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Locating Media in Cultural Theories

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Abstract- This paper examines means of facilitating research on media as a critical component of contemporary culture based on assessments of recent publications on media. The primary target is in the fundamentally heuristic value of social theories relative to the topic. Based on semiotics, practice, and, to a much lesser degree, speech act theory, analysts generate constructs wherein media often deviate from the conceptual horizons in respective schemes. Reading Derrida's views on speech act theory suggests that an endeavor to resolve the mismatch demands the decomposition of core concepts of a theory. Just as Anderson's formulation casts a delicate light on the use of semiotics in media research, media prefigured through the lenses of the performative forces us to rethink its presence in everyday occurrence as a problematic unthought. The paper concludes that the application of speech act theory to media is a plausible solution to the problems so far encountered if accompanied by historical perspectives on the formation of illocutionary acts.

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Introduction

Media, as constituting mass-produced vehicles of information, existed long before Benjamin made his proclamation about the end of a cultural epoch.[1] However, media's sphere of influence has never diversified as quickly as in our current period. Media today replicate in unfamiliar ways everyday across the globe,[2] and in versions of the newly emerged media culture, the difficulty of conceptualizing the unthought is no less problematic than in metropolitan counterparts. This occurs because media practices in various cultures acquire individuality, giving shape to a collective sense of the present in a way that is unique to the respective locality. To facilitate research on the formative power of media in a culturally sensitive manner, a method through which one can conceptualize the modus operandi beneath the surface of media practice is needed. What type of analytic strategy should we anticipate? Among debates about the consequences of cultural dynamics over the past few decades, those pertaining to media deserve attention for two contrasting reasons. First, vindication of the domination of technology in daily life arose in an ever more tangible fashion with the integration of the trans-national networks of communications media. Second, embedded in the core instrumentalities for the processing of information available to the masses, media compounds the cultural complexity of the present. From romantic novels to participatory audiences linked via a simple notification service, study of the topics of media, as a disciplinary subject, invariably encompasses emerging fields of empirical research, which show how media connect with diverse social phenomena in a manner so far unidentified.

The task of this paper was to examine means of facilitating research on media as a critical component of contemporary culture. To limit the scope of my discussion, I rely on recent publications about social implications of media, especially works by Andreas Hepp and Nick Couldry. Based on the premise that contemporary life is irrevocably mediated, Hepp argues that a recipient sensitive theory should consist of three mutually related components: culture, communication, and media mediation. The central thesis revolves around what Hepp calls the metaprocess that communications technologies trigger through mediation into social life. Depicting how communication resources contribute to the making of unfamiliar norms characteristic of the present, Hepp argues that our lives are media centered. In doing so, Hepp sheds light on the molding effects of media on culture.[3]

Although my attention is limited to the works of these authors, a cursory examination of recent publications on media revealed that analysts concur on the urgency of coping with the current situation based on interdisciplinary efforts. The use of insights gained through media study is no longer a choice but, rather, a necessity. The disciplinary fusions that arise in response to the contemporary global setting open otherwise imperceptible horizons on the latest phase of modernity. We have seen attempts to build a bridge between this discipline and several other branches of the social sciences, from audience perspectives on media content to the practice theory; multiple foci on media have accelerated debate about culture in the respective fields

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[1] Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility: Second Version", in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings. Vol 3. 1935–1938*, translated by Edmund Jephcott, Howard Eiland, and others, pp. 101–133, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, 2002.

[2] On media's impact on emotions, Karin Wahl-Jorgensen, *Emotions, Media and Politics*, 2019, Polity Press. Also see Valerie Alia, *The New Media Nation: Indigenous Peoples and Global Communication*, 2010, Berghahn Books, New York, London, and Ashis Nandy, "Introduction: Indian Popular Cinema as Slum's-Eye View of Politics." in *The Secret Politics of Our Desire: Innocence, Culpability and Indian Popular Cinema*, Ed. Ashis Nandy, 1998, pp. 1–18.

[3] Andreas Hepp, *Cultures of mediatization,* Polity, 2012.

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and raised a new set of issues. Although the study of media remains a problem that is not highly congenial to the original training of analysts in certain areas, recent publications on the cultural impacts of media demonstrate the extent to which the attention given to the topic has substantially expanded the research potential.

Another reason for the growing concern about the position of theory in media research arises from the predominantly heuristic status of the analytic constructs on media. From the classic dictum about the centrality of media as the component of message to Hepp's mediatization, media studies have been in search of a methodically viable theory. This need has been partially met with pragmatic, but often short-lived, alliances with socio-cultural theories. While concerned with case studies of media, research is affected by a constant pull from micro-level ethnographic foci. Sensitive to this immanent onus, empirical case studies justify themselves as part of the collective processes within which tasks of the discipline are located. From this perspective, Hepp's mediatization may not be a theory on media practice but, rather, akin to a paradigmatic revision for deduction of a generalized diagnosis about the state of culture. An awareness of the imminent collective inheres in Hepp's views (and to a large extent in Couldry's) on the impact of media on culture, but it leaves little room for the unthought, giving priority to the discovery of normative workings of how culture may transmute through mediatization.

The following discussion relates to the question raised earlier: Why are conventional theoretical frameworks insufficient for media? The effort here is much less than an attempt to seek an alternative: If theories are useful for explaining why media often trigger the unexpected, leading us to unthought of theories, are they not of some use for illuminating the locale of the other in media? I hope that this paradoxical overture to failure, if acceptable, justifies an attempt to delve into theories to capture some of the haunting shadows that elude premeditated schemes of analysis.

The critique of the characteristically relative status of theories mobilized in media analysis supports my postulate. Couldry argues for the need for an inherently iconoclastic stance on theories applied to media analysis. He calls for socially oriented theory in media study. Couldry modifies the importance attached to subjects in conventional media studies, "media considered as objects, texts, apparatuses of perception or production process", and highlights the practice as an alternative. Couldry writes that "a practical approach to media frames its questions, by reference to what people are doing in relation to media".[4] This assumes that media affect the ways that people relate to the world through active reciprocity rather than in isolation as autonomous instruments. The task is to detect the sociological significance of media by reference to its impacts in use. Couldry's claim about the relevance of looking at practice, rather than "audience", seems reasonable for social scientists who approach people as regenerating actors based on their reflexive mediation. First, in the light of the analytic potential that audience research promises, this claim is audacious in the notion that practice presupposes an autonomous formation derived from actions. When applying practice theories, analysts invoke subjects while being forced to contextualize them in a social context that often denies their potential. Couldry's departure from field-level raw reality reflects the post-modernist notion of agency, against the prevailing image of media as the dominant power.

Ethnographic studies of audience in the "non-west" have proven that theories deduced from specialized disciplines are useful for exposing generalized patterns of cultural modernity among those who face media in non-western contexts. But then, why discuss mediatization? The problems, if any, stem from the fundamental axiom to be followed in the execution of the theory in question.

