themselves — and is incorporated in the theatricality,” (FÉRAL, p. 87). The theatricality on digital social networks consists of both placing individuals in the other divided space — possible thanks to the framing effect through which I inscribe what I see — and transforming an event into a sign.

The constant activations on online social networks involving algorithm-induced invitations can be thought of as the ways that we are routinely summoned to act on a global and public scale or that which is called, almost instinctively by authors of the concept of theatricality, “theater desire”: a taste for playfulness, pleasure in the creation of illusion, projection of simulacrum, infinite source of simulacrum of the self that is strengthened in a networked life that daily invites us to expose fragments of the quotidian experience in the attempt to form networks of compatibility and affection but that also results in systems of dispute, exclusion and disruption.

### **Guidelines for the Study of the Theatricalities of Media Performances**

The study of the theatricality of media performances is established, with the objective of strengthening the debate on Performance in the field of Communication. It stems from two interpretive

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<sup>4</sup> It is possible to consider different ways of referring to this space through theories that think of Performance as a transitional space (Winnicott), a liminal space (Turner) and a framework space (Goffman).



movements that are derived from methodological guidelines which are the foundation for visualizing the theatrical dimensions of analizable performances.

1. The study of dramaturgy: When referring to dramaturgy, I am proposing the same epistemological movement that Victor Turner undertook with his notion of social drama, or the development of models of social conflict analysis from the metaphor of theater drama. The concept of social drama was formulated by Turner in his 1957 book “Schism and Continuity in an African Society: A Study of Ndembu Village Life” and emphasizes the sociological dimension present in Turner’s proposition insofar as it is possible to understand how conflict is a production mechanism of the dynamic and unit of social life. On the descriptive level, understood by conflict, quarrels and misunderstandings occasionally emerge in the most diverse ways in the daily life of the region studied by the author. (CAVALCANTI, 2013)

Generated by a break in some expected behavior among the social actors, these fights unfold, as Turner discovered, in a process that follows a set sequence of actions encompassed by the four known phases of social drama: 1) Crisis: The recognition of a crisis that interrupts daily life making latent tensions inherent to relationships and social interactions apparent. 2) Expansion of the crisis: the affected individuals/actors act and activate their networks, neighbor and friend relationships; the crisis gradually grows, reaching new spheres and involving more and more actors. 3) Regeneration: Some of the involved individuals/actors mobilize in search of solutions and reconciliation attempts that always involves carrying out ritual actions and broad collective rituals. 4) Rearrangement or split: if successful, the attempts in the previous phase involve a rearrangement and redefinition of positions and relationships and, if unsuccessful, result in the group breaking apart, translated into a division along family lines and the creation of a new organization.

I add that the social actors in the dramas analyzed by Victor Turner are consequently transformed into vivid characters, full of peculiar features and characteristics, qualities and defects. The experience inside this structure of a social drama emphasizes dramaturgical characteristics in these individuals. Their experience in the development of the drama is subjective and produces reflection and can alter the individual and their group, activating self-consciousness and thus control over actions and premises.

The frightening, comical and tragic dimensions of performances in the media put into play social dramas that are activated by social actors in high visibility contexts. In his book “From Ritual to the

Theater,” Turner proposes the notion of social drama as dramatic occurrences that activate beginnings, crises, and outcomes of daily actions that materialize in the form of debating how societies learn their dramas and how memories are part of these actions.

For Turner, the public actions observable in the social sphere form temporal and spatial structures that imply framing them in a dramatic perspective. In many cases, the criticism of evoking structuralist assumptions in the interpretation of social phenomena — in the static and prescriptive treatment of the dramatic framings that result from these actions — weighs upon the author. It is interesting for us to think of this movement less in terms of structures and more in terms of frameworks for public actions of online individuals in a high visibility context, in the attempt to recognize that we are routinely invited to reflect on posts on social networks, their objectives, motivations, activations, and outcomes.

