Exu Steps on the Single-Branch Stump: performance and performativity in Exu

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ABSTRACT – Exu Steps on the Single-Branch Stump: performance and performance in Exu – This paper discusses performativity and performance through an analogy with the orixá Exu and the Exus entities. The field research and participant observation in Candomblé and *giras* of Exu allowed for an in-depth reflection. Experiences as an Omorixá Exu allows us to approach the *terreiro* and the crossroads as a knowledge production space. Our understanding of performance is broadened due to the contributions and influences of the African diaspora. We conclude that performativity/Exu and performance/Exus cannot be subjugated to universalist and standardizing views. The crossroads is a space with the capacity of pointing out paths that contribute to the understanding of Black performances and corporealities.

Keywords: Exu. Exus. Performance and Performativity. Afro Performance. Crossroads Body.

RÉSUMÉ – Exu Étapes sur le Moignon d'une Seule Branche: performances et performativité dans Exu – Cet article discute de la performativité et performance par le biais de l'analogie avec l'orisha Exu ainsi que les entités Exus. La recherche de terrain et l'obseration participante au sein du Candomblé et dans les rouages de Exu ont permis d'approfondir les réflexions. A travers des expériences telles que Omorixá Exu, le temple et le carrefour se projettent comme des espaces de production du savoir. La compréhension de la performance s'élargit grâce aux influences et contribuitions de la dispora africaine. Il en découle que la performativité/Exu et la performance Exu ne peuvent se réduire exclusivement à la vision occidentale. Le carrefour est un espace capable de montrer le chemin qui contribue à la compréhension des performances et esprits corporels noires.

Mots-clés: Exu. Exus. Performances et Performativité. Performances Afro. Corps Carrefour.

RESUMO – Exu Pisa no Toco de um Galho Só: performance e performatividade em Exu– Este artigo discute performatividade e performance através da analogia com o orixá Exu e as entidades Exus. A pesquisa de campo e a observação participante no candomblé e nas giras de Exus permitiram aprofundar as reflexões. Através de experiências como um omorixá Exu, projeta-se o terreiro e a encruzilhada como espaço de produção de conhecimento. Alargando o entendimento de performance tendo a diáspora africana como contribuição e influência. Conclui-se que performatividade/Exu e performance/Exus não podem ser subjugados a olhares universalistas e padronizadores. A encruzilhada é um espaço capaz de apontar caminhos que contribuem para a compreensão das performances e corporeidades negras.

Palavras-chave: Exu. Exus. Performance e Performatividade. Performance Afro. Corpo Encruzilhada.

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Exu pisa no toco de um galho só
Exu pisa no toco e pisa no galho
O galho balança Exu não cai ô ganga
(Exu steps on the single-branch stump
Exu steps on the stump and steps on the branch
The branch swings, Exu doesn't fall oh ganga)[1]

The *ponto* in the epigraph refers to the mastery of Exus, to their way of dealing with situations and to how they cause chaos to promote *order* against the grain. This article touches the concepts and conceptions of *performance* and *performativity* as someone walking a tightrope, ever aware that at any moment one can stumble over the traps, in which the authors quoted got caught in an attempt to stiffen what is fluid and dynamic. This study reflects on these concepts by dialoguing and getting close to Exu and Exus. To this end, we turn to certain disciplines, such as anthropology, art and philosophy, in combination with our experiences in Candomblé *terreiros* (temples), at crossroads and in Umbanda temples in order to contribute to the reflections and discussions about Performance Studies. We also look into Afro performances in order to understand the similarities between the various performance approaches of African origin.

For this, we turn to the crossroads as a place of creativity and production of epistemes that offers other aesthetic possibilities and bodily experiences to express Black performance and corporeity. Candomblecist and *omorixá* Exu experiences also participates in this "[…] epistemic *ebó*" (Rufino, 2016, p. 23). Our research thrives on the need to raise awareness about the importance of valuing and knowing other forms of knowledge production and of bodily expression that have been long silenced, and in presenting other perspectives from which the arts can flow. It brings significant contributions to the studies of Presence, Performing Arts, Performance and Afro-Brazilian Culture. So for the *xiré*, the party, to take place to the satisfaction of Exu, we offer this conceptual *padê*, our yellow *farofa*, to remember the ancestors in a performance study.

Although Futurist, Dadaist and Surrealist artists have already intervene with the aim of breaking with the dogmas and paradigms of traditional artist and of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s social milieu, Goldberg (2007)

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points out that performance only gains fame and recognition while genre and an artistic expression in its own right in the 1970s, a time when works of art were viewed only as superfluous and commercial. Conceptual art was then enjoyed in prestigious art centers, museums and galleries, promoting these artworks as a commodity to be bought and sold.

Goldberg (2007) quotes Marcel Duchamp (1913) denouncing the fact that an elite of artists had the power to endorse and define what could be considered an artwork. Thus, as if by magic, any everyday object touched by an artist and endorsed by the elite would be, in essence, considered an artwork, available for sale in prestigious salons (Salgado, 2014). The art of that time aimed to value the product at the expense of the process. It is in this scenario that performance emerges as a catalyst, a wrecker of categorizations, where the performer not only used it to attract publicity for himself, but also as a strategy to put into practice, to materialize, to embody ideas and a diversity of concepts about artistic creation, breaking with the idea that art was confined to a single concept. Therefore, "[…] live gestures have constantly been used as a weapon against the conventions of established art" (Goldberg, 2007, p. 7).

As a result, canonical artists had to rethink their approaches and pay more attention to processes, which allowed them to transgress the boundaries of an elitist art using performance as a malleable discipline open to promoting dialogues between diverse languages and fields such as literature, art and social sciences. There is no doubt that its origins lie in the visual arts and that it was through these dialogues that performance could expand into various fields, as those already mentioned, and into various areas of human life. Performance art thus became a fertile, borderless field of art production – which allows for exchange and contact between artistic languages, generating a universe of diverse approaches to anthropology, sociology, history and sports, in addition to art (Ligiéro, 2010).

Born in a post-cold war scenario, performance is also the product of the various social and disciplinary upheavals that rocked Europe and the United States in the late 1960s, radically breaking with the notions of normative behavior promulgated by sociology. It sought to bridge the disciplinary divide between anthropology and theater (Taylor, 2003; 2013).