If the metaphor of the subject being entangled by the web of culture à la Geertz applies to the mediatized west, we will see how practice perspectives simultaneously set media research on diverse analytical strategies. But this leads to our second thought about Couldry. As we will see, media practices elude fixated analytic frameworks, instead manifesting in the forms of the collective, which are tendentiously ephemeral. This tendency manifests itself in dialectics of mechanical reproductions of cultural practice and the collective but highly subjective consequences that ensue illogically, often in no premeditated fashion. Indeed, as recent publications on media demonstrate, ethnographic micro-sociology promises viable approaches to media, potentially opening a rich analytic horizon. Nevertheless, by allowing us to examine the consequences of media to the lives of receivers, it generates problems of its own, i.e., the contingent unpremeditated specificities of media culture arising from the field-level investigation of a particular social group or community. One of these concerns the outcomes of social processes triggered by agents that are not easily objectified in sociological terms. If actors generate sociological reality by doing something in relation to media, how do they mutate the consequence of localized perspectives in collective forms? Couldry making reference to the sociology of Durkheim, suggests the symbolic dimension of social facts, and anticipates the use of practice for the exploration of sociologic phenomena in the late modern period. Couldry argues that the practice perspective based on classical sociologic thinking should not be circumscribed in semiotics. Then, what is the

[4] Nick Couldry, *Media, Society, World: Social Theory and Digital Media Practice*, Polity Press, UK, p. 35.

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conceptual basis for the adoption of practice perspective?

In social science, attention to localized practices has been an established methodological procedure. Nevertheless, the fluidity of media practices in the latest phase of transnationality forces us to rethink the validity of the overture to the object of analysis. A question is the status of the practice perspective. Is it still a viable tool to conceptualize processes of contemporary transmutation? If there is a hiatus between the micro-level modus vivendi of media and the macro-level implications, what constitutes an analytic procedure capable of coping with the ethicopolitical dimension of this mediatized state? Is the practice perspective a remnant of the historic past now superseded?

I argue that media practice locates semiotically organized originals in new indexical relationships with their potential receivers and generates a system of mediatization. The significance of what one may refer to as indexical relocation is fundamentally beyond semiotic interpretation because signs in this case do not undergo significant change. Hepp rightly captures this repetitive reproduction as the fundamental basis for the cultural mutation, but I hold that media practices exhibit processes which escape the attention of analysts.

To substantiate the point I begin with a brief discussion about the location of media in the topology of cultural analysis. I propose to map media practice in this topology by reference to the components, or axioms of analytic logic, endowed with instrumentalities linking data with respective perspectives. In doing so, I find it relevant to focus on two major perspectives on signs, i.e., Saussure's semiology and the Peircean theory of sign.

I. Sign Theories and Media

The term topology predicates uses of premeditated plans, based on some calculus, often for the sake of certain predictions.[5] By locating theories in media research, the task of my discussion does not include disclosing their shortcomings for the sake of criticism. As we will see, the topology of a theory misfits the location where the premeditated scheme tendentiously loses its target and encounters unthought. The task here is to illuminate the nature of theories, not put them on the periphery by means of better theories. Then, what if semiotics, as a type of explanatory framework, comes under this subalternist scrutiny, and what type of problematics hitherto invisible come to the forefront?

In the case of theories on sign, the topology consists of several spheres organized by components for the definition of semantic value. In the classical structuralist perspective, signs are endowed with materiality, but primarily for the realization of referential meaning. The meaning, or the signified, of the signifier is conceptualized as a function of the difference between signs, primarily at the level of the signifiers. In the Peircean model, the semantic components also consist of the sign, but those are divided into three components, i.e., sign, sign data (or object), and interpretant or deduced signified. In contrast to the dyadic Saussurean model, Peirce's triadic model has an advantage because of its capacity of showing how certain semantic components obtain significance in particular use. However, despite the difference in approach to the question of meaning, i.e., the way in which information is conveyed by cultural device, sign theories exhibit weaknesses in capturing certain aspects of media. What causes the problematic relation between media and cultural theories?

The answer lies in the inherent ideology of sign theories as sciences of meaning built on the premise that meaning can be predicated as a positive substance subject to objectification based on methodically determined rules.

I argue that one way to tackle the question of how this premise generates a problematic relation with the media is to focus on the formulated mechanism of signification; whether in structuralism or the Peircean model, how to handle the materiality of the sign is the lynch-pin in determining the correlation of the semiotic function with the given immediacy of a sign. In the Peircean version, the correlation is determined according to the way in which the three components referred to are conjoined with each other. The validity of a sign as a carrier of meaning is assessed by multiple criteria, and the subsequent multivalence is not explicated by reference to materiality, as in the case of the Saussurean dyadic model. In Peirce's triadic scheme, the materiality likewise denotes potentially problematic spheres of autonomy, but this component is analytically domesticated to play the instrumental role of signifying. This is shown in the alternative solution prepared by Peirce. Peirce introduces the "object" to show how an arbitrary sign (or signifier) obtains the status of a sign vis-à-vis the objectivity of its referent. Signs are endowed with power to signify via verification against the concrete evidentiality of the real (object). The three types of sign accrue respective instrumentality according to the difference in the way in which the judgment of verification is made.

Short claims that Peirce's approach to the sign is an ingenious solution to the philosophical exploration

[5] Referring to "the complementarity of causal and quasi-causal forms of analysis", DeLanda claims that the aspects that characterize the topological structure of social theories are "not actual but *virtual mechanisms*", supposedly operating with given empirical phenomena. The term topological is used to remind ourselves of this virtuality. For further comments on the virtual character of social theories, see M. DeLanda, *A New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity*, Bloomsbury, 2006, p. 31.

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of how the mind operates vis-à-vis the world based on the mediation of signs.[6] Signs in this system are secondary devices to organize general concepts, which are, according to Peirce, given in a cultural community. The task of a sign, whether an icon, index, or symbol, is to place a world object in a test to ensure that it can be aligned with a particular concept. Because of this attention to the mechanism at work, the theory avoids the problems emanating from the Saussurean dyadic semiology, wherein the validity of a concept (or a signified) is indubitable because of the rootedness of signs in empirical phenomena. In Peircean theory, signs rarely assume the concreteness of semiological signs. This difference is attributable to the difference in the fundamental status of the sign in the respective sign theories. While Saussure's sign is arbitrary in relation to the meaning it signifies, and thereby demands an explication of its potency to signify, Peirce requires signs to satisfy a set of demands to achieve respective instrumentalities. As if anticipating the problems emanating from the handling of materiality in Saussurean semiology, Peircean theory presupposes an exercise of cognitive deliverance to fuse the contents of the referent with the actual reality.

Located in the exercise of the mind, signs are released from the burden of semiological materiality. The tangible properties of signs are no longer necessary, being subjected to a transmutation, to an internalized topology of reflection. As mentioned above, this is a consequence of the idealist orientation of Peirce's sign theory; free from the epistemological conundrum of how to demarcate signs in thought process and signs as empirical manifestations of the former, the theory prioritizes generality of the sign as a vehicle of cognitive processes.

