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THE PERFORMATIVE MOVEMENTS OF DEISIANE BARBOSA

OS MOVIMENTOS PERFORMÁTICOS DE DEISIANE BARBOSA

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The Performative Movements of Deisiane Barbosa

Abstract: Deisiane Barbosa is an artist from Recôncavo Baiano who creates a multimodal artistic work including poetry, letter writing, performances, visual arts, photography, sewing, and book editing. Her work fuses artistic languages to challenge established categories and promote the creation of counter-narratives. Ancestry, memory, and feminism are central themes in her work, which echo the experiences of Black women. This study discusses three long-term artistic projects (referred to here as performative movements): *Cartas a Tereza*, *Andarilha Edições*, and *Casamendoeira*. *Cartas a Tereza* involves letter writing, performances, video art, and urban interventions. *Andarilha Edições* is a publishing house that specializes in handsewn books and that values the book as an aesthetic object. *Casamendoeira* is the reconstruction of Deisiane's grandparents' old house. The house has been transformed into a cultural center and an artist's residence. It is also the subject of a narrative of the same name.

Keywords: Deisiane Barbosa; memory; ancestry; black women.

Os movimentos performáticos de Deisiane Barbosa

Resumo: Deisiane Barbosa é uma artista do Recôncavo Baiano que desenvolve um trabalho artístico multimodal incluindo poesia, escrita de cartas, performances, artes visuais, fotografia, costura e edição de livros. O seu trabalho é uma fusão de linguagens artísticas que desafia categorias estabelecidas e promove a criação de contranarrativas. A ancestralidade, a memória e o feminismo são elementos centrais em seu trabalho, que busca ecoar as experiências das mulheres negras. Este artigo aborda três projetos artísticos de longa duração, aqui chamados de movimentos performáticos: *Cartas a Tereza*, *Andarilha Edições* e *Casamendoeira*. *Cartas a Tereza* é um projeto que envolve escrita de cartas, performances, videoartes e intervenções urbanas. *Andarilha Edições* é uma editora especializada em livros artesanais, costurados à mão, que valoriza o livro como objeto estético. *Casamendoeira* é a reconstrução da antiga casa dos avós de Deisiane, transformada em um centro cultural e residência artística, além de ser tema de uma narrativa com o mesmo nome.

Palavras-chave: Deisiane Barbosa; memória; ancestralidade; mulheres negras.



1 Recôncavo Baiano: the territory of Deisiane Barbosa's performative movements

Recôncavo: deep cavity, concavity. Curved space facing within, inward. Recôncavo: the other name for the identity territory¹ surrounding Baía de Todos os Santos in the state of Bahia. Recôncavo currently consists of 20 municipalities, corresponding to about 0.8% of the territory of the state of Bahia. One of the first territories occupied by the Portuguese colonization, Recôncavo has established itself throughout the centuries as a region of great cultural effervescence due to its residents' orality, music, history, and religiosity. Artistic and cultural activities such as *samba de roda*, *maculelê*, *candomblé*-related manifestations, *capoeira*, and religious brotherhoods comprise only a few examples of a creative, diverse, complex environment the social inequalities of which mostly result from colonization and slavery and the aftermath of struggles, revolts, continuous resistance, and the daily confrontations of those who keep Recôncavo curved and sinuous but firm and fertile as the *massapê* soil. The region shows a strong sense of belonging, so much so that, according to Fernando Pedráo (2007, p. 12), the cultural identity of the people of Recôncavo offers a unique case in the state of Bahia: people are aware of belonging to a region rather than a locality or municipality. Artist Deisiane Barbosa comes from such a place. Moreover, in this place Deisiane transits with a continuous, multimodal artistic work she articulates in several languages, hybridizing poetry, letter writing, visual arts, photography, sewing, and book publishing. Moreover, her academic work adds her theoretical thought on creative processes to such artistic production².

This study will address three of Deisiane Barbosa's performative movements: *Cartas a Tereza* (which became a book, video-poems, installations, and performances), *Andarilha Edições* (a publisher specializing in hand-sewn handmade books with original graphic designs and short runs), and *Casamendoeira*, the former home of Deisiane's grandparents (entirely rebuilt by her), which has become an important cultural center in inner Recôncavo, serving as the basis for *casamendoeira*, a poetic narrative *Andarilha Edições* published in 2023.