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We emphasize that the United States of the 1960s and 1970s experienced events historically and socially marked by a growing questioning of classical art. These decades were also known by a *performative turn* in which performance was consolidated as a language that can be used to question political and cultural values and structures, placing Art and the artist in check. At that moment, there was a quest to abolish any way of thinking about art that distances itself from life.

Performance studies' commitment to reflect on and analyze art objects is a way of intervening in man's relationship with his social environment and in his body through the tenuity of art's interfaces with everyday life (Zenicola, 2014). For Zenicola, performance results from the possibility of allowing the dialogue between life's various spheres to become applicable and functional. Nei Lopes (2010, p. 9), in his preface to the book *Corpo a corpo: estudo das performances afro-brasileiras* (body-to-body: a study of Afro-Brazilian performances), points out that performance is a discipline "[…] attractive and mysterious […]" – his observation contains the idea of overcoming the dichotomy between art and life, both appearing as attractive and mysterious to man.

It would be this ability of performance to associate, in an intrinsic way, the mysteries of art to the mysteries of life that allows for and/or provokes in performance a distancing and/or escape from theater. As much as Carlson (2009) seeks to refute this separation between performance and theater, it cannot be denied, since performance emphasizes the performer's physical presence in an attempt to bridge the distance between artist and audience. Fictional characters leave the scene to make room for the subject; the performer does not represent any character but himself, events have no domain, the script is not a prison as in classical theater. Performance gives the performer the potential to be, at the same time, creator and creature, as there is no separation between artist and work of art, art and life vibrate in a time-space lapse where both are *being* in the here and now.

Literature points out that performance emerges from futurism, dadaism, surrealism, happenings and poem-paintings, where body and physical presence take on the center of the action through behaviors and gestures (Goldberg, 2007; Carlson; 2009; Salgado, 2014).

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> Kaprow's viewpoint is that the live show (performance) was closer to social life, that is, life itself offers content to art and can be lived as art. This convergence between art and life in Kaprow's works is heavily influenced by Erving Goffman's thinking (Toro, 2010, quoted in Salgado, 2014, p. 8).

Art and life are associated in a complementary way, in a process of inter-nutrition, where art emerges from life and feeds it at the same time, thus connoting a relationship of inescapable reciprocity. Among the artists who worked from a perspective that approached or generated performance art, Allan Kaprow stands out with his works that in 1950 combined diverse artistic languages, which could not be identified and/or classified as dance, music, theatre, painting or sculpture, and his artistic practices were closely related to installation art and happenings.

Widely known for their importance to the emergence and strengthening of performance are artists such as "Ana Mendieta, Chris Burden, Dan Graham, Gina Pane, Joan Jonas, John Cage, Lao Tzu, Laurie Anderson, Marina Abramovic, Vito Acconci, Stelarc" (Salgado, 2014, p. 81), who produced their works of art in an intersectional way, breaking barriers between genres and fields of knowledge, seeking to overcome the dichotomy between life and art.

Although Carlson (2009) has pointed out the impossibility of conceptualizing performance, we will make some reflections towards a concept capable of informing this study. To this end, we also reflect on the concept and presence of performativity as observed in the *orixá* Exu and the Brazilian Exus entities. We created an analogy between the two *concepts*, performance and performativity, and Exu and Exus, not respectively. We focus on the complexity of conceptually reflecting on these four *elements*: Performance, Performativity, Exu and Exus. Performance/Exus and Performativity/Exu are taken in an analogous way. Performativity/Exu is our starting point, as one who does it backwards, as one who denies in order to affirm. We thus leave the core concepts Performance/Exus stored inside the *moringa* (a Brazilian clay jug) to access at an opportune moment, as one who is surreptitiously waiting for the right moment to attack.

The Exus are to the orixá Exu what performance is to performativity: both appear to affirm the presence of their matrix, whether in the form of annunciation or in their very way of acting, of taking action. Taylor (2013)

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views performance and performativity as false cognates; we dare say, here, that Exu and Exus are the same in this regard – they are contradictorily as similar as they are different. Brazilian Exus, Umbanda entities, are elements that connote the presence, the physicality of the orixá. In religions other than Candomblé, they arise and are strengthened in the relationship that Candomblé forges with other cultures. Performativity, in turn, arises with scholars coming from rhetoric and philosophy, such as Derrida, Foucault, Lacan and Butler (Taylor, 2003 and 2013; Carlson, 2009; Lopes, 2010), all referring to the action, to the utterance, whether through gestures, behaviors pre-established by symbols, codes or speech, which brings us to the interaction in the physical domain that Exus establish with devotees through beverages, cigarettes, food, speech, dance and garments. Performance is to the action as much as performativity is to the utterance, the energy, the force of the discourse that makes the orixá present.

Another element that allows us to approach this conceptual crossroads of Exu/performativity and Exus/performance is Schechner's argument (2003; 2006; 2012) that not everything is performance, but that anything can be studied, seen *as* performance. Therefore, if performance is situated among the performer, the action and the audience, performativity is the discourse that links meaning and context, or the non-meaning. Performativity is composed of *micro performances* that give the performer the sensation of achieving, or not, the objectives they have set to themselves, thus expanding the meanings attributed to codes and symbols.

If we enter the mystical and mythical domain to observe and relate these aspects, we will realize that when Exu is present in the *terreiro*, even if expressed in Exus entities, his utterance is realized in the physicality that is taking place there. As well as in the energy field that involves the devotees' conception of the divinity, whether through the colors, the elements used to adorn the environment, the drinks, the music, the drumming and dances performed in the ritual. Exu/performativity and Exus/performance are present in a simultaneous, interrelational and/or interdependent way.

However, we find in the figure of Zé Pelintra an enigma that leads us back to the conceptual crossroads of the Exu/performativity becoming and the Exus/performance becoming. Zé Pelintra is a Catimbó entity, which some view as not being one of the Exus, and others as being a disembodied

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spirit, an *egun*, who is invoked in the Quimbanda, in Umbanda's *giras* (rituals) for the Exus. His utterance comes from the phalanx of souls, but his presence is linked to the representative and symbolic field of the Exus. These entities are seen as Exus, so their performance is permeated by songs, dances, beverages and garments that express a performativity that makes it possible to understand them as Exus, connoting the enunciative energy of the orixá Exu. This places us in the middle of the Schechner's *as* crossroads. Zé Pelintra is seen *as* an *egun*, so he would act in the phalanx of souls, but he acts *as* Exus in the Umbanda's phalanx of Exu. Performance and performativity in a single entity. Performativity thus encompasses a set of movements, gestures, speeches, cultural symbols that can be studied as performance, but it is not performance. There is much of theatricality in performativity, which brings it closer and almost makes it intimate with theater, but it is not theater either (Féral, 2015). Therefore, performance can be understood as a staging of lived life, while performativity is an analysis, a study of life.