In this sense, it appears central to postulate the existence of dramatic frameworks that start from statements and question the relations between what is said and the reason why what is said, is said. Thinking about these frameworks means stepping away from the field of discourse, observing from outside the scene, and creating a divide from the elements that are both highlighted by the statement and recognizable from the point of view of the observer. The movement of stepping back in the face of an episode prompts us to recognize the tessitura of the intrigue and the memory of the acts, how such narratives are made present and in what context. This “setting the scene” from the online statements includes that which we call theatricality.

The theatricality in media performances points to the recognition of social dramas and agency in media phenomena such as outbreaks of crises among politicians, revelations among celebrities, and break-ups of various types among individuals. Our proposal is to outline what we call the dramaturgical approach to online performatic conflicts: What is the type of drama such actions invoke? From the concepts Turner proposed, we will try to frame them in the approach to media performances. The idea of rupture seems fundamental to address the breakdown of pacts in formal social relations. Since the post-2013 political polarization that is experienced daily, the public announcement of dissent is brought about by the fact of “making something public”: the esteem for a politician, for a historic situation, for the engagement with a cause. It is understood, from Turner’s indications, that ruptures are triggers symbolic of confrontations or clashes, violating some previously indicated pact, showing that actions can be translated as individual

gestures or point to the collective. The ruptures fray the preexisting relational fabric by misunderstandings, controversies, “tattling” or noise that can be purposefully produced.

Ruptures activate crises that tend to expand and involve other individuals, situations and institutions, resulting in a wider sphere than that of the conflicting relationships. Turner employs the term “crisis escalation” to describe the exponential growth of the rupture and to activate the formation of the conflict. It is when the crisis is initiated that, in fact, theatricality is built in the social sphere: What are the dramatic positions of the social actors? Heroes, villains, arbitrators, innocent bystanders? What emerges from the script? Humor, drama, terror? The crisis pulls together the triangulation of actions to the fictional current running through the social sphere, using the inflections surrounding danger and suspense, when actors “wear masks” and position themselves in the scene constructed in the social fabric itself. The crises build liminal zones in the media performances that can be thought of as boundary lines on which the fictional diegesis are built, a creation space that is reflective and indicative of the tension zones of the actions.

The corrective actions, in turn, limit the spread of the crisis, working as mechanisms to adjust and regenerate, formal or informal, institutionalized or not, operated so that the disturbance is contained. Typologies of corrective actions, just as their complexity varies in relation to the institutional interests that inevitably emerge as a tool of counseling, mediation, arbitration, legitimizing forms of resolution in public rituals. Examining corrective actions in social dramas invites a self-conscious perspective, which slows the signs of reducing the spread of the crises. Social dramas also promote reintegrations that are the organizations around the disturbed, in the social legitimation of the schism, in the accommodation of the points of view and in the fissions or reconciliations. Turner warns that these practices form overlapping temporal and atemporal structures forging nuclei of cohesion and interests in the search for the foundations of the actions.

From the methodological point of view, those invested in the link between performance and social drama form an important connection in the tradition of anthropological and theater studies. I would like to highlight an approach that takes the media dimension of social dramas into consideration. Diana Taylor (2013) analyzes the innumerable demonstrations of what she calls the “sadness archive” on the occasion of Princess Diana’s death in 1997, from the links between the tragic story and the theatricality of the productions in the media. Taylor uses Turner’s social drama method in an attempt to define the stages and

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intensification of the theatrical artifacts of the actions, working as a tool to demarcate the actions from their theatricalities. For Taylor, Diana's death is intensified in its global character insofar as it negotiates with a set of acts that highlight the way that societies present their dramas. From the structural ruptures (Diana's divorce from Charles and estrangement from the Royal Family); from the crisis of the drama of her tragic death (highlighting the image of the "tragic lover"); from the healing actions through the performance of fans at her funeral in the acts and cultural forms of celebrating death; and finally, in the way that Princess Diana is reinstated to social life through the media, i.e., the ghost of Lady Di shown in films, series, and pop culture attractions, Taylor conceives of substantial methodological indications for the development of analyses that consider the dramaturgy of the performances on digital social networks — key to the theoretical-methodological proposal synthesized in this article.