We ignore the fruitful discussion about the term performance, which, according to Diana Taylor (2018, p. 9), an encompassing and undefined word that means many often-contradictory things. However, the term can create practical and theoretical complications for its ubiquity and ambiguity. Also, Diana Taylor (2018, p. 54) deems performance as a multidimensional word that points to deep connections between aesthetic, political, economic, sexual, and religious acts. In addition to the categorization of the concept of performance, we are interested in the capacity performance has to provoke, to alter the established order, or, as per Eleonora Fabião (2008, p. 37), to “turbocharge the relationship between the citizen and the polis; of the historical agent

1 According to the Secretary of Culture of the State of Bahia, in the state “27 Territories of Identity are recognized, demarcated by environmental, economic, cultural criteria, among others. Moreover, these populations are seen as relatively distinct social groups, indicating identity, social, cultural, and territorial cohesion” (SECULTBA)

2 I have researched the contemporary literature from Recôncavo Baiano since 2020. Some of my articles have focused on Deisiane Barbosa, one of the main names in the local literature and arts. Thus, this study echoes some fragments of previous texts, especially biographical ones.



with its context; of the living with time, space, the body, the other, the self.” Thus, the power of performance would reside in “de-habituating, de-mechanizing, brushing against the grain. It involves seeking alternatives to address the established, experiencing altered psychophysical states, creating situations that disseminate diverse dissonances” of numerous orders, such as the economic, emotional, biological, ideological, psychological, spiritual, identity, sexual, political, aesthetic, social, racial ones (Fabião, 2008, p. 37).

Performance is one of the many artistic languages Deisiane uses in her works³. However, we will ignore the performances themselves, adopting the term performative movements to reflect on some of Deisiane Barbosa’s long-term creative projects. As we observe these projects, we perceive their performative force throughout time and space, their development, strands, layers, points of contact and distance between one and the other, and, above all, its deep connection with the Recôncavo territory.

2 Performative movement 1 – *Cartas a Tereza*

In 2010, Deisiane Barbosa wrote a short story with fantastic tones entitled *A moça que desfiou*, the character-narrator of which dialogued with someone named Tereza. Then, Deisiane began some letter-writing exercises still without a specific addressee. This interlocutor again emerges as a “fixation on the name Tereza. A proper name, a mystery, adjective, multiplied identities, women, different strands of feminine” (Barbosa, 2020, p. 11). From then on, *Cartas a Tereza* became one of Deisiane Barbosa’s long-term artistic projects. The initial part of this performative movement was the theme of her final course paper as Bachelor of Visual Arts at Universidade Federal do Recôncavo da Bahia entitled *Cartas à Tereza: confluências entre escritas, imagens e errâncias na cidade*, defended in 2016.

From *Cartas à Tereza* emerged the performance *A moça que desfiou* (2013)⁴, the videoart *Os dias circulares*⁵, the video letter *23 de janeiro* — present in the collective project *(auto)lou.cu.ra*⁶, the method of artistic experience called *Erranciar*, the use of lomography (a technique that captures the moments, the experiences seen in wanderings across the municipalities in Recôncavo), and the publication of a series of postcards entitled *cartões-postais à Tereza /caixas de entrada*, which

3 In her master’s thesis, for example, entitled *Inventário/da ilha\de Tereza: cartografia de um livro devir*, the artist proposed a “cartography of creative paths of the ‘inventory/of the island/of Tereza,’ a book in process that grows from literary writing to the production of poetic narratives in performance and video” (Barbosa, 2020, p.7).

4 In 2013, this performance participated in Salão de Artes Visuais de Feira de Santana, Bahia.

5 OS DIAS circulares. Produção: Deisiane Barbosa. 1 vídeo (3:07min). [S. l.]: Cartas à Tereza, 2015. Disponível em: <https://vimeo.com/109497837>. Acesso em: 02 mar. 2026.

6 A collective project of the visual arts course at Universidade Federal do Recôncavo da Bahia. In 2021, Deisiane revisited her letter, publishing it in the second edition of *Cartas a Tereza*. She also made another video with the text of this letter: *23 DE JANEIRO*. Produção: Deisiane Barbosa. 1 vídeo (2:48min). [S. l.]: Cartas à Tereza, 2022. Disponível em: <https://vimeo.com/535976276>. Acesso em: 02 mar. 2026.



combined photography and text. Part of this activity consisted of leaving postcards in mailboxes randomly chosen by the artist. In, 2015 the urban intervention/installation *Cadê Tereza?* took place in Feira de Santana, Bahia, as did an urban intervention with the series of *cartões-postais à Tereza/ Cachoeira* (which belonged to the group exhibition *Confluências*) at Espaço Cultural Hansen Bahia in Cachoeira, Bahia. That year also saw an independent edition of 100 copies of *Cartas a Tereza: fragmentos de uma correspondência incompleta*, a handmade book-object. This publication would be the fuse of what would become *Andarilha Edições*.