Performativity is a false cognate of performance, although not semantically, but performativity expresses a vast cultural domain, not being, like performance, related to and focused on a purely aesthetic issue and/or concern, as Féral (2009) points out when addressing performance and performative theater. Féral mentions two approaches to performance: the first expands and extends the concept of performance to the fields of anthropology and social sciences, focused on the study of rituals and social dramas based on Turner and Schechner; the second is Professor Huyssen's, which focuses on artistic perspectives that value aesthetic aspects to the detriment of sociological and anthropological ones, a view that distances art from sociocultural demands. With regard to cultural performance and artistic performance:

> His view is about performance in its purely artistic sense – and not anthropological. He places himself in an essentially aesthetic view that continues to dominate the performing arts. Performance, in this sense, is performance art, an art that rocked our view of art in the 1970s and 1980s (Féral, 2009, p. 199).

Performativity is one of performance's central tentacular aspects that allow it to expand and be multifaceted. It is in the set of factors that acts on

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the culture. Just as the Exus express the presence of the orixá Exu in Afro-Brazilian religions, where some aspects of the orixá are preserved in each fragment of his being offered to the nine *Orun*, in each of the Exus, the concept of performativity also shifts our gaze from the utterance and its content to the modes of discursive utterance, deconstructing and assigning new meanings to symbols and signs, creating a friction between life and art, reality and the imaginary.

Understanding these *terms*, Performativity/Exu and Performance/Exus, will be irrelevant if we do not also understand their *essence*. These *elements* are both known to be too multifaceted and complex to be apprehended through a conception that sees itself as purist and conservative. However, this search becomes legitimate by demonstrating how they are inseparably associated with life. Performativity/Exu and Performance/Exus are centered in action, in the body that is present, in physicality. It would be too simplistic to seek a semantic field to deal with such ambiguous issues. In this sense, Carlson (2009) points out the futility in the pursuit of a semantic understanding and apprehension of performance:

> Viewing performance as an essentially contested concept warns us against seeking some over-arching semantic field to cover such seemingly quite disparate usages as the performance of an actor, of a schoolchild, of an automobile (Carlson, 2009, p. 16).

Exu and performativity have the ability to engage in dialogue and promote dialogue between diverse artistic languages and in diverse spheres of life. The existence of different approaches to performance as a practice or object of study makes a precise conceptualization difficult, especially if we consider that, like Exu, it is present in all cultures and can be understood as actions carried out in a variety of contexts. Performance, according to Schechner (2003; 2006), serves as an umbrella for preserving various artistic and cultural manifestations. Regarding this aspect of performance, it is important to note that:

> […] performance has always materialized a multiplicity of inspirations and forms, which no other art has been able to preserve to the same degree. Coming to performance from very different horizons (music, painting, dance, sculpture, literature, theater) […] (Féral, 2015, p. 136).

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These aspects of performance, among others, are also identified in Exu/Exus: malleability, transmutation capacity and adaptation to time and space. They are not restricted to physical spaces or time; being able to play with both, they impose their own temporality, their own images and projection, playing with space, sometimes expanding, sometimes retracting. Performance bends time as Exu does with his *ogô* – his magic club –, which allows him to transport himself through time-space.

The ability to manipulate the body in space, expanding it to open possibilities is an attribute of existence and permanence inherent to the orixá, the entities and to the languages we are dealing with here alike. The body is the umbilical cord that connects Exu to the universe, expressing its performativity as Elegbara, the lord of the body, and it is through this same body that he, the umbilical Exu, connects all living beings to the gods, to Orun, the world of the nonliving. And it is no coincidence that it is through the body, through the process of incorporation or embodiment, that the Exus entities perform all sociocultural ills and dramas in the form of dance, music, chants, cigar puffs and laughter. It is through these actions, acts and performative gestures that the Exus spread their symbolic *ebó* throughout the physical and metaphysical universe.

When Exus express themselves in performance in temples, they mystically invoke Exu's performativity. The whirl of Pombagira's skirt manipulates time-space and projects *axé*, the essential energy of the orixá, who is reverenced and made present in the messages inscribed in the bodies and imagination of those present. Pombagiras' laughter, Zé Pelintra's *riscado* (composed symbols) and Tranca-ruas' cigar puffs are symbolic *ebós*, "performatized" to invoke in subjects and for subjects all the subversive potential inscribed in/by the lord of the body, Orixá Exu Bara, to proclaim the street and the crossroads as a place of diverse and varied epistemic possibilities. For this, the performer/priest needs to put their body at risk, literally, always aware that *mutilation*, injury and imbalance are real possibilities, and that this *mutilation* will not occur, as commonly thought, as a form of denial of or punishment inflicted on the performer or the body. It will be a form of reaffirmation, a healing that purifies, that allows the body to flourish from the body, affirming the indisputability of the presence, the surrender of the soul. This m*utilation* opens the body, but also protects and pre-

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pares it. Letting the audience manipulate the performer's body or something in it allows for resignification and dilation, expanding it towards a plurality and diversity of meanings.

Other aspects that support and are fundamental to the analogies proposed here are the abilities of the *elements* involved to manipulate and transform both the space and the reality that surround them. To support this hypothesis, we invoke and give bodily form to Exu personified in *Enugbarijó*, who according to Santos (2008) and Santos and Santos (2014) is also known as the first living being, Exu Ianguí, the Yoruba system's interpreter and linguist, connecting Orun to Aiê. This faculty derives from to the fact that:

> […] all four hundred *irumilés* decided to give a piece of their own mouths to Exu, on the day he should represent them at the feet of Olorum. Exu took these pieces and put them in his own mouth; since then he speaks for all of them and his mouth represents them (Santos; Santos, 2014, p. 108).