2. Study of performance scripts: Every production follows a script, a "paradigmatic configuration that relies on supposedly live participants, structured around a schematic plot, with an intended purpose (though adaptable)" (TAYLOR, 2013, p. 41). The proposal is to structure a method of observing the media performances in social networks as scripts of meetings and separations, i.e., a presented staged narrative: a group of individuals and a stage, in an enunciative set, a cultural context. We would like to propose a method of script analysis as a way of understanding the performances as the summary, outline, draft that gives information about the scenes or situations. Barthes (2003) has already proposed that thinking through the scripts' premise means recognizing the existence of something previous, performed before, a "portable structure" that carries the weight of accumulations and repetitions. Thinking through the idea of script provides us with benefits to recognize both the implied in the stagings (and to try to recover these implied situations through primary or secondary data) and that which is explicit, the clichés of the stagings, and through stereotypes above all.

We call attention to the fact that investigating media performances demands not only an attentive look at the symbolic field, what the performance acts want to propose while "producing meaning," but also at something non-hermeneutic that involves the materialities of the bodies and objects that affect and produce presence — to invoke the term that Gumbrecht (2010) discusses. Though such a presence may be "filed" by the media, it forms the understanding of what addresses an ever unfinished process, under construction, though certain performance acts and their registers — like concerts and theater presentations — can carry the idea of ending or conclusion. In Taylor's perspective, these are not finished

in themselves, they are always read and interpreted in different historical contexts, shedding light on theoretic and empirical frameworks of each era, causing effects, reverberations, and reworkings even after their supposed end.

What Taylor is claiming is part of what Derrida (2001) has also mentioned: files are always living and ready to be read from the perspective of the present, evoking a procedural dimension of the performance that only “appears” static in relation to History. However, it is precisely the historical roots that place the files less as a reflection of the past and more as what was possible to be done in that context, e.g., what implications existed for a staging to be produced in the way that it was. Viewing archival images from the perspective of the possible performance scripts is, according to Taylor, a metaphorical exercise around the performances and quotidian actions and, as Goffman posits, always re-elaborated and reconstructed.

The great script in the history of the Americas, as Taylor reminds us, is of Discovery: characters are sketched in these historical narratives (the discoverer, the natives, etc.). Such historical narratives haunt the present when they are reenacted, presented as being unedited, able to “frighten” our understanding with the idea of another possible ending. Methodologically, the scripts impel us to more attentively view the gestures, attitudes, tones — simultaneously production and action, activation and framing of dramas. The production shows elements like meeting, conflict, resolution, conclusion. A friction zone between the social actors and characters is outlined, the appearance of cultural agencying in innumerable ways. On the method of the script as performance analysis, Taylor suggests the analytical observation of at least three performance fields that form the dramaticity:

1. The physical location where the presentation is given, a “scene,” that denotes intentionality in artistic and political terms, signals conscious strategies of exhibition. The author suggests the idea of a material stage as well as codified environments (countries, cities, streets, etc.). “Places allow us to think about the possibilities and limits of action. However, the action also defines the place,” (TAYLOR, 2013, p. 62).
2. The bodiliness of the social actors or the social construction of bodies in defined contexts, the visual details, the peculiarities of appearance, gestures and speech. The tension zones between “plot” and “character” and what is presented as an expressive solution.

3. The staging of actions as structures that follow formulas, prearrange results and also open space to think of inversions, parodies and changes. “The script forces us to situate ourselves in relation to it: as participants, witnesses or spectators,” (TAYLOR, 2013, p. 62). The staging of actions commonly conjures up past situations that are part of a collection of memories, housing a capacity for meaningfulness.