In the following years, *Cartas a Tereza* moved into other territories. The premise that moves the poet is wandering, moving like her letters. The poet-sender left Recôncavo, picked up Terezas in Itaparica (Bahia), Olinda, Recife, Salgueiro, Serra Talhada, and Ilha de Itamaracá in Pernambuco, passing by Luanda in Angola, to then return to São Felix and Cachoeira in Recôncavo. These are some of the places in which Deisiane has done extensive research and artistic production with women. Part of this research became an installation that was exhibited at *Tramações 2- Cultura Visual, Gênero e Sexualidades* at Universidade Federal do Pernambuco in Recife. After wandering outside Recôncavo Baiano in 2021, the artist produced a revised and expanded reissue of *Cartas a Tereza*, initially as an eBook and, later, in a handmade edition designed and sewn by the poet and *Andarilha* collaborators, already a consolidated publisher at that time. The project also created eight video-performances that can be seen as an introduction to Deisiane's other performative movement: *Casamendoeira*. As is common in Deisiane's artistic work, the second part of this performative movement became her master's thesis, entitled *Inventário da ilha de Tereza: cartografias de um livro devir*, which she defended in 2020.

Looking at the entire course of this performative movement finds a point among others that underlies this trajectory: the continuous questions Deisiane asks Tereza. In the short story *A moça que desfiou*, the narrator asks numerous questions: "where will my thick curly hair be lost? [...] I still waver before the fearful question: dream or reality? [...] And how can I be in the world? How to be? [...] Who then was I just now? What? [...] And did I still in fact exist? [...] What would the world be like if I were not here?" (Barbosa, 2016, p. 73-80). The narrator certainly obtained no answers since this performative movement revolves around the question, the sending of the question to this recipient first imagined and then sought in other real or reimagined women. *Cartas a Tereza* constitutes a search performance, a continuous wandering that turns corners, crosses streets, enters municipalities, towns, multiple territories of identity. More than receiving an answer to these existential, philosophical, poetic questions, the important thing is to ask them, to send them in letters, to structure a look, a poetry, an existence on the question: "Would this be lucidity, Tereza? ~ when all that resists is a shrewd head to fabricate small outlandish plots?" asks Deisiane Barbosa (2021) more than a decade after writing the short story that is, so to speak, the genesis of Tereza.

This decade witnessed meetings, comings, goings, passages by the experiences of other women and the existential and creative experience itself. Among such experiences, her master's research further deepened her interrogative search:



During this research, I experimented and studied a literary production based on the fictionalization of affective memories (mine and other women's), which grew into an urban and collective performance laboratory unfolded in video art and itinerant interventions and bearing fruit in the writing and materialization of this book-archipelago (Barbosa, 2020, p.16).

By transforming her master's thesis into a "book archipelago," Deisiane again proposed the erasure of boundaries between academic and artistic genres and the connection to Edouard Glissant's archipelago in counterpoint to the continental one as a non-systematic, more inductive thought that can explore "the unforeseen of the whole-world" and that tunes and harmonizes "writing with orality and orality with writing" (Glissant, 2005, p. 47).

At this moment of her performative movement, Deisiane Barbosa went out to hear the voices of Terezas along her path. Her own voice, her own questioning, reverberated in each one of them. Still within the premise of archipelago thought, for Glissant:

Listening to the other, to the others, means enlarging the spiritual dimension of one's own language, that is to say, putting it in relation. Understanding the other, the others, means accepting that the truth from elsewhere complements the truth from here. And getting on well with the other means agreeing to add to the particular strategies developed to benefit each regional or national language, more general strategies that would be worked out in common. (Glissant, 2005, p. 47-48).

This "listening to the other" in Deisiane mostly consists of listening to another woman. *Cartas a Tereza* consists of a performative movement of a Black woman from inner Brazil, from what is conventionally called the periphery in the country, wandering across other inner regions, knowing and recognizing herself in the Terezas she found, in the Terezas who also ask countless questions based on their experiences. For this, Deisiane bases herself and continues:

It awakens to the awareness of plural femininities and feminisms, to the meanings of currently being/living/becoming a woman in a country with patriarchal foundations the colonial resonances of which are still so incisive in the cultural configuration of genders and sexualities in which Black women (the place from which I speak) are still at the base of the social pyramid and fight for the right to elaborate and record counter-narratives (Barbosa, 2020, p. 16).