In this sense, *Enugbarijó* would be the collective mouth of the universe, therefore the mouth that eats everything, and, in his role of interpreter, he would be the one that makes everything palatable, understandable in its own way or not. He would be the expression of dynamism, manipulation and transformation. For Simas and Rufino (2018, p. 51), *Enugbarijó* is the mouth "[…] that eats everything, it is the same that returns what it swallowed in a recomposed form […]," transformed, processed, modified. Ills and hunger are inhaled; misfortunes and love sorrows are drank. The cigar puffs, the laughs and the hip shakes that Exus perform in the Umbanda and Quimbanda temples are the feedback, the restitution in response to the demands they swallowed and processed, they are the harbingers of good news, or not.

We bring Féral (2009) to our game of analogy to examine the relationship between performance and performativity in their exchanges with representation and the ability to play with signs, codes and symbols, to swallow reality in one form and return it in another, to be an interpreter and decoder, imparting a certain ambiguity to the scene, which takes the spectator out of his state of passivity, just as *Enugbarijó* does when he gives his feedback in the form of an enigma:

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> Performance takes place in reality and focuses on this same reality in which it takes place, deconstructing it, playing with the spectator's codes and abilities… This deconstruction involves a game with signs that become unstable and fluid, forcing the spectator's gaze to incessantly adapt, to migrate from one reference to another, from one system of representation to another… The performer establishes the ambiguity of signification, the displacement of codes, the slippages of meaning. It is, therefore, about deconstructing reality, signs, senses and language (Féral, 2009 p. 203-204).

The performer's body is a chameleon body that adapts to different environments through manipulation and metamorphosis; the performer works the body as a painter works the canvas (Féral, 2015, p. 151). The body, both in performance/Exus and in Performativity/Exu, assumes the role of locus of knowledge and life production and, therefore, it is through action that performance is invigorated and manifested, an action that starts from the performer's *self* to reach the audience's *other*. For Salgado (2014, p. 86), "the body is the privileged place where performance takes place and, for that, it summons an audience around which the act is performed."

The performance is interstitial (Lopes, 2010, p. 8), it is neither the performer nor the audience. It is in the middle, in between the performer and the audience, and the performer assumes the role of provocateur. It is just like Exu, who is situated exactly between Olorum and man. Therefore, both performance and Exu preexist the performative utterance, that is, they are like an action that takes place in the body due to its expansion toward the various artistic genres and languages, as well as toward literature, social sciences, anthropology and ethnology. It plays with chance and seeks to bridge the distance between artist and audience. Performance changes the artist's relationship with the audience.

Still in the period of futurism, Goldberg (2007, p. 20) points out that performance art served to disrupt a complacent audience; the purpose of futuristic performances was to get artists out of their comfort zone and make the public give up its place of passivity and its eternal state of intellectual inertia. Audience participation is essential for performance, whose existence is neither in the performer nor in the audience, but in the in-between place, in the bond, in the commitment and responsibility joining performer and audience in an interdependent way (Salgado, 2014).

The performer controls, he chooses what to reveal of himself and how a part of himself might affect the audience; he manages what should or should not be exposed and, even if he has no control over the audience's action and reaction, the performer must be open to revealing the truth of himself. Performance has the ability to unravel and reveal the truth of both the performance and the audience, be it the true truth or an invented truth, using the pulse of the moment as an ephemeral booster. The reflexivity and awareness of self-presentation in front of the other occurs in a fine line between the "[…] not me [and the] not not me, [between the] person [and the] character" (Schechner, 1985, quoted by Salgado, 2014, p. 88).

Performativity/Exu and Performance/Exus are the direct expression of empowerment, of the subversion of those who had been made subordinate. Both have an interventionist character, vehemently questioning rules taken for granted, whether in the social domain or in the fields of arts, literature, history, among others. In this way, they seek to break with the canons of society and serve as tools to educate individuals to think critically, to overcome repressions produced by ideologies that subordinate a culture and/or a people to another.

Richard Schechner, together with Victor Turner, elaborated concepts and procedures that help performance researchers to assimilate social demands. Both authors sought to reflect on experiences taking place at the crossroads of the arts, anthropology and sociology, in order to understand performance as a relationship that intrinsically involves all these fields. Inspired by Turner's research on rituals, Schechner makes use of the idea of *social drama* to structure his study of performance and develop the concept of *restored behavior* or *twice-behaved behavior* based on Greek tragedy (Salgado, 2014), a concept that Schechner considers essential for understanding performance. Thus, for Schechner, in the arts, something is performance when it is put on a show, a play, a dance, a concert, that is, something to be shown to someone. In everyday life, it takes place in a historical and social context when the social dynamics say something can be viewed *as* performance (Schechner, 2003; 2006; 2012). Therefore, performance takes place in an inextricable relationship between art and life.

Schechner understands that performances are physical and verbal actions that are prepared and/or rehearsed, that are being performed not for

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the first time and that are important in the transmission, transformation and/or maintenance of a given society's cultural knowledge (Taylor, 2003; 2013).

In this sense, it is important to point out that due to its expansion as action, its multifaceted character, its diverse interfaces and the frictions arising from its conceptual complexity, performance's field of action is wide and diverse, so it is important to draw attention to some of its aspects. The first is the issue of *being*, of existence, which is a problem related to philosophical reflections on the issue of the subject. Next, the *doing*, which is related to action, to the movement originating in the subject, so that the subject is because he moves, he controls the action. And third, the *showing by doing* – every performance needs an audience by essence and to exist, this is the aspect linking it to the spectacle, to spectacularization. In other words, there is a link connecting these three aspects and making them interdependent: the subject exists through action, through doing, which in turn is directly connected to showing himself, to being seen doing something. These aspects are the pillars of performance. Considering the above, the concept of performance is expanded to a diversity of fields, reinforcing its tendency to be an inter- and multidisciplinary genre.

Carlson (2009, p. 15) invokes Herbert Blau to point out that the fact that our lives are based on socially established sets of movements, behaviors and gestures allows all human activity to be considered performance, and that the difference between doing and performing lies in an attitude, in the action, and not in the frame of theater versus real-life. Corroborating Schechner (2003; 2006), an action becomes or can be considered as performance when an awareness of the behavior being performed arises, so everything can be studied, observed *as* performance, just by imparting an idea and/or purpose to it, which means this possibility lies more in the observer than in the performer. However, conceptually, this *as* potentially corresponds to performativity. In this aspect, performance acts upon a pre-established standard. As Schechner points out, performance is an action performed successfully and that is related to the other, to showing-doing and to doing.