However, in media, materiality of signs regains hitherto suppressed autonomy and generates unexpected signifying powers apart from the semioticians' purview. This explains the weariness of media study researchers to be overly reliant on the classical semiotic perspective.

In dealing with media, semiotic theories position their components in the topology where the materiality of media is reduced to instrumentality. In media practices, those semiotic aspects of referentiality are retained, but inscribed in mediating substances; they are subjected to a secondary place of significance. Nevertheless, whether a certain media practice is mass printed for the public, transmitted through the air, or placed on digitalized global networks, the manner in which the original contents replicate affects the status of semantic components. Thus subjecting signs into spheres where the materiality of sign resumes its presence, media pose as the dual faces of semiotic reference and an additional semantic function deduced from the autonomy in the materiality of the medium. The problem is that these two semantic components are not only heterogenous in nature but also mutually exclusive, simply co-existing in an identical instance of media. Although Peircean theory allows multiple components to generate an instance of signification, the autonomy inherent in the materiality of media practices carries the face of subordinated elements put beyond the sphere of mental processes but often in wait to overtake the dominant sign.

II. Texts and Media

The way in which media affect the status of representation promises an opening of an unexplored milieu by shedding light on the duality of media not fully covered by the conventional notion of referentiality. In media study, analysts have been well aware of the effects that occur when the substance of information is transferred in a medium other than the one originally used. Based on detailed research on readers' reception of the newly printed classical texts at the early phase of the print revolution, E.L. Eisenstein convincingly illuminated the way in which print media changed the attitudes of the contemporary to classical texts.[7] Febvre and Martin provide details on publication in Europe and substantiate the social consequences of print technology.[8] In writing about the correlation of print capitalism to the rise of nationalism, Anderson gives us a graphic picture of the formative power of media (in this case the novel and newspaper):

> I have been arguing that the very possibility of imaging the nation only arose historically when, and where, three fundamental critical conceptions, all of great antiquity, lost their axiomatic grip on men's mind …. No surprise then that

[6] T.L. Short, *Peirce's Theory of Signs*, Cambridge University Press, 2007, p. 18. Defining the difference between Pierce's approach to sign and the approach of Saussure as that of "a semiotic philosophy of mind" versus "a theory of signs that takes mental functions largely for granted" (ibid., p. 16), Short writes, "Saussure made the sign a dead, a two-sided entity. Pierce, on the contrary, made the sign just one relatum of a triadic relation, of which the other two relata are the sign's object and the sign's interpretant. All three items are triadic in the sense that none is what it is – a sign, an object, or an interpretant – except by virtue of its relation to the other two. (ibid., p.18)

[7] E.L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe*, 1979, Cambridge.

[8] Lucien Febvre and Henri-Joan Martin, *The Coming of the Book: The Impact of Printing 1450–1800*, 2010, Verso.

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> the search was on, so to speak, for a new way of linking fraternity, power and time meaningfully together.[9]

If we can conceptualize the "search" as a form of "structure of feeling" that emerged at a phase of print capitalism, we see how the problematic relation between social theories and media practice suggests that "a way of linking fraternity, power and time", or the constriction of new social solidarity based on media, defies methodical explication derived from semiotic imaginations. The approach is effective for elucidating the contingent character of the nation thus imagined through print media; although nation building essentially follows a similar pattern, reflexive subjectivity in the act of imagining a community relies on the innovation of new cultural signs, not on an application of the familiar. Anderson rightly makes an adjustment arguing that the approach to nationalism should be interpretive instead of that of conventional political science; nonetheless, for all his insights into the consequences of mass media, Anderson treats literary work as a type of semiotic sign and relies on the conventional identification of mass media "as objects, texts, apparatus of perception". This methodological approach to media results in a mismatch of the analytic target (imagined communities) and a methodological procedure (focus on texts primarily as a form of referential vehicle).

Let us take Anderson's analysis of novels. In novelistic depictions of social life as collective recognition of common subjective perceptions of reality, temporality is an indispensable precondition for the construction of the imagined nation; depictions of the public in a novel present a social life taken for granted, yet at a certain stage of the literary history of a nation, mundane depiction of the public serves as a type of qualisign against which reality turns into an "object". The qualisign assumes the status of icon. Nevertheless, the signified of the qualisign – simultaneity – is not a direct derivative from the referencing of the qualisign to the real because the novel as a form of duplex sign conjoins the iconic meaning to a reflexive awareness on the part of readers. In Peircean parlance, the secondary layer of signification derives from a form of sinsign for deduction of the self as an object for a synthesis of aggregate readership. However, the validity of this synthesis depends on the knowledge of aggregate readers, with whom the reader presumably shares the literary realism of simultaneity. In so adopting the semiotic interpretation, Anderson risks excessively stretching the indexical role of an iconic sign. The claim that media generate a social condition wherein a reader of a novel generates a synthetic knowledge presupposes an ontic condition of a kind, but a condition that is not easily ascribed to a function of aggregate quantity.

[9] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism,* 1991, London, Verso, p. 34.

In Anderson's discussion on nationalism, the formative power of print media constitutes a lynch-pin of his assertion about the mediation of unreflected but decisive elements contributing to the making of modern nations. His work in this sense is an exemplary contribution to media study. However, one's impression is that he falls short of claiming the value of his ingenuity because of the reliance on the notion of print capitalism without substantive evidence. It is facile to ascribe the shortcomings of semiotic theories to this outcome, but it is surely not a far-fetched predicament given Anderson's sophisticated use of semiotic perspectives. Like a double-bladed sword, his use of semiotic insights might cut too well, leaving behind the problematic unthought inherent in media.

Couldry's departure from the semiotic approach to meaning seems relevant in light of the role of actor in interpretation. It helps to explore the more protean practice in analytic terms, but a critique of semiotics from within casts doubt on whether the paradigmatic shift in media makes the matter overly schematic. Numerous published studies show that media studies revitalize practice by stimulating a new set of issues; however, in reading those, one also detects pragmatic use of semiotics in which other related theories on texts, objects, and apparatuses remain indispensable for induction of cultural consequence from practice. As mentioned, actors may activate media (e.g., consumption of a novel), but their actions in aggregate can result in a collective representation that may obtain a semiotic function (e.g., index of an imagined community).

III. From Semiotics to Practice

Media practices today come with diverse modalities of communicative process. Forms of conventional print media – newspapers sold at stations for commuters, free papers given away in public, books in specialized stores nurtured by devout supporters – though increasingly pressed economically to peripheral spheres of circulation, cling to their shrinking but still substantive market. Such remnants of the pre-digital era are accompanied by the medium-free broadcasts. Radio, television, and satellite transmissions once dictated the correlation of time and information reception. Media in this sphere liberate the receivers of message from the materiality of representation, while also generating a peculiarly cumbersome lifestyle. The ritualistic synchronicity imposed on the audience turned broadcast into semi-theatrical performance. Then, with the advent of new broadcast, everything did not dissipate into the air; it tied the audience to the rigid regime of time, imprisoning them in an authoritarian scheme of media reception.