Cartas a Tereza is an intersectional performative movement in its vision of Black feminism; in it, gender, race, and class become inseparable in the fight against patriarchy. Intersectionality, rather than "a theoretical narrative of the excluded," would configure something that has "a practical dimension," "the intellectual authority of all the women who were once interrupted," according to Carla Akotirene (2019). Thus, Deisiane Barbosa's artistic practice also constitutes a confrontation, a struggle, an awareness of the woman and the artist she wants to be. In 2016, Deisiane wrote to Tereza:

I have wanted to hear, read, know these things because I have wobbly legs, living and learning to play, wanting to know how the fall hurts less, how to do it/how to not do it. What remains for us — being humans, friends, travel companions — is



this: to share the pains and joys, to pour all this into learning. And then, once again, I turn to writing, to correspondence, to dialogue: it is necessary not to let this be extinguished [...] (Barbosa, 2016b).

The performative movement *Cartas a Tereza* also consists of a kind of clearing in which she will create, expose, present counter-narratives to prevent the extinction of the search, questions, and dialogues generated by this movement. Thus, language multiplicity sustains her performative movements, inserting itself as one of the most impactful characteristics of Black women's artistic production; what Florentina Souza considers as "a strategy to resist epistemicide; the breaking of rigid borders, the small insurgencies in everyday and artistic practices" (Souza, 2018, p. 97). The performative movement *Cartas a Tereza* also serves as a foundation or settlement⁷ for Deisiane Barbosa's other two performative movements: *Andarilha Edições* and *Casamendoeira*.

3 Performative Movement II – *Andarilha Edições*

Writing a book. Making a book. What differences and similarities do these verbs, these actions share? In common sense, writers write books, something that Ulises Carrión highly questions in his famous manifesto "The New Art of Making Books." Right at the beginning, Carrión states that, rather than writing books, "a writer writes texts," which corresponds to the old art: "in the new art, the writer makes books" (Carrión, 2023, p. 7). Carrión, as several other artist-thinkers, looks at books as objects and, thus, as something to be made, molded, sewn; in short, something to be built beyond being the home of the text, the place in which the text will shelter itself until it finds a reader.

Deisiane Barbosa is also a book maker. She thinks of them as a support for texts and as an aesthetic object. Her initial performative movement of seaming her own books until she gives rise to a publishing house in *Casamendoeira* (a movement we will see below) shows that Deisiane Barbosa's creative processes are more than interconnected, they are hybridized, as is the art she produces from these movements: an art that also arises on the boundaries of artistic languages, mixing and amalgamating such languages and boundaries.

As mentioned, the initial experience took place with the handmade publication of the first edition of *Cartas a Tereza* in 2015. The following year, Deisiane launched *desavesso*, a small handsewn book of poems with photographs pasted one by one with an envelope and a sheet of paper containing other poems in its center. These initial self-publishing experiences already show what Michalis Pichler will call "material tenderness," that is, the premise that creating a book

7 "The settlement (also called *ibá*) in Candomblé is, at the same time, the abode of the orixá, the materialized orixá and the place in which the relationship between a person and orixá is made. [...] From the settlement, a powerful bond between person and orixá is created and a history of bonds, exchanges, and care is composed — a history that aims to increase the existence of both the person and the saint himself" (Marques, 2018).



is a “conscious orchestration” that involves knowing how to use “material, structural, and social elements within the process of producing multiple copies of a book” (Pichler, 2023). Thus, the book becomes an artistic object that exceeds the support of texts.

From 2015 to 2019, Deisiane was deeply involved in the research around *Cartas a Tereza* and what she called “wandering writing,” that is, “the performative gesture of recording the walks I take via poetic notes and text flows.” Such a walk, rather than always the “focus of the record,” would configure a “research and observation procedure; a trigger for me to arrive later or simultaneously at the annotated contents” (Barbosa, 2020, p. 35). This process also produces the making of her own handsewn notebooks.

Walking and treading constitute human actions that come from time immemorial and that have interested philosophers, poets, and artists in general. Francesco Careri (2013) points out that walking configures an action that is learned with a lot of effort in the first months of life that then becomes automatic. On the other hand, the conscious, poetic, and philosophical act of walking has gained some famous names, such as *flânerie*, which, Walter Benjamin (2006) deemed to prioritize urban airs, circumscribing itself to municipalities, as configuring a kind of epithet of modernity. In this performative movement, Deisiane appropriated the term “wanderer,” which has a broader meaning than *flânerie* in Brazil. Wanderers often travel long distances at random without a destination of arrival or departure. Life becomes a movement, a continuous walk. José Sterza Justo and Eurípedes Costa do Nascimento state that a part of the wanderers in Brazil move in search of jobs. However, others break “with the whole mesh of the social network, abandon the places of settlement and sedentism (family, work, home, and many others), and take nomadism as a way of life” (Justo; Nascimento, 2005, p. 177). With this image of continuous wandering and of detachment, a certain abandonment, the constancy of going, of moving, even making writing part of this movement, Deisiane incorporates the term “wanderer” that attracts a look at gender beyond these issues: a female wanderer, a Black woman who wanders across municipalities, books, notebooks, a wanderer in search of the voices of other women, wanderer also by self-writing and performative writing:

because it would be a kind of cartography of “inner movements,” a way of recording what awakens me when I move around the municipality when it moves in me ~ something intensely metalinguistic that is not restricted to that. That, therefore, dialogues directly with the essence of a writing that is performed ~ embodies the performativity of plural writings, which is not restricted to the writing itself but to the procedural movements of recording the cartographies (Barbosa, 2020, p. 38).

Thus, making the term wanderer also a performative movement, Deisiane’s friend Maíra Vale instigates her to publish her first book *Cachoeira & a inversão do mundo* in 2019. With an exquisite edition, *Andarilha Edições* officially began as a wandering publisher that proposed to go beyond sewing literature and visualities always from Recôncavo in Bahia. She proposed to create more experimental books based on handmade works in small print runs. Currently, the catalog



includes more than 20 titles; in it, each book is designed according to its particularities, its immanent characteristics. Books of poems, narratives, and essays have been published. Editing books became one of Deisiane's performative movements, encompassing each author's creative processes. What each one wants for their book and what each book also points out to themselves become part of the artist's creative process. Thus, in a complex game of attempts, adjustments, encounters, departures, each book is born, happens, spreads throughout the world.

In this work, Deisiane also had the help of visual artist Luana Oliveira, who specializes in book sewing. Installed in Povoado do Cruzeiro, a town in the municipality of Conceição da Feira, in inner Recôncavo, *Andarilha Edições* has established itself as one of the most creative publishing spaces in the scene of Bahia. Moreover, making, sewing, thinking of books as art objects became part of another academic research by Deisiane Barbosa. She is currently pursuing a PhD in Visual Arts at Universidade Federal University da Bahia, with a project entitled *Corpo-livro-casa-etc: uma poética desdobrável para a criação do livro de artista 'casamendoeira'*. Once again, the performative movement dialogues with Deisiane's academic research, now interested in testing, if not supplanting, the limits of what is called an artist's book. In Brazil, one of the most important studies on the subject of "artist's book" is that of Paulo Silveira *A página violada - da ternura à injúria na construção do livro de artista* (2008), which states this difficulty of conceptualizing what an artist's book would be:

As in other languages, Portuguese contemplated with many words the field in which the artist is involved in the construction of the book as a work of art: artist's book, object-book, illustrated book, art-book, poem-book, art-book, art-book, work-book... For this and other reasons we will see, I use "artist's book" to designate a large artistic field (or category) in the broad sense, which could also be called art-book or another name (Silveira, 2008, p. 25).

Andarilha Edições has always proposed itself as a publisher that thinks of the book as an artistic object and of making the book itself as part of artistic creation. It is once again another borderline hybridized theme that is difficult to fit into a concept, a category. Deisiane Barbosa's performative movements tend to implode artistic or academic categories precisely so that, demolished from within, they can result in freer spaces of flows and transits in which the wanderer is not restricted by fixed conceptual walls.

Currently, Deisiane Barbosa is working with the concept of book-etc, precisely to investigate some ways of inventing a book that handles several languages, such as performance, video, literature, installation. Thus, the performative movement of creation by *Andarilha Edições* is also already mutating into something that now intends to encompass not only Recôncavo but an entire dialogue to "stitch together Atlantic sheaths" to create a book-etc based on the memories of the Black diaspora, gathering lived experiences with new ones the artist obtained in Angola and São Tomé and Príncipe. In these places, Deisiane held a series of book-making workshops, having as an audience, once again, local women, women who find a full form of expression in writing and



making books⁸. In addition to her PhD thesis, such research is to be shared as site-specific art in the cultural space *Casamendoeira*, the current headquarters of *Andarilha Edições* and the third of the performative movements in this text.