Performance connotes the display of a specific skill that goes beyond quality. It is related to the execution and/or repetition of a gesture, move-

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ment or behavior. Performances are events, ephemeral experiences, since they happen to a minimum extent in the relationship between two subjects. They tend not to be repeated due to the space-time relationship, to the action and reaction of the subjects involved, among other factors. Performance has interaction at its core, and over this, the performer does not have full control. A performance can be repeated exactly the same, but the interaction factor will introduce other events such as rain or a power outage, events that are out of the performer's control. As Schechner (2003; 2006; 2012) points out, interactivity is always in flux, just as the being is not permanent.

Schechner (2003; 2006) highlights eight situations where performance can occur for him. First in everyday life, in everyday practices studied as performance; second in the arts, where behavior is rehearsed, trained in order to be displayed, for example, in dance, music and theater performances; third in popular sports and entertainments, linked to competition and results; fourth in business, where to perform involves displaying quality or aesthetics values to the advantage of the customer; fifth in technology, which is based on the ability to perform in a timely and quality manner; sixth, sex also embodies performance, aesthetics and efficiency; seventh in rituals, both sacred and secular; eighth in play, ability to get involved, ability to engage in games. It is important to note that these situations can occur both in isolation and in combination; the particular occurrences are thus immeasurable. In this sense, a soccer game can show great plasticity and be considered art, as well as a culinary competition may gain a sporting aspect highlighting its performative character.

These everyday actions raised to the category of performance can also be viewed as objects of social sciences studies and investigations and allow us to reflect on the ritualization of everyday behavior, such as going to work, going to school, having a family lunch or a birthday celebration. Ritualization is consolidated through the repetition of behavior of which, according to Schechner (2003; 2006), one may not always be aware. To understand performance, therefore, it is first necessary to be aware of what the author called "[…] restored behavior […]" (Schechner, 2003, p. 36), which for him is present in our routines, habits and rituals, where what is considered new and/or unprecedented is actually the recombination and combina-

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tion of restored behaviors. Performance also results from these combinations of twice-behaved behaviors.

On this aspect and the importance of studying behaviors for the investigation and analysis of performance, Carlson (2009) puts into perspective the consensus that exists on performance with respect to society and the processes of cultural maintenance and/or transformation:

> There is widespread agreement among performance theorists that all performance is based upon some pre-existing model, script, or pattern of action. Richard Schechner in a happy and widely-quoted phrase calls performance "restored behavior." John MacAloon has similarly asserted that "there is no performance without pre-formance." On the other hand, much modern anthropological analysis of performance has laid special stress on how performance can work within a society precisely to undermine tradition, to provide a site for the exploration of fresh and alternative structures and patterns of behavior. Whether performance within a culture serves most importantly to reinforce the assumptions of that culture or to provide a possible site of alternative assumptions is an on-going debate that provides a particularly clear example of the contested quality of performance analysis (Carlson, 2009, p. 24-25).

At this point, we arrive at an approach to performance that, in part, is applicable to our research, i.e. the study of cultural performances focused on the investigation of ritual. Taylor (2013, p. 33) points out performance studies' break with sociologist Émile Durkheim's structuralist theories, which involve the idea of normative behavior and postulates that the social condition of humans account for behaviors and beliefs. Taylor points out anthropologists who oppose Durkheim's approach, such as Turner, Milton Singer, Erving Goffman and Clifford Geertz, who begin to theorize and investigate individuals as agents in their own dramas.

Schechner (2012) employs Turner's theory of social drama, seeking to refine it and extract universalist aspects from it. As constituent factors in the study of cultural performance focused on understanding social drama and behavior, Singer (1959), quoted by Carlson (2009, p. 25), suggests that the cultural content of a tradition was transmitted by specific cultural media, as well as by human carriers. The study of the operation of such media on particular occasions could provide anthropology with "[…] a particularization of the structure of tradition complementary to the social organization." And

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he also points out the importance of performance studies to the culture, whether for its ability to transmit, to store, to subvert or to maintain the memories and previously built social and cultural relationships.

For Taylor (2003; 2013), performance participates in acts of transfer, transmission and maintenance of knowledge, memory and the sense of social identity, being at the same time ontological and epistemological, simultaneously *real* and *constructed*. She presents a post-colonial approach to functionality and investigations into performances conducted in the Americas and emphasizes the importance of finding a term capable of encompassing the demands and conceptions of life and culture of Latinos, thus reinforcing that performance has the capability to bend time, mark identities, reshape and adorn the body and tell stories (Schechner, 2003, p. 27).

Fischer-Lichte (2005) draws attention to the need to understand the body, the physicality as a way to enable the understanding of cultural performance.

> It is not the ideas, concepts, or meanings that must be examined in the first place in order to give visibility to the performative character of culture, but the particular physical bodies, through which and among which the spectacle is produced – the body of the actor who, by employing certain techniques and practices, manages to occupy the space and focus the spectators' full attention on himself, on his physical presence, as well as on their own bodies, which respond in a particular way to an experience of presentness such as this (Fischer-Lichte , 2005, p. 76).

Fischer-Lichte corroborates the importance of the physical body as an element of co-presence in cultural performance, highlighting some points that for her are essential in the study of culture as performance. They are:

> 1. A performance occurs through the physical co-presence of actors and spectators, through their encounter and interaction.

> 2. What happens in it is transitory and ephemeral. Nonetheless, whatever occurs during its realization manifests as hicet nunc, and is experienced as present in a particularly intense manner.

> 3. A performance does not transmit predetermined meanings. On the contrary. It is the performance itself that generates its meanings during its execution.

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4. Performances are characterized by their "event" nature. The specific model of experience that it enables is a particular form of liminal experience (Fischer-Lichte, 2005, p.73-74).

The points raised by Fischer-Lichte (2005) agree with the theories postulated by Schechner (2003; 2006), which emphasize both the physical presence as essential for performance execution and the performance's nature of ephemeral experience, which take place in the here and now, having interaction and the relationship with the audience-*other* as drivers of the events taking place and dispensing with a predetermined story or script constraining the performer. Performance does not transmit predetermined meanings, but transmits instead discourses that generate a range of meanings; the performer, therefore, does not need to represent any character. It is performance's physicality that modifies, adorns, shapes and frames the space through its display and displacement.

Faced with all the complexity involved in conceptualizing performance and performativity in their different and varied spheres, we surveyed here some points about which various performance theorists in the fields of arts, anthropology and social sciences agree – which shows how broad and comprehensive is the scope of these concepts, thus enabling our research to create and/or point out epistemic crossroads/intersections to establish dialogues with social agents, in order to understand cultural performances in Candomblé rituals for the orixá Exu, as well as with their interlocutors.