However, the last few decades have produced a radical transformation in the way media regulate the

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relationship between information and receivers. In an increasing range of genres, digitization has enabled the audience to recall instances of broadcast; for movies, net streaming eliminates the difficulty of acquiring movie contents. By digitization, media is freed from the physical impediments of a recording medium as well as the temporal synchronization imposed on the audiences by the analogue broadcast. Now released from the materiality of media that has hitherto tied culture to a specific topology of time and space, signs in media mark a distinctive mutation in the mode of the recipients' being in the world. With the peripheral placement of signs as objects, print media are no longer effective in generating communities. Media or culture after media affect the composition of the public, mapping recipients into a new network of information with no alibi of materiality attached.

The task of exploring the significance of the transformation in media has been assigned to a series of ethnographic studies on media culture. To narrow the scope of my discussion, I focus on the relation of this development with the theory of practice, primarily with reference to the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu.

Bourdieu places emphasis on the experience of subjects and facilitates a sociological investigation of the implications of their practice to the sustenance of collective cultural systems. Bourdieu arrived at this approach through critique of empiricist perspectives in sign theories. In structuralism, the objective materiality of the sign promises a science of meaning via empirically discernible patterns of representation. Practice theory departs from this endeavor and adopts phenomenological insights into the body. In this shift of focus, the centrality of the sign is replaced by the complex network of sensations accessible by means of rigorous analysis of practice. Just as signs reveal hidden signifieds based on opposition to others, the body technique conveys the inner sense of being (and also becoming), achieving a conceptual transcendence over the physio-psychic duality inherent in structuralism and semiotics. The notion "habitus" extends this premise to the life world of the subject.

The practice theory in this synthesis of post-structuralist imagination compounds ethnography with the body's capacity of both doing something and also tracing the process of internalization so as to restore the meaning of the act; reflective observation enables an actor to retrieve her/his memory, test the validity of the retention, and utilize the memory in the future. The crux of the theory revolves around the social implications of practice seen in the generative perspectives by reference to the sustenance of the life world. Yet, the fundamental question in the practice perspective concerns the way in which the consequence of practice is substantiated. While it can be placed, at least in theory, in reflexive awareness in the bodily mechanism of retention, the process defies analytic overture. If its Durkheimian manifestation, as possibly social facts of a certain kind, obtains a definitive monumentality of its own, it poses a considerable challenge to articulating the subjective microcosm of practice as its part and parcel in constitutive terms. At a purely functional level, actors engage in practice and thereby locate themselves in a given topology of the social world. At the same time, they live in an imagined reality that their positioning substantiates as tangible events.

Although highly synoptic, the generalization, on one hand, helps us recognize the importance of understanding which type of knowledge is at stake in the practice perspectives, and on the other hand, the implications of adopting the practice orientation for ethnographic research. Referring to the status of knowledge retained in a normalized lifestyle, Merleau-Ponty gives us a clue on the first point:

> But if habit is neither a form of knowledge nor an automatic reflex, then what is it? It is a question of a knowledge in our hands, which is only given through a bodily effort and cannot be translated by an objective designation.[10]

To see how practice can be embedded in autonomous structures of time, thereby leading to a knowledge in the body, making reference to tightly coordinated collective acts shared by a group of individuals is useful. Retention of physical sensations from bodily engagements gives rise to a phatic sense of communality. Routinized daily worship in a religious order transmutes the physicality of the acting body into a seat of awareness. Indian culture abounds with practices that prioritize bodily engagement over discourse for acquisition of a spiritual state. In tai-chi, practitioners conceptualize an imperceptible flow of energy and embed the notion within physical motion. Linked with arcane metaphysics, systems of temporarily ordered flow of action defy logocentric designation because they prescribe highly organized disciplines on the body. In such practice, a generative source of reflexive memories assumes a central place. Likewise, the practice perspective that Bourdieu constructed presupposes communities organized by an operational discipline of some kind. This is because of the nature of the knowledge in question; just as the transmission of knowledge in the body requires some form of physical manifestation, the theory necessitates the interpretation of practice without objectified designation. Although the focus on internalized retention of practice prioritizes the subjective terrain, as semiotics does, unlike the latter, the former lacks an objectified marker of the contents. Without a language of its own, practice presupposes co-habitation of actors in a shared life world. In analytic terms, this necessitates empirical markers of knowledge obtained through practice. Practice thus requires practicing communities as empirical evidence to

[10] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. by Donald A. Landers, Routledge, 2012, p. 144.

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safeguard the purpose and validity of interpretation. This raises the question: How far can this premise be warranted?

a) Practice and its other

The theory of practice necessitates metaphysical commitments on the part of agents to substantiate the normalized reciprocity between practice and actors. However, as Mauss has suggested, acquired bodily technique can be activated unconsciously, without necessarily affecting the selfhood of a person; internalized physical routines are stored without apparent mediation (such as referential sign), and this explains why an invocation of certain bodily technique may not be accompanied by reflective consciousness. Although observers engage in translatability of knowledge related to the very possibility of practice theory, actors in practice can operate for other motives. In sociology, the problem of deducing unmediated knowledge is resolved by the claim on the evidentiality of institutional reproduction, i.e., habitus, even though the question remains, regardless whether the empirical alibi offered is sufficient to override this fundamental epistemic gap. The difficulty in establishing access to the consequence of practice in subjective terms constitutes a fundamental weakness of practice theory. Although repetitive routine is indispensable for acquisition of bodily techniques, acquisition itself retains relative autonomy from social institutions. The body preserves an internalized technique of some kind, but that does not necessarily mean subjugation of its possessor to a social structure. Thus, insofar as the practice theory retains the phenomenological concern with knowledge and utilizes ethnographic approaches to explore the social, collective significance of practice, it is destined to face a gap between the practice in subjective terms and its social consequences as observed from objective, analytic perspectives.

In the classical Marxist criticism, the notion of false consciousness epitomizes the aberration of practice as part of an abstract larger system (in this case labor) from the consciousness of the actors (workers). Marx considers the transcendence of his dichotomy as a primary political goal, yet a similar gap between ethnographical findings and a theory by which to frame the practice poses a considerable challenge to researchers. Writing about the readers of romance novels in the Midwest, USA, Radway presents a complex narrative describing the dual positions of an analyst, first as a researcher committed to ethnographical understanding and second as an analyst pulled by the onus of discovering abstract patterns that the subjects she interviews may not possess.

> Given the apparent power of the romance's conservative counter-messages, then, it is tempting to suggest that romantic fiction must be an active agent in the maintenance of the ideological status quo because it ultimately reconciles women to patriarchal society and reintegrates them with its institutions. It appears that it might do so by deflecting and recontaining real protest and by supplying vicariously certain needs that, if presented as demands in the real world, might otherwise lead to the reordering of heterosexual relationships.[11]

As mentioned earlier, practice perspectives derive a set of axiomatic insights from phenomenological reflection about the type of knowledge retained in the body, but in its later development, practice has been increasingly embedded in discussion about its collective, social dimension. The example Radway presents is a case of in-depth research on subjectivity based on ethnographic perspectives that lead to a critical illumination of politics hidden in the mundane. Yet, the case is also a contradiction of the theoretical interpretation arising from the field-level sensitivity required of research on literary consumption.