4 Performative movement III - *Casamendoeira*

Returning to her grandparents' house and rebuilding it constitutes Deisiane Barbosa's third performative movement. In *Cartas a Tereza*, the poet left Recôncavo, became a "wanderer of unusual cartographies" (Barbosa, 2021). However, there also exists the path of return, the path that led her to her childhood home, built a long time ago by her grandparents in a place called Povoado do Cruzeiro, which, despite its proximity to Cachoeira, belongs to the neighboring municipality of Conceição da Feira, Bahia. Deisiane considers this a place of constitution for the artist she is, the place that fermented and fostered her creative processes:

However, where I really grew up, where I buried my navel, threw milk teeth on the roof, and grew up with the education of poetry in a homemade flour mill was in the village of Cruzeiro in extensive backyards and *terreiros*; in a house that to this day is huge, built of adobe by my newlywed grandparents, in which an almond tree was planted before it even before starting the work; today, fifty years of winds. There I grew up for the world, and this has everything to do with letters, Tereza, literature, books, art. It was there that I first nourished myself. I still feed on material for creations. It made all the difference to be born and to live up to the age of 25 in a farm surrounded by the learning from those rural people of mine (Barbosa, 2020, p. 11-12).

Thus, from the idea of return and renewal, Deisiane started this performative movement, which took place on several fronts: a return to her grandparents' old property; the perception that the first house, the one built in adobe, was in ruins; the intention to rebuild the house, to remake it as a space for dwelling and artistic residency. However, the most striking part of this performative movement was to think of the house as a book and the book as a house: "by performing a book in the structure of a house, the densification my research proposes is, via this process, to reflect on ways of constructing expanded textualities, using performative aesthetics expressed in the intersection of writings, video, and environment" (Barbosa, 2024, p. 238). Thus, Deisiane took an intimate look at her memories and those of her elders, of her ancestry. She returned to the ground that needed to be repopulated, to the foundations, beams, walls, and roofs that needed to be replaced again in the leading role of experience, of writing. The wandering poet, the poet who searched for answers in the Terezas she met along the way, returned to the old place of her childhood, returned, herself even more Tereza, still questioning but with the urge to root herself again in that original site, in that ground that gave her the first roots, but also gave her a trunk, branches, leaves. So much so that the

8 Information obtained from conversations with the author and from reading unpublished texts she is producing.



reconstruction involved the house and an old almond tree planted by her grandfather that serves as a witness and a metaphor for this performative movement.

Ancestry can be seen as the principle that organizes *candomblé*, as a blood kinship or, more currently, as a foundation of the resistance of Black and native peoples. Eduardo Oliveira thinks of ancestry as a “time riddled with identities” in the folds of which “an innumerable number of floating identities are sheltered” (Oliveira, 2005, p. 249-250). Ancestry also offers a space “dotted with different corporeities.” A fractal, fragmented body, just like Deisiane Barbosa’s performative movements. In this case, this movement takes place in a time and space deeply marked by the idea of ancestry, which, still in Eduardo Oliveira’s point of view, would be:

a category of relationship, connection, inclusion, diversity, unity, and enchantment. It is both enigma-mystery and revelation-prophecy. It indicates and hides paths. Ancestry is a way of interpreting and producing reality. That is why ancestry is a political weapon. It is an ideological instrument (set of representations) that serves for political and social constructions (Oliveira, 2005, p. 258).

This, perhaps, is the most difficult performative movement to think of in a genesis as the house and the almond tree have accompanied Deisiane since her birth. The artist delimits no specific beginning but states that:

At casamendoeira, I began my *Cartas à Tereza*, in which I managed my first artistic projects, discovering that I would like to be an artist and study art. There, where I prepared myself to wander other geographical distances. I finally fulfill an omen now (Barbosa, 2020, p. 12).

Between comings and goings, after completing her master’s degree in 2020, Deisiane effectively began reconstructing her grandparents’ house, a process called a “performative program” (Barbosa, 2024, p. 243), which begot a series of video performances that began by *casamendoeira, um palimpsesto*, followed by eight other video performances based on *Cartas a Tereza*⁹ (which received a second revised and expanded edition in 2021). Parallel to the production of the video performances and the reissue of *Cartas a Tereza*, Deisiane also dedicated herself to writing the *casamendoeira* narrative, which *Andarilha Edições* published in 2023.

The performative movement *Cartas a Tereza* closed its cycle, returning to the house in which it was born, constituting a kind of floor or pillar for another performative movement to germinate: *casamendoeira*, a treehouse or housetree Deisiane, now not only an artist but also a builder, or rather, a rebuilder, also hybridized. From the materiality of the ruined house, Deisiane fostered a narrative that was went beyond the written text, also constituting an entry into the world of memory, ancestry, the past, and the ruins that act in the present time of the house. It was necessary to face the presented palimpsest, to get in touch with it so that the video-performances, the narratives, and the new life that would come from the rebuilt house could be born from that. For this, the performative program would:

9 Videos available at: <https://vimeo.com/deisianebarbosa> .



rub the skin of the house, investigating the silence, voice, narratives, and memories that reverberate in the body of the woman who experiences it. The first gesture I chose to inaugurate the program was to rub, to explore this literally in the direction of the movements, never losing sight of its metaphorical quality, of considering the effects of a contact that proposes mixtures, contaminations. After all, the verb also reminds me of the very image-obsession of the palimpsest, always recurrent in the practices I have been carrying out (Barbosa, 2024, p. 244).