With Taylor’s guidance, we propose to think of performance from its media intersections: the entrances, exits, and the continuity of the bodies in the media sphere — how such bodies are put in the scene and what makes it theatrical. The approach to performance needs to recognize the media dynamic itself as a performance layer. The media forms, in itself, performance agencies that indicate particular modes of acting, looking, interacting, and giving value.

### Final considerations

The purpose of this article is to present theoretical-methodological guidelines to study the actions of individuals on digital social networks, viewing these actions as performatic frameworks that establish social dramas, are organized into performatic scripts and propose different forms of engagement and online experience. It reviews a collection of fundamental authors in the fields of Communication, Anthropology, Sociology and Theater Arts in order to try to understand the practices of online performatic clashes that form the principal support of the “media bios” (SODRÉ, 2013, p. 1).

The media bios are the media split applied to daily life and the historical existence of the individual in a media ecosystem. In the conditions of contemporary civilization with heavy urbanization and market-based relationships, it deals with an exacerbated inflection of the imaginary and the narrative plots of the fictional in mediated quotidian life. The effects of fascination surrounding the intense process of turning individuals into celebrities result in ways of living online that strengthens the ability to perceive sensations in a physical presence. “The aesthetic phenomenon becomes a product for the stimulation of life, hereafter directed to the industry and the market. It is, however, more *aiesthesis* than *ethos* — though one can speak of an ethos of aesthetics, in other words, of an intelligibility of the sensitive capable of moving towards an ethics or a social architecture of values,” (SODRÉ, 2013, p. 2).

The challenges in understanding the acts of online individuals in contemporaneity unfold. The reflections on Performance spark the debate on the intangibility of truth in the actions. Complex interpretation frameworks emerge from phenomena in which theatricality becomes a value for online experience. The premise surrounds the field of dramaturgy, the possible results inside a determined script. The tessitura of the conflict of media life requires different types of engagements in the set of observable online practices.

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## Abstract

Debating the nature of the media performances requires apprehending its theatricality: the drama, the script, the fictional links that keep potent the plots involving subjects. In a deeply self-referential context, in which positions and scenarios in digital social networks trigger conflicting points of view about individuals, it is necessary to question: what are the variables around the adhesion to performance actions in digital social network contexts? The analysis of controversies involving subjects in high visibility contexts modulate different ways of theater conflict, triggering a pragmatic of network action and their places of performance in different performative frames.

**Keywords:** Performance. Theatricality. Social drama. Digital social networks.

## Resumo

Debater a natureza das performances midiáticas requer apreender sua teatralidade: a dramaturgia, o roteiro, os enlaces ficcionais que mantêm potentes as tramas envolvendo sujeitos. Num contexto profundamente autorreferente, em que posicionamentos e encenações em redes sociais digitais acionam conflitantes pontos de vista sobre indivíduos, é preciso questionar: quais as variáveis em torno da adesão a ações performáticas em contextos de rede sociais digitais? A análise de controvérsias envolvendo sujeitos em contextos de alta visibilidade modulam diferentes formas de teatralizar conflitos, acionando uma pragmática da ação em rede e seus lugares de atuação em diferentes quadros performáticos.

**Palavras-chave:** Performance. Teatralidade. Drama social. Redes sociais digitais.

## Resumen

Debatir la naturaleza de las performances en los medios requiere comprender su teatralidad: la dramaturgia, el guión, los vínculos ficticios que mantienen potentes las tramas que involucran temas. En un contexto profundamente autorreferencial, en el que las posiciones y la puesta en escena en las redes sociales digitales desencadenan puntos de vista conflictivos sobre los individuos, es necesario preguntarse: ¿cuáles son las variables en torno a la adhesión a las acciones de performance en contextos de redes sociales digitales? El análisis de controversias que involucran a sujetos en contextos de alta visibilidad modulan diferentes formas de teatralizar conflictos, desencadenando una acción pragmática de la red y sus lugares de actuación en diferentes marcos de actuación.

**Palabras clave:** Performance. Teatralidad. Drama social. Redes sociales digitales.

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