A decade after Radway, Hills reported similar attempts to embed practice in social theories, but he argued that they provoke complex relations between researchers and fans of popular media, leading to their mutual marginalization.

> It is necessary to reflect on the ways in which media and cultural studies closes its seminar room doors on the figure of the fan as an imagined Other, thereby constructing what is to count as good academic work. Of course, this is only half of the story. It is equally important to consider the place of theorising within fan cultures, and to consider what boundaries are imagined around good fan practices. These boundaries may work to exclude the academic as an imagined other in fan writings and practices, providing the other half of what could be described as a torn social dynamic. Such mutual marginalisation would suggest that fandom and academia are co-produced as exclusive social and cultural positions. The categorical splitting of fan/academic here is not simply a philosophical or theoretical error, but is also produced through the practical logics of self-identified fans and 'academics'.[12]

Citing Cavicchi, who reports fans' own accounts of becoming a fan,[13] Hills substantiates the methodological utility of the practice perspective for

[11] Janice A. Radway, *Reading the Romance; Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature*, 1991, University of North California Press, Chapel Hill and London, p .217.

[12] Matt Hills, *Fan Cultures,* Routledge, 2002, p. 2.

[13] Cavicchi suggests that the practice of becoming a fan involves a complex transformation of self-identity, often at the level of habitus. "Becoming a Springsteen fan ... entails a radical, enduring change in orientation. It is not simply a matter of acquiring a new taste but is the development of a complex relationship with Bruce Springsteen through his work, a dramatic opening oneself to another experience. While fans often have trouble articulating exactly why they became fans, in their stories they dramatically portray the process of becoming a fan as a journey from one point to another, they indicate that it is a lasting and profound transition from an 'old' viewpoint … to a 'new' one, filled with energy and insight." (Cavicchi 1998: 59, quoted in Hills, ibid., p. 6)

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analysis of fans, but he acknowledges that the mutual marginalization is no less severe when theorists activate their agenda: "Academic practice – regardless of its favoured theorists and theoretical frameworks – typically transforms fandom into an absolute Other."[14] This mutation takes place because of the theorist's concern to place ethnographic reading of practice in an abstract generalization of the discipline.

> All too often, …. theorists follow their own institutional or theoretical agendas, and use fandom within these theory wars and territorial skirmishes. And of course, if this is to be my argument then I too will have to defend myself from the very same accusations, or make explicit what my own institutional and theoretical agendas might be.[15]

Discussing the humanitarian perspective that underlies cultural studies in the UK, Couldry emphasizes the importance of reflexivity and suggests that the problem of voice persists:

> Cultural studies, however, should involve not only dialogue, but also reflexivity…, including reflection about the means through which all the voices in that dialogue have been formed, and the conditions which underlie the production of the space of cultural studies itself. That means reflecting both on ourselves and on the culture around us: …. Critical reflection on shared culture, of course, carries risks: of being misunderstood as elitist or unconstructive. [16]

In addition to dialogue with actors, Couldry demands theoretical mediations beyond ethnographical research on grassroots practice, but what would "critical reflection on shared culture" be in the post-medium digitized media culture? If the practice perspectives in media research generate risks, why so? Taking the risk of being elitist is not the only solution to avoid being unconstructive in theoretical terms. From the critical reviews of the practice perspectives above, it is clear that one cannot deny the empirical applicability of the theory in a facile fashion; the notion of habitus would be valid to some social conditions in which normative social practice has a general implication as part of a prevailing cultural norm. Actors endowed with certain bodily skill may be incorporated into a social system as an inadvertent constituent. In his/her relative autonomy in relation to the public, the sustenance of habitus would be a necessary pre-condition for the reproduction of the overall structure. In this manner, in practice perspectives, the analytic concern with the social constitutes an important agenda; compared to the ethnomethodology in which practice is considered a methodological basis of research on the subjective dimension of cultural reality, it occupies a central locale in the sociology of Bourdieu. The dual foci on subjective practice and its collective consequence mark the strength of his practice theory, but the need for the co-ordination of one perspective with the other is also a spin-off from the fundamental premise of the body/mind synthesis, not an inevitable entailment in reality.

In his discussion about the assemblage as an alternative to conventional society as a closed system, Delanda clarifies why the choice Couldry refers to is not only unnecessary but irrelevant. The very fact that individuals (fans, for example) do not normally share a holistic concern with the functioning of society warrants the point.

> … we can define social wholes like interpersonal networks or institutional organizations that cannot be reduced to the persons that compose them but that do not totalise them either, fusing them into a seamless whole in which their individuality is lost. …. The property of density, and the capacity to store reputations and enforce norms, are non-reducible properties and capacities of the entire community, but neither involves thinking of it as a seamless totality in which the very personal identity of the members is created by their relations: neighbours can pack their things and move to a different community while keeping their identity intact.[17]

IV. Media and the Speech Act Theory

In coping with the multivalences of meaning that media generate, we realize that the mind/body synthesis inherent in cognition goes beyond the semantic realm that semiotics predicate. Yet, the question of to what extent the prioritization of practice is warranted becomes pertinent when the social dimension of practice intensifies the aberration between the two spheres. Research on the impact of media on social behavior shows the problematic status of practice in the age of post-medium culture ('after' in the sense of lost materiality): loss of social space not only affects the way in which the very notion of "social" is conceived by actors but also re-constitutes the way media operate. While practice theory takes the primary significance of the body as a given, the theory leaves open the mechanism by which the retention of experience is transformed into a systematic axiom of doing things. Even though the practice perspective prioritizes this invisible internal mechanism, the reference to the mutation of space/time in digitized media culture raises a question about the relevance of an analytic strategy that relies on practice, where we are tendentiously forced to take the collective social process as the reference point of research on media.

In this manner, in media research, theory and ethnography exhibit characteristically volatile modes of articulation between conceptual synthesis and empirical data: the latter reveals unfamiliar facades often in unexpected fashion, demanding a break from prior formulations. I argue that this dialectic is particularly

[14] Hills, ibid., p. 5.
[15] Hills, ibid., p. 2.
[16] Couldry, *Inside Culture: Re-Imagining the Method of Cultural Studies*, Sage Publications, 2000, p. 38.
[17] Delanda, *Assemblage Theory*, Edinburgh University Press, 2016, pp. 10–11.

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acute in dealing with media, primarily because of the duplicity of the topic; it requires a theory to manifest the social implications of media, but in encountering the unexpected in the object of analysis, discourse on media tends to deviate from the analytic horizon that the theory prescribes. The emphasis on the relative autonomy of practice from habitus is an example: the increasing fluidity in the reality of media-saturated society transmutes the social that the notion of practice must presuppose, while imposing the contrastive sense of constitutive power not captured by conventional analytic tools for interpretation of culture.