Performativity/Exu and Performance/Exus are thus phenomena inseparable from life and involve so many ambiguities that they are too complex to be apprehended in a single concept or discipline. Their subversive potential make them attractive to everyone who sees universalism as an obstacle to various possibilities for artistic, social and cultural expression. The individual and the body are important because they are where rituals, actions and behaviors take place in a concrete, ephemeral, isolated or combined way. Performance is in the middle of action, agent, space/time and audience, while performativity is in the operating elements that structure and/or determine the sociocultural, historical, political and economic aspects of societies.

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Afro Performance

Considering this, it is both necessary and our desire to study Afro performance, since this subject is little explored in the field of Brazilian performance studies, and also because of the authors' familiarity with the Afro-Brazilian practices we examine here. We agree with Frigerio (2003) when he points out that in order to understand Afro and Afrodiasporic performative dynamics it is necessary to relinquish all colonizing views and seek a dialogue with an "[…] Afrocentric perspective" (Frigério, 2003, p. 51). Therefore, in addition to the literature review, we turn to what Rufino (2016, p. 58) called "exusiac" and Santos (2014, p. 22) called "baraperspective" to validate all knowledge that recognizes the body as an epistemological locus of scientific knowledge production and all possibilities for dialogue and intersectionality arising from the body through Exu/Bara. We rely on these authors, since both fully engage in dialogue with the methodological approach of Afrocentricity, which seeks to deconstruct and/or reformulate all products of colonization and which has Africa, the African and/or the Afro-diasporic as reference, as a place or center of knowledge production (Asante, 2009). In this investigation, the experiences of authors, Afro-Diasporic Blacks, Candomblecists, performers, artists and researchers of Afro-Brazilian dances are also employed as a tool for accessing bodily and oral memory, which is an important mark of Afro performances (Martins, 2003a).

The study of Afro performances is also necessary because the term in question, Afro, is related to a wide range of different ethnic, cultural and linguistic groups, although originating in the same continent. What we seek in this reflection is to explain the similarities in the various performances forms of African origin (Frigério, 2003), as well as to reflect on the "[…] cultural drivers […]" pointed out by Ligiéro (2010, p. 107) as "[…] a set of cultural dynamics used in the African diaspora to recover ancestral African behaviors," which through various processes, mechanisms and strategies allow these performances to adapt and cope with the adversities they have faced and are facing. To this end, the Afro-diasporic black body must be understood based on its own references. We will thus take the Candomblé *terreiro* and Umbanda temples as references to structure an understanding of this body. However, this will not be done because we believe that all

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Blacks profess or should profess these religions or beliefs, but because we believe that ancestry is an element common to all forms of construction and affirmation of this Black identity.

The Black body is a crossroads by nature and Blacks make it a locus of production, whether of a survival strategy or of a flow and storage space for knowledge and memory. The mechanisms that allow Afro performance to codify and assimilate different cultural systems are born and also make sense at the crossroads, thus establishing Afro performance and performative practices as an ontological and epistemic issue. The crossroads is both a meeting place and a passage; it is dynamic and different cultures and ethnicities pass through it. It is a place of cultural intersection, but nothing passes through it without leaving a bit of itself, without paying *toll* to Exu, which makes it a space of exchange, "[…] Black culture is a place of crossroads" Martins (2013b), p. 70). Zenicola (2014, p. 91) points out that for the Yoruba the human body is where "[…] all the forces of nature […]" are concentrated and take place harmoniously, which explains, in part, its mythology, since the body is the center of all the energy in the world.

The crossroads body is the kingdom of Exu. It is there that all paths intersect and originate; it is through and in the crossroads body that humans and gods meet under the aegis of its guardian, Exu – the lord of paths and crossroads. There the movement occurs sometimes in a circle, sometimes in a spiral or simultaneously. The crossroads body has, therefore, an inherent potential to be centrifugal and centripetal, that is, to exert a force from the inside out and from the outside in. This is the *essence* of all Afro performances. These performances are situated in a domain that is difficult to understand due to its complexity, but it is also this characteristic that ensures their longevity, allowing it to transmute, adapt, fructify and flourish in hostile fields.

> Black culture in the Americas has two sides, two voices, and expresses, in its foundational constitutive ways, the disjunction between what the social system assumed that individuals should say and do and what, through countless practices, they actually said and did. In this operation of asymmetric balance, displacement, metamorphosis and veiling are some of the basic operating principles and tactics in African-American cultural formation, which the study of performance practices reiterate and reveal. In the Americas, Af-

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rican arts, crafts and knowledge take on new and ingenious formats (Martins, 2003b, p. 69).

This ambivalence inherent to Black culture – which we understand as African – pointed out by Martins (2003b) is actually the two sides of the same coin. To survive the slavery systems, Africans had to camouflage their desires and wills, which will directly reflect on artistic-cultural performance practices and on the bodies of Africans and their descendants. Ligiéro (2010) emphasizes the importance of the body for performative practices of African origin, extolling its qualities and highlighting its effective role in the life of Africans and Afro-descendants:

> Today, in performances of African origin, we can observe: the body is the center of everything. It moves in multiple directions, undulates its torso and lets itself be permeated by the percussive rhythm. The dance that subjugates the body is born from the inside out and spreads through the space in sync with the syncopated music typical of the African continent. It is so insistent and engaging that it participates equally in the festive, the religious, and the Brazilian people's everyday life; from Catholic celebrations to Afro revelries and rites, such as the Candomblé and the Umbanda (Ligiéro, 2010, p. 131).

Afro performance practices and origin have peculiarities that should be examined. One of the main characteristics that mark performance in its origins in the 1960s is its ability to be permeated by the encounter of diverse art languages (Carlson, 2009). Therefore, visual arts, dance, music, architecture and other languages were part of a complex that stood against the theater and its dogmas. In African culture, this amalgamation of languages, which characterizes performance in the West, has always been an inseparable part of everyday life. Frigerio (2003) argues that in African-American performances it is necessary to master more than a single code, as there is a whole system composed of bodily codes – gestures, movements and ways of walking, dressing, talking, singing and telling – that impart dynamism to the practices.

Frigerio points out six main points common to Afro-American performances, which we believe can also apply to Africa as the origin of these practices, as well as the concept of *cultural drivers* developed by Ligiéro (2010).