In this performative movement, Deisiane Barbosa used the idea of performative writing the most, which, according to Graciela Ravetti (2007, p. 1) deconditions the perception of representations, moves away from conventional narratives, and proposes other connections, other intertwinings of space and time, experimenting with language and language spaces of rehearsals and contamination. In this performative movement, Deisiane worked with a farewell and an arrival. The farewell to *Cartas a Tereza*, the cycle of which ended in the video-performances and in the reissue of the book *Cartas a Tereza*. The letters recount the state of a woman who has wandered too far and who is, so to speak, accepting the ground, the surroundings, the house, and its imperfections: “sometimes, in anguish, I feel that it is not possible to do anything but turn off the fire so that the milk does not spill / nothing but to ever scratch it on the wobbly rim of a glass / nothing but to push it to the last drop into the stomach out of pure precaution” (Barbosa, 2021). The convulsive and fragmented writing of the letters tries to insert the woman into this new, recognizable, and intimate space in a present marked by weariness and ruin, by time that eats everything:

Time pretends to walk in a pasture of low grass but time circulates, circles the house erected in the middle of the *terreiro*, cradles the uninterrupted whirlwind – the dizziness of time / the torture \ the dizziness of time / the torture ~ macerates a song like this ~ the dizziness of time / the torture \ the dizziness of time... (Barbosa, 2021).

Performance and performative writing unfold into text, orality, image, and video arts. Deisiane places herself at the center of the scene, carries out activities around the house, reads her letters to Tereza, reflects on those moments, and knows that she has to say goodbye to the paths, to the wanderings; she knows that she must rebuild the house, but this is far from an easy gesture: “my constant impression is that everything will end by tomorrow,” “sitting on the bed, I say goodbye to the beams that support the weight of the years that have borne fruit for me” (Barbosa, 2021). Even so, the decision is made, the house will be materially and poetically reborn by the artist’s hands: “only this house greatly adds to my travels. This house was not taught, it was polished with the time of our coexistence” (Barbosa, 2021). The last letter to Tereza¹⁰ contains a brief message: “everything will pass, Tereza ~ I don’t know if I make this my peace or my greatest despair [...]” (Barbosa, 2021).

Thus, in the face of circular time, of time that passes and returns, of the doubt between peace and despair, Deisiane’s performative movement unfolded once again before the rebuilt house, its

10 According to the arrangement of the cards in the book. *Cartas a Tereza* has neither a specific order of time nor a thematic linearity, only, at first, the order established by Deisiane Barbosa.



transformation into an artistic residency, a place of exhibitions, workshops, the house of *Andarilha Edições*, of the wandering poet, of the grandmother who, despite living next door in a larger and newer house still walks across *terreiros*, of the grandfather who rendered himself ancestral there. Then, with the house ready and the almond tree revived, Deisiane continued in her performance program with another creative gesture: the *casamendoeira* narrative. A biographical invention of the house and the almond tree that precedes it that also evokes:

narratives about my ancestry, direct and unimagined – grandfather, grandparents, great-grandparents, and others whose names I do not even know. I try to inventory until I reach the point of thinking about how this territory was possibly configured before colonization. For this, I start in making sewing, I gather lint from what my grandmother Maria (a remnant of all those who have already been enchanted) repeatedly trample; Every time we pause to talk about the stories of the family and of times gone by (Barbosa 2024, p. 239).

Performance writing is, according to Graciela Ravetti (2007, p. 2), a practice of risky thinking for those who encounter their “in-itself” and with their surroundings, taking advantage of collective experiences and memories that are also individual. Thus, the personal, the social, the historical, the tradition, and the novelty become a stage for writing. Deisiane tells us a little more about this process:

Regarding the artistic procedure I have embodied in poetic research – the production of an expanded writing that summons every body that writes to a more plural state of action in direct dialogue with time, spaces, and materialities in the course of its literary exercise. Regarding this, I emphasize that what led me to the described performative program was what I had been elaborating before in fictional text (Barbosa, 2024, p. 244).