Yet, media do engage subjects in a particular modality of existence; by intervening into the topology of daily life, media frame a tempo-spatially orchestrated normalcy the constitution of which is not immediately apparent from the particularity of the information conveyed. How should we conceive this engagement? In an attempt to illuminate the social consequences of media, Hepp shifts attention to the impacts of media in his discussion about mediatized cultures. Calling for a systematic reconstruction of media as a complex component that intervenes in the constitution of the life world, Hepp claims that the shift to the holistic vision of media promises a set of sociological insights into the way in which micro-level subjective spheres reciprocate with the macro-level media culture composed of multiple media practices. On the topic of how we can utilize the ensuing conceptual frame mediatization and achieve the task of rectifying the shortcomings of conventional media research, Hepp acknowledges the need for theories based on empirical research to articulate the actual workings of mediatized culture.

Derrida provides a clue helpful for imagining how this task can be achieved by replacing speech with writing, so that the primary importance of voice in speech act theory is modified. Derrida's engagement in the topic is not intended for empirical research in media, but its relevance is sufficiently clear. First, it enables us to situate mediatization as a predictable consequence of advanced communications technology; second, it serves to mobilize the performative perspective as a potential to supplement the theory for mediatization.

One question arises at the outset: Can we apply the performativity of speech acts to types of expression based on media other than speech? J. L. Austin discovered that the task of speech goes well beyond the referential denotation of meaning, reaching the constitutive dimension of doing something[18] Despite its potential implications to media research, where the consequences of message take on tangible sociocultural forms, speech act theory itself proved to be an obstacle for replacing the missing link until Derrida raised doubt about the notion of acting based on speech in media. Derrida suggests the possibility of applying the original thesis to non-speech events other than acts that arise from speech. Derrida's main target is the essentialism inherent in western thought, where the physiological origin, i.e., voice, is considered a primary source of will and thereby the basis of thinking.[19] From this point of view, speech act theory replicates the essentialist tradition because of its prioritization of the voice coming from an actor. In Austin's view, the voice similarly constitutes a critical element for the making of a context predicated for the fulfillment of a speech act. Few have so far responded to the discussion between Derrida and Searle, the principle proponent of Austin, for a potential use for media research, but in extending the notion of performativity to media, Derrida's challenge to speech act theory offers a hint for imaging the act in media from an angle other than the available.

a) Presence and Absence

The use of speech act theory for media research is essentially a form of bricolage, a deviant use of the theory for purposes originally unintended. To justify this operation, a brief summary of Derrida's intervention into the Austinian paradigm is appropriate.

Let me begin with the notion of absence. It assumes importance for the deduction of the subterranean movements that predicate communication in a horizon unique to writing. Derrida captures the movements as a form of iterability, which predicates the act of writing, that presupposes the existence of its receiver but often in absence. Because of this duality in the target of the interlocutor, his/her overture to others is positioned in distinctive time and space. The presence, the addressee who is actually absent, is a willed potentiality to which one's message is addressed. Writing in this manner locates our connection with assumed presences in time and space unique to their own; time resists narrative flow and the space therein disobeys the law of extension set by sheer physicality.

> The absence of which Condillac speaks is determined in the most classic manner as a continuous modification and progressive extenuation of presence. Representation regularly *supplants* [*supplée*] presence. …, this operation of supplementation is not exhibited as a break in presence but rather as a continuous and homogeneous reparation and modification of presence in the representation.[20]

Is a speech act in this horizon? The answer is definitively yes, but to confirm the point, we need to

[18] J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words: The William James Lectures delivered at Harvard University in 1955,* Oxford University Press, 2nd ed. 1975.

[19] Referring to the "the inevitable consequences of these nuclear traits of all writing", Derrida writes, "This essential drift … bearing on writing as an iterative structure, cut off from all absolute responsibility, from *consciousness* as the ultimate authority, orphaned and separated at birth from the assistance of its father, is precisely what Plato condemns in the *Phaedrus*." J. Derrida, *Limited Inc.*, Northwestern University Press, Evanston IL., 1988, p. 8.

[20] Derrida, ibid., p. 5.

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clarify that the issue is not that of medium (i.e., whether it is speech), but the way in which the message under question manifests itself so as to generate a shared rule of locution.[21] For those who are accustomed to speech act theory, Derrida's overture to writing contradicts the fundamental premise of the theory. However, the social dimension of space/time, which comes into being through writing, presupposes, according to Derrida, an act, suggesting the potential for a significant theoretical synthesis.

Austin was primarily concerned with speech-based performativity, but he did accept the possibility of other locutionary media with illocutionary effects. Austin thus included gestures and other types of expression as vehicles of performativity. If that means that Austin accepted non-speech-based performatives, what about writing addressed to a person absent at the time of its production? As an example, a "deed" related to the ownership of property may or may not expect the presence of the addressee, insofar as the validity of the terms stipulated in the document is concerned. Nonetheless, the fact that its illocutionary force is no less effective and valid is clearly attributable to the sanction of law with regard to the rule of succession and procedures. A document can thus function as a performative (if not a speech act), thereby casting the notion of contexts as an awkward redundancy. The fact that we do not need an actor performing an act to realize a speech act is apparent because certain performatives can be perfectly coextensive with the non-speech-based performativity or deeds by means of saying other than via speech. It is because letters, wills, and other writings are endorsed with the same effects as those generated via normative speech acts. Such writings are given a force whereby the contents predicate its consequents as denotation of acts to be consummated.

Derrida goes a step further and raises a question about the distinction of writing from speech based on the assertion that both are subject to repetition and thereby accessible to heterogenous addressees, either intended or unintended, and are therefore iterable:

> … a written sign carries with it a force that breaks with its context, that is, with the collectivity of presences organizing the moment of its inscription. This breaking force … is not an accidental predicate but the very structure of the written text. In the case of a so-called "real" context, what I have just asserted is all too evident. This allegedly real context includes a certain "present" of the inscription, the presence of the writer to what he has written, the entire environment and the horizon of his experience, and above all the intention, the wanting-to-say-what-he-means, which animates his inscription at a given moment. But the sign possesses the characteristic of being readable even if the moment of its production is irrevocably lost and even if I do not know what its alleged author-scriptor consciously intended to say at the moment he wrote it, i.e. abandoned it to its essential drift. As far as the internal semiotic context is concerned, the force of the rupture is no less important: by virtue of its essential iterability, a written syntagma can always be detached from the chain in which it is inserted or given without causing it to lose all possibility of functioning, if not all possibility of "communicating" precisely. One can perhaps come to recognize other possibilities in it by inscribing it or *grafting* it onto other chains. No context can entirely enclose it. Nor any code, the code here being both the possibility and impossibility of writing, of its essential iterability (repetition/alterity).[22]

Just as a document exerts an illocutionary force with a comparative consequence to reality, speech is perceived as being devoid of its contexts, to be addressed to someone absent, acquiring a similar transcendence through time and space. Thus, subjecting speech to the scheme of iterability, Derrida proceeds to articulate the significance of what he considers the Austinian paradigm of performativity. Consequently, speech in Derrida's discourses loses the tempo-spatial particularity that Bakhtin describes. As the analysis of voices in literary works reflects socio-linguistic dimensions of speech genres, it appears that the emphasis on iterability of voice appears contradictory in the light of empirical data. Yet, the very fact that speech acquires multiple genres in the novel, literally echoing a social dimension now in writing, suggests an inherent architectonic segmentation at work in speech practice. Although Derrida does not offer empirical data for substantiating his claim on iterability, in his reference to drama, where performatives fulfill their social functions in fiction, he makes it possible to confirm the modality of iterability in action, including the cultural sphere in which media assume the task of grafting writings onto daily life.[23]

Derrida lists four reasons for the placement of the performatives in his paradigm of writing. First, Austin presents locutions from speech practices that normally serve to deliver information in the classical sense and creates a contradiction with the notion of a speech act.