> African-American artistic performance is characterized by being multidimensional, participatory, omnipresent in everyday life, basically conversa-

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tional, in order to highlight the individual style of each participant and to always and clearly fulfill social functions (Ligiéro, 2010, p. 64).

The first aspect of Afro performance pointed out by Frigerio (2003) is its multidimensionalism, as Afro or African-originated artistic practices are not built upon a hierarchical, categorized or isolated relationship. The practitioner must have knowledge of the entire practical, cultural and symbolic system. An instance of this can be found in Candomblé, where the neophyte, appointed by the orixá through cowrie-shell divination, must practice all the necessary functions – from the kitchen to the hall, from cleaning the *terreiro* to the most complex rituals – to become a babalorixá. He will learn to cook, sew, weave, sing, dance, throw cowries, manage the space, lead and conduct rituals. Multidimensionality is one of the main and most important characteristics of Black art, and this is observed in artistic, religious and profane expressions.

This potential is also emphasized in Ligiéro's studies (2010), when he makes use of the ideas of the Congolese philosopher Busenki Fu-Kiau, to highlight the multidimensional and multidisciplinary ability of the Afro performer to simultaneously employ a set of techniques in performances, which he called the *powerful trio*: singing, dancing and drumming.

> In considering the combination of bodily arts with music and, especially, with the simultaneous use of singing as something that is perceived as a unit within African performance, Fu-Kiau highlights a device that, undoubtedly, remains characteristic of African diasporic performances in the Americas – Black African performance could not exist without this powerful trio, and the same applies to Afro-Brazilian performances (Ligiéro, 2010, p. 109).

Another aspect of Afro performance that deserves to be highlighted is its participatory character, since in it we find no clear separation between audience and performer, whose roles are only circumstantial. Most of these performances involve a break with this dichotomy (audience versus performers). In this sense, a *repentista* (folk singer) from the Brazilian Northeast, when playing his tambourine, improvises his *repente* (sung verses) together with the supposed audience, which at any moment can interfere in the construction of the stanza or in the show. In a *samba de roda* (samba circle), it is not possible to distinguish musicians and public, as they all sing, clap, gesticulate and dance in harmony. Ligiéro (2010) emphasizes the

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tendency to concomitantly associate play and ritual in the same dynamic; in other words, in these performances the combination of these elements reflects and reverberates the practitioners' everyday life.

However, Frigerio (2003) calls attention to the professionalization of these artists, who start to instill in their *shows* an element of spectacle characteristic of the West in Afro performances. These begin to establish a separation between performers and audience. This seems a valid concern, but our experiences with traditional groups or research groups in popular culture lead us to believe that a more in-depth approach is necessary, since establishing a relationship with the public is a goal inherent to performance and Afro performances do not make use of the fourth wall concept, such as in a theater performance on a traditional Italian stage.

We observe that in the popular dance and Afro-Brazilian dance professional groups in which we participate there has always been a moment when performers erase the separation between them and the public, which even when it is more present can be easily dissolved. In the *samba de roda* group ReconcaRio's performance of the *boiadeiro* – an entity of the Umbanda pantheon, which portrays the country dweller's rustic and hard life – his function is to pull people into the circle and mediate the relationships between them, intervening in everyone's way of singing and dancing. The shows and performances of the *Companhia Folclórica do Rio – UFRJ* are interactive, and the public has an effective participation by dancing, singing or establishing a dialogue with performers. All this leads us to reflect on the fact that, even on stage, these relationships take place interdependently and are directly associated with the practitioners' everyday life.

The importance of exchanges between languages in Afro performance also deserves to be praised, whether in the case of the northeastern *repentista*, of the *jongueiro* of the southeast who makes his verses while drumming, of the samba circle or of the conversation between sacred drums invoking the gods. It is known that this potential to promote direct exchanges between audience and performer also takes place in a circular form. If Exu creates his own time (Sodré, 2017), it is in the circle that Afro performances bend it. The circle for Afro culture is one of the strategies for accelerating, reversing or stopping time and thus subvert, even if in imagination, social roles and remember time, connecting with the ancestral.

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Another peculiarity of these exchanges is that the Afro performance by no means erases the performer's personality; on the contrary, it affirms identity and promotes an encounter between the individual and himself. However, mastering bodily and verbal techniques is not enough to execute a dense performance like the Afro performance (Frigério, 2003, p. 59). For Frigerio (2003), one must have personality to be a performer *in full*; having a personal style is fundamental to Afro culture and Afro performance. This is one of the most marked characteristics of a master's or leader's knowledge repertoire. For Ligiéro (2010), these masters are responsible for the survival, maintenance and dissemination of Afro and Afrodiasporic performances. The master is the holder and guardian of the knowledge necessary to ensure continuity and resistance, whether transmitting, codifying or adapting information to make it understandable to new generations. It is important to emphasize that having mastery of the entire symbolic system does not necessarily grants the individual a place of privileged leadership, and that several leaders can coexist in the same system. However, it is undeniable that a good performer has obtained the mastery of several skills, understands the symbolic system expressed in performances and has as their major quality the ability to improvise, in addition to being knowledgeable about the social issues related to the group.

Improvisation is what puts creativity to the test and it is improvisation that creates a fertile ground for creation, allowing the performance activity to disseminate and/or assign new meanings to itself. A good *kuduro* dancer is one who has the ability to use the music's beat and nuances to improvise, one who has developed his own movements, through which he expresses and builds his identity, his mark. In the same way, a samba *passista* (dancer) has developed and expresses herself through her own repertoire of movements created by the variation in dynamic required by the drums' beat and tempo.

Movements, gestures and behaviors (way of walking, dressing, talking, expressing oneself bodily to emphasize speech) make up a system that we call in this study an ancestral repertoire. We believe in the bodily memory left by our ancestors. One of the authors of this work was approached by a dance student asking for advice on what activity would be good for his four-year-old son, who was very creative and liked to invent moves. He

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asked the child to dance, who then performed a sequence of movements very similar to those in the *capoeira* repertoire even though he had never seen it before. There were jumps, turns and falls that were too complex to be learned without a technical and gradual development. Experiences like this make you wonder where do these moves, this knowledge, this cognitive and motor intelligence come from if not from an ancestral bodily memory.