In 2023, *Andarilha Edições* published *casamendoeira*. The narrative begins with the Almond Tree as its narrator, the tree that has been there since before all. The almond is an exotic tree, the fruit and victim of the diaspora imposed by colonization: “rustle to the ear that writes, *I am of wandering lineage descending from crossings*. I come from other oceans, resisting the long weather journey; to the desire of caravels, I germinated in the bands here, I also remain” (Barbosa, 2023, p. 28, emphasis added). Taking this place of sister of the diaspora, the Almond Tree continues to narrate how Barbosa’s grandfather bought the land, the preparation of this soil, the beginning of the courtship with her grandmother, the preparations for the construction of the house, the growth of the family, the coming of the children and the children’s children, the death of the grandfather, and the house that begins to be ruined. This is followed by the serene, tall, static gaze of the almond tree, which also greatly observes the “woman who writes,” a term Deisiane use to insert herself as a character in the narrative. It is the current time that connects itself with the circularity of the time of the almond tree, a witness of before and (with the house) a witness of the after, of what will come from the decision to rebuild it by the “woman who writes.” However, this happens in a difficult and indirect way just as time is a circularity and a crossroads, this performative movement also intersects with past and future doubts and certainties:



The woman who puts herself to the work of such writing believes that no letter will account for such a gerund experience, this much palimpsest, but I, with the air with which I bless her not only from now, deposit in her memory something of a breeze that stirs her tongue, slowly encouraging her not to let go of this handbook, even if it is impossible to do so in any other way than so, in pieces (Barbosa, 2023, p. 52).

In pieces, the narrative continues until the moment when the house becomes the narrator and reaffirms the pact with the “woman who writes:” it will be reformed, it will come out of its state of ruin to be another body but still as the same body created by ancestry because “a house, when it is born; it is from the ground that support, walls, roof emerge. A house, when it inflates itself by the second breath of life, is reborn from the top to the bottom. It begins by adjusting the back so that its dorsal weight does not come suddenly” (Barbosa, 2023, p. 78). It is possible to think of this performative movement with this image: *Cartas a Tereza* was the first house built over the years, little by little; it is being rebuilt from the roof ridge to the ground until it becomes *casamendoeira*. The performative movement *Cartas a Tereza* bid farewells but, at the same time, remains as a pillar, a slab, a part of the house that lies within the walls, supporting what is now *casamendoeira*.

At the end of the narrative, the almond tree, the house, and the woman who writes merge into a single body, unite in new planes, hopes, and continuous struggles so that Recôncavo is more than a ground, it is an illumination, a place in which ancestry, rather than ancient history, constitutes a foundation for the present and the future:

By imagining a coming memory of the place in which I sew books, I see *casamendoeira* sowing seeds. They land on the road, on which everything starts again all the time, people from this place and nearby ones, children, women, old people. What I inscribe the day after tomorrow is the house teeming with species, each sprouting and bartering fruits, varying seeds dispersed from here (Barbosa, 2023, p. 88).

5 The body-movement that follows

In 2016, Deisiane Barbosa wrote to Tereza:

I am really that wandering person, but I think that one day — soon, maybe — I will build a house of my own of flesh and blood that I can paint with the soul inside me. I know that I will not achieve it totally because no idealization is achievable in its totality, but I will format a place that surrounds me, a physical shell in some part of this world, and I will spend many happy days there. I will face my future sorrows there as well (Barbosa, 2016c).

Almost a decade later, Deisiane Barbosa has Terezas, *Andarilhas*, the house, and the almond tree in her body; with this, she managed to build her “physical shell.” During this period, she made her body a place for various performative movements. She is a restless moving artist who proposes to be a maker of art and culture for the community rather than an isolated creator. Her projects



establish fruitful dialogues with those who have lived in the territory for a long time and with those who arrive there to stay or are just passing by. She is an artist who is based on theoretical study and a constant artistic practice. This is always marked by a deep softness, here seen from the perspective of Anne Dufourmantele, as a “secret life-giving transformation linked to what the ancients called ‘potentiality’” (Dufourmantele, 2022, p. 14). The softness that “requires a body” to exist and nothing better than the body of an almond-house-woman, who proposes to be the voice of those who could not speak before:

I am, then, a woman, house, almond tree, arboreal island that waves winds. I write this because I ask for my fingers, corpoet that I risk in the invention of a dance, in the stubbornness of crossing words and weaving deafened tales not for lack of mouths nor ears. They urge me not to take my body out of writing when now I can do much more than they could not before, and that is why (Barbosa, 2023, p. 86).

This text describes three of Deisiane Barbosa’s performative movements. It merely consists of a fixed look at a living creative process in constant change, hybridization, and movement. A project that will still unfold in multiple other performances since, as Deisiane Barbosa pledges, in the last sentences of *casamendoeira* she will still “reinvent so many forgotten languages, songs, memories, tales. So much that is not even known yet: resuming” (Barbosa, 2023, p. 87).



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