[21] Admitting the possibility of non-verbal performative acts, Austin writes, "In very many cases it is possible to perform an act of exactly the same kind not by uttering words, whether written or spoken, but in some other way." (ibid., p. 8)

[22] Derrida, ibid., p. 9

[23] In this connection, Bakhtin evocatively refers to the transmutation of speech genres as they move from primary speech to complex, written ones. Displacing the notion of context with the relations of speech genres, Bakhtin describes how speech genres enter into complex ones and "lose their immediate connection to actual reality" (p. 62) This implies that Bakhtin supports the notion of iterability, but also emphasizes the importance of looking at the interaction between the primary speech genre and the complex one, in particular, in the historical transformation of the former. Admittedly, it remains to be seen how the Bakhtinian treatment of the grafting helps illuminate the way in which the status of a locution is affected in media. M.M. Bakhtin, "The Problem of Speech Genres", *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, University of Texas Press, Austin, 1986.

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Second, the first reason is emphasized by the novelty of the notion, although locutions that act as illocution or perlocution actually prescribe the way in which the communication assumes the role of producing effects. Third, as a form of writing in the general sense of the term, the performative cannot be explicated by reference to any substantive, semantic value, and in this sense, it differs from a constative. Fourth, the difference from the normative role of utterances manifests itself in the need to distance the performative from the question of the truth value, so that the analysis on force is prioritized. With these four reasons, "Austin has shattered the concept of communication as a purely semiotic, linguistic, or symbolic concept."[24]

However, one detects a shortcoming of speech act theory in applying its original insights to media in the absence of methods with which to explore the mechanisms of the force that underlies illocutions. In his discussion about the performatives with relative degrees of subsumption to predetermined rules, Austin suggests the possibility of historic mutation of performatives, but the topic has not been explored sufficiently.[25] Nonetheless, as the history of media reveals, media practices generate illocutionary mediatization as a form of act, influencing the daily practices of recipients. Certain types of performatives are undoubtedly endogenous in media. Although media practices are normally seen as a form of communicative process, the effects of saying something therein are not merely referential. Just as confession in the medieval church involved disclosure of internal self, printing did not simply convey messages; contrary to the tendency in media studies to cling to the message of media, media actually 'mould' (Hepp) the ways in which subjects reflect their way of doing things and interact with others. Indeed, media have affected the way in which imagined communities were conceived. Even though the deeds of print capitalism have been captured in terms of shared contents of media, the actual impacts derived from a mechanism are unique to respective eras, often with considerable forces legitimizing the media's performance. There is a paucity of methodological tools available to illuminate the process that would lead to the performativity of media, but the introduction of performatives into media research provides the promise of liberating our inquiry from the pursuit of referentiality based on the premediated logic of representation.[26]

b) Detecting the acts of media: How to do things with writing?

Media studies have not given attention to the speech act theory to face issues that are crucial for understanding the ways in which media influence culture. Lack of interest can be ascribed to the assignment of agency on the role of an actor: in the definition of the concept, an utterance demands the presence of the speaker with no spatial or temporal hiatus, whereas media make the presence of the agent irrelevant for successful emission of a message. Media intervene into speech practice and reformulate the fabric of time/space of a speech event.

Nevertheless, Derrida's argument shows that speech act theory, if recomposed by the notion of writing, promises advantages in methodological terms over the theories proposed by Hepp. The lack of space makes it difficult to substantiate the claim, but I hope that a brief examination of the characteristics of illocutionary acts as Austin defined them will be of some help. A short schematic enumeration involves (1) the non-referential value of speech acts, (2) the autonomy of illocution with regard the intention of an actor, and (3) the historical mutation of illocutions with regard to their perlocutionary force.

(1) *Non-referential aspects of illocutions*

Embedded in media practice, the iterability of a speech act has been given insufficient attention in media studies. This omission arises from the unfortunate outcome of debates on the issue between Derrida and Searle; it has not been taken up as a substantive issue with concrete implications to empirical research. However, in certain media genres, illocutions tendentiously acquire far more potent perlocutionary effects than in the normative settings. If not recited in a written text, a speech act in media can retain the immediacy of the agent, attaining a tempo-spatial transcendence. Media thus abound with performative acts that mutate seemingly innocuous statements in highly regimented institutional orders of things.

Critique of media has tendentiously concerned itself with the contents of media. However, the theory of speech acts is not concerned with the truth value of the contents of the literary locution: this implies the significance of the illocutionary effects apart from the semantic value at the locutionary level. While the non-semiotic approach to media based on practice-oriented reception partially resolved the question of meaning, it had to confront the question of the subjectivity of recipients. As we have seen, the media research that Hepp formulates promises to solve the conundrum, but without any measure to gauge the effects of media practices, the notion of the act of media remains largely metaphoric. When discussed against the relocation of original acts of saying through media, the notion of iterability radicalizes our perception of communications.

[24] Derrida, ibid., p. 13.
[25] Austin, ibid., p. 66.
[26] Karin Wahl-Jorgensen writes, "Research on how emotionality is constructed and embedded in journalistic text has contributed methodological tools and conceptual insights.", in *Emotions, Media and Politics*, 2019, p.14. Needless to say, the performativity of journalistic texts does not have to be limited to emotionality.

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Just as Anderson's print capitalism generated a sense of collectivity, cannot media as a type of writing give rise to a horizon comparable to that of illocutionary acts? If we follow Derrida, in that speech theory brought forward a new perspective on meaning with a potential for further application beyond the notion of speech, we then recognize a range of issues to be explored in further research. I argue that the first step to substantiate the point is to reiterate the non-referential aspects of the speech act.

(2) *The autonomous consequence of the performative*

The consequence of a speech act affects the status of those who are involved in it, either directly or indirectly: some are involved in the act, while others are involved as the receivers of the messages. If conducted in a prescribed manner, the consequence is normally independent of the intention of the participants. Although the emphasis on autonomy seems contradictory to cases of illocutions in the first person singular, once an act is executed, its consequence tends to acquire autonomy irrespective of the will of any person involved.