> […] the body in performance is not just the expression or representation of an action, which symbolically refers us to a meaning, but especially a place where knowledge is inscribed, a knowledge that is written in the gesture, in the movement, in the choreography, vocally in the solfeggios, as well as in the props that performatively cover it. In this sense, what is repeated in the body is not repeated only as a habit, but as a technique and procedure for inscribing, recreating, transmitting and reviewing the memory of knowledge, whether aesthetic, philosophical, metaphysical, scientific, technological, etc. (Martins, 2003a, p. 66).

The crossroads body is fertile memory where, and through which, the knowledge originated in the African continent is inscribed and stored. This particularity of the Black body can be accessed to varying degrees and by different means, and it is through autonomy, wit and personality that the performer processes and adapts the decoded information to the contemporary space. Afro performance is thus present in the everyday life of Africans and Afro-descendants and has great social and cultural relevance. Schechner (2003, p. 32) called "[…] restored behavior […]" the potential for repetition, combination and/or rearrangement in time/space. Schechner argues that "[…] individuals given credit for inventing rituals or games usually turn out to be synthesizers, recombiners, compilers, or editors of already practiced actions […]," and also that "[…] restored behavior can be 'me' at another time or psychological state […]" (Schechner, 2003, p. 34). Reflecting on the body as the main intermediary between the natural and the supernatural, as the Yoruba believe and from the perspective we adopt here (*Exusiac* and *baraperspective*), it will be the main gateway to ancestral memories by means of the spirituality expressed in behaviors.

The ubiquity of performance in the everyday life of Africans is a topic highlighted by Frigerio (2003), who considers this fact the particularity that enables each individual in this society to master the codes necessary to participate in performances:

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> In cultures where there is no rigid separation between artistic forms, where all singing implies music, and music implies dance (which also includes elements of pantomime), where there is also no rigid separation between performers and audience and where the separation between situations of representation and everyday life is not very marked, there would be no surprise in finding that each individual is a potential performer, and each everyday life situation a possibility for a small performance (Frigério, 2003, p. 56).

It is expected that social tensions, problems and issues will be present in these performances, whether in the *jongo* chant, in Brazilian funk or in American rap, as a means of denouncing government negligence towards the less affluent population. Because it is so embedded in the citizens' everyday life, Afro performance also works in the service of society – so most performances, based on everyday life, seek to question, subvert or modify reality. Afro performance has at its heart a community character. It tends therefore to value and act in the service of the collective, such as in a group pulling a fishnet on the Brazilian northeastern coast, in the work of coconut breaker women, in *cirandas* (circle dancing) and other expressions arising from community work that combine the six aspects mentioned by Frigerio (2003).

The multidimensional capacity, the participation, the ubiquity in everyday life, the conversational character, the participant's individual style and the social functions present in Afro performances are part of a complex of relationships and interactions that compose the repertoire of behaviors and the way of life of Africans and their descendants. What makes it possible to think if there is an expiration period for Afro performances? Are they truly ephemeral? Regarding its permanence, we turn to Lévi-Strauss (1977), when he postulates that myths do not die, but rather fragment and change to give rise to other myths within the same narrative context. The Afro performance, like the myths, also gains new meanings and aspects, but does not lose its nature. Its capacity for resistance is associated with the colonization processes to which Africa and Africans were subjected. Performance entails an intrinsic relationship between art and life that concerns the way of life and the worldview of Africans and their descendants. This syncopated body that performers of African origin have allows them to perform at various crossroads without losing their origins because, as we argued above, African culture finds its potential at the crossroads, and it is the body that

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deals with both of Exu's realms, which there are unified, constituting the *indivisible* in the universe, a universe of its own.

Final Considerations

In view of the aspects that the analogies and dialogues carried out here allowed us to observe, we consider that the Exus' performance creates an atmosphere that speaks of the presence of the orixá Exu, whether due to the ingestion of alcoholic beverages and its hallucinogenic possibility, color combinations, the ability to communicate, exaggerated movements and gestures, as well as to the dynamics. Exu and Exus merge. Because of this they cloud the minds of the faithful and the lay people who become lost in the fine line between divinity and entity, and all that remains is to live the experiences, feel the energy and embrace the inebriation, the touch of supernatural beings' energy. As for performance's interactional character, we understand that no matter how much the artist is trained to deal with the events that may occur during performances, there is a point when the artist has to break through the boundaries that keep the audience apart. Intentionally or not, these events disrupt and restructure the performance, and the performer has to become involved in them, partially losing control over the actions and interactions.

Performativity and performance establish a collaborative relationship with Exu and the Exus, who both mediate events in a feedback process. In addition to the considerations put forth here, we note that these entities engage more in the event in terms of time and space than of form, the *how*, adapting to the subjectivities arising from the event in the here and now, establishing a direct relationship with the audience. Thus, due to their metamorphic, adaptable and relational dynamic character, they are difficult, if not impossible, to be understood in full.

Our arguments, underpinned by a research that approaches Performance/Exus and Performativity/Exu and Afro-Brazilian cultural practices in a complementary way, are expressed through *ebós* and *pontos riscados* (composed symbols) devoted to Exu in Black bodies, crossroads bodies. Both produce knowledge in the form of resistance in their convergences and divergences, bearing the fruit of presence, whether in performance art or in

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social performance. This presence transmits ancestral echoes, and Exu is the navel of the universe, just like the Black individual inhabiting any society. Exu is nature in transit, the driver between the (visible and invisible) means and all existing forms of life. His performance is in constant transmutation and he travels across both the tangible world and the intangible world. His characteristics are complex and his fields of action are extensive and enigmatic, and this complexity makes him subject to a diversity of interpretations.

As for Afro performances, our examination of Candomblé *terreiros* and crossroads bodies allows us to conclude that Exu constitutes a paradigm. The crossroads body offers an expressive possibility for creativity and potentiality in its existence and as an expression of physicality. It is present in performances that merge with and becomes indistinguishable from the lives of priests/performers, both in cultural and religious performative practices and in artistic performances. Candomblé *terreiros* and Umbanda temples establish themselves as fertile ground for the production and dissemination of knowledge; a soil that is fertilized and energized by Exu and the Exus in their physical and metaphysical domains, which effectively affects the relationships and interactions established by priests/performers. Considering the above, the performances we addressed here involve habits and behaviors that are also mediated by the orixá and the entities, in order to express their identity and their blackness.

Notes

[1] *Ponto* is the chant sung during festivals and rituals for spiritual entities at Umbanda temples.

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