There is an implicit assumption that media involve a qualitatively different communicative process to that of a speech act: the former concerns the way some mediations intervene into social relations based on newly created communicative processes, and the latter presupposes a primordial style of telling as a form of being. Media transmute speech acts into "recited" versions and replicate the message in totally new referential orders. However, it is true that normative semantics on messages transmitted by means of media may not lead to positive evidence of the performative, constitutive effects of speech acts recited. Just as the statement, "I wager on that" (a speech act) is qualitatively different from "I wagered on that", information in media often revolves around events in the past, as opposed to raw, on-going acts of doing things with words. Yet, media recite speech acts on an unprecedented scale and generate a new linguistic domain in which the immediacy of the agent and speech is intensified. This constitutes a transcendence of time and space normally crucial for the efficacy of a speech act. However, if media can actually operate as a form of writing and generate processes whereby saying is equivalent to doing things, what do media actually do? Austin's contribution lies in the discovery of communicative practices that substantively change the given condition in which a semantic value is transmuted to effects comparable to doing something. The point was arguably made through samples of utterances that trigger change in reality. Derrida in his discussion about the delayed statement written on paper invokes a speech event in which similar performative effects become real.

Media practices that have attained the status of an illocution generate in the receivers of messages impacts comparable to those of perlocutions. Research on popular cultures, i.e., novels, music, and cult movies, has substantiated the point, but these works have tended to treat the recipients' reaction without sufficient reference to the role of communicative mediation into social life. However, if we see that certain media practices are comparable to illocutions that are conducted in daily life, often with autonomous influences on the lives of actors once conducted, foci on actors, in particular, on their subjective preferences as certain symptoms of deviance, may be seen as sources of epistemic deviance. This is the case because the perlocutionary forces tend to operate irrespective of the intention of the participants.

(3) *The need to reformulate research questions*

Derrida was no more concerned with the historic formation of a speech act than Austin himself, and this indicates a conspicuous absence of criticism with regard to the social consequences of speech acts. If we take into consideration (1) and (2) and proceed in empirical research on media practices, the absence implies urgent needs for a critical investigation of their making. Media transplant the original speech act into a manifested iterability and replicate the message in question in totally new referential orders. The transmission of messages by means of media per se does not lead to positive evidence on the formation of indexicality, but if we take the original primary as a type of speech act and detect the illocutionary concatenations, we see that with the transgression comes definitive semantic mutation.

Media recite speech acts on an unprecedented scale and generate a range of new linguistic processes wherein the immediacy of the agent and speech act is intensified. By reciting the original illocutionary act, for example, media give rise to the transcendence of time and space crucial for the efficacy of a speech act. We should anticipate that this transcendence does not rule out the signification of the performative. Media enable recitation of speech acts as writing well after the performance of the original. In fact, the consequence of the tempo-spatial transcendence of a speech act in the media may even manifest itself in an augmented force unique to the historic specificity of the media. It is well known that, in the second phase of Hollywood, cinema created stars unexpectedly. It did so by directing audience attention to particular agents so as to naturalize the media effect (or perlocutionary effect) by means of individual actors. The performative in this case is highly actor-oriented, or so it seemed to the audience of the extensive media network. Media unified the performative with the agent and attempted to personify the capacity of media technology to transmit data instantly across a wider space than known before.

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Media's power to formulate a new modality of performative derives primarily from the necessity to signify. Media's incessant search for the novel predicates media practice irrespective of genre. Media thus justify the self-practice of media, sometimes even for a topic not suitable for such justification. Then, how do the performative effects of speech acts in media recitation (or reproduction) lead to a social reality? Media generate new forms of performativity by transplanting localized speech acts in a new modality of recitations. In doing so, media exhibit a set of problematic aspects in relation to philosophical reflections on the speed act. In one sense, media support the claim that the immediacy of the context of a speech act is not necessarily the ultimate requirement for the realization of a speech act. On the other hand, media also depart from the philosophical arguments about the speech act, leading to questions about the historic formation of performativity and its consequences.

V. Conclusion

This article addressed recent reformulations, which seem innovative both theoretically and empirically, for alternative explications of media. The primary target in doing so is in the heuristic value of social theories for clarifying their problematic relation with media, a topic that tends to resist prescribed modes of explications. Based on semiotics, practice, and, to a much lesser degree, speech act theory, analysts generate constructs, or generalizations, that often deviate unexpectedly from the conceptual horizons inherent in respective schemes.

The hiatus between the semiotic discussion about the semantic contents of media and the accountability of collectivity is exemplary. The emergence of imagined communities, though an ingenuous formulation that relies on a semiotic perspective, unexpectedly sheds light on the materiality of signs. Benedict Anderson skillfully mobilizes his insights into literary works as a type of media with the power to go beyond textual meaning. In this case, theory and practice in ethnographic research exhibit a characteristically contentious dialectic of conceptual synthesis and revaluation vis-a-vis empirical data. The latter reveals unfamiliar facades in an often unexpected fashion, revealing the shortcomings of prior formulations. The dialectic brings forward an unheeded hiatus in the horizons and also forces amendations to exonerate hasty application of theories. I argue that this dialectic is particularly acute in dealing with media, primarily because the topic has not been endowed with recognition of a problematic in need of a theory for the positivity of meaning.

In a similar vein, the seemingly innocuous question of how media can be appropriated by groups of actors at first sight appears valid with regard to the introduction of practice theory for a new socially oriented approach to media. However, insofar as the theory that Bourdieu offered is concerned, practice necessitates an established social institution or habitus within which acts are embedded. Media can be a constitutive agent independent of stable institutionalizations (such as class) but, as mentioned, this would trigger a problem of accountability. Media tendentiously elude any search for the causality inherent in conventional social theories. Then, how should we conceptualize media as a constitution of social practice if the cultural consequence of practice in this case may be substantiated by reference to an objectified social order? If a reply to the question presupposes dissociation of practice from habitus, what analytic purchase can we expect of the breach?

I argued, on the one hand, that reflection on the question of accountability in practice theory serves to draw attention to the increasing fluidity of reality in media-saturated society and the contrastive sense of constitutive power not captured by conventional analytic tools for interpretation of culture. Media engage subjects in a particular modality of existence. By intervening in the topology of daily life, media frame tempo-spatially orchestrated normalcy with an additional order not immediately apparent from the particularity of the information conveyed. How can we conceive this engagement? If Hepp is right in claiming that media "mould", what is the actual process to materialize the consequence? If the expression predicates some act, what type of action is at issue?

The limitation of space available prevents a summary of case studies on media with a focus on constitutive acts via speech practice grafted in media. However, the paucity of research based on speech act theory suggests that the notion of acts, as applied to media, remains metaphorical. This seems to be a natural consequence if the non-referential aspect of communication is not sufficiently captured. Reading Derrida's views on speech act theory suggests that such an endeavor demands decomposition of core concepts of the theory. Just as Anderson's formulation casts a delicate light on the use of theory in media research, media prefigured through the lenses of the performative force us to rethink the presence of media in everyday occurrence as a problematic unthought.

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