

Time and Ancestry in Edimilson de Almeida Pereira / *Tempo e ancestralidade em Edimilson de Almeida Pereira*

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ABSTRACT

The article intends to discuss the notions of time and ancestry in the writing of the poet and critic Edimilson de Almeida Pereira. A black essayist and thinker who has allowed us, based on his crossroads-literature, to tension and erase not only the hegemonic critique, but also the authoritative, canonical discourse of white supremacy. His poetic criticism has enabled us, from a diasporic perspective, to offset new rumors for criticism and broaden the lens on ancestry. For this, we will focus on his works *O ausente* [The Absent] (2020) and *Orfe(x)u e Exunouveau: análise de uma estética de base afrodiaspórica na literatura brasileira* [Orfe(x)u and Exunouveau: Analysis of an Afrodiasporic-Based Aesthetics in Brazilian Literature] (2022) as theoretical-epistemological corpus, we will focus on the conception of time and ancestry, as problematized by our ancestor Leda Martins (2021) from a spiral point of view, as well as on Eduardo Oliveira (2023) in his aesthetic-ancestral regime, and on the “terreiro-literature” [Sacred Ground Literature] forged by Henrique Freitas (2016), unfolded at the crossroads theoretical and epistemological ideas from thinkers such as Muniz Sodré (2017) and Luiz Rufino (2019). These ideas have made us problematize and expand criticism from the Afro-Brazilian diaspora originating from terreiros [sacred grounds].

KEYWORDS: Edimilson Pereira; Time; Ancestry; Crossroads; *O ausente*

RESUMO

*Pretendemos aqui discutir as noções de tempo e ancestralidade na escrita do poeta e crítico Edimilson de Almeida Pereira. Um ensaísta e pensador negro que tem nos permitido, a partir de sua literatura-encruzilhada, tensionar e rasurar não somente a crítica hegemônica, bem como o discurso autorizado da supremacia branca, canônica. Sua crítica-poética tem nos possibilitado, a partir de um olhar diaspórico, repensar novos rumos para a crítica e ampliar as lentes acerca da ancestralidade. Para esse movimento, focaremos em suas obras *O ausente* (2020) e *Orfe(x)u e Exunouveau: análise de uma estética de base afrodiaspórica na literatura brasileira* (2022); como corpus teórico-epistemológico daremos enfoque à concepção de tempo e ancestralidade, tal como foi problematizada pela nossa ancestral Leda Martins (2021), a partir do ponto de vista espiralar; Eduardo Oliveira (2023) em seu regime estético-ancestral, bem como a “literatura- terreiro” forjada por Henrique Freitas (2016) e desdobrada nas encruzilhadas teóricas e epistemológicas de pensadores como Muniz Sodré (2017) e Luiz*

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Rufino (2019) que nos tem feito problematizar e expandir a crítica a partir da diáspora afro-brasileira oriunda dos terreiros.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Edimilson Pereira; Tempo; Ancestralidade; Encruzilhada; O Ausente

Introductory Crossroads

What is proposed to think about here is how the notion of time occurs and how ancestry is drawn in the complex writing of Edimilson de Almeida Pereira, professor at the Federal University of Juiz de Fora, writer, poet, author of children's books, essayist and literary critic. The author, Edimilson Pereira, born on July 18, 1963, in Juiz de Fora, Minas Gerais, began his career as a writer in 1983, in a group of artists called *Abre Alas* [Open Wings], from Juiz de Fora.

It is important to highlight that the notion of time is not separated from ancestry. If we can evoke and summon ancestry within us, it is because we are responsible for our time and the language that permeates it. Throughout a western tradition, philosophy from Greece has presented us with *chronos*, that is, a chronological and sequential time (time measured by nature) and *kairós*, translated as an indeterminate phase in time. The Greek foundation that emerges from Heraclitean thought was that time was translated under the sign of a child playing, with time being the freedom and instinct of the game itself.

From this point onwards, in the words of Peter Pál Pelbart (1998), the Greeks already understood that alongside *Chronos* - this time of measurement, which fixes things and people, which develops a form and may determine an individual, which constitutes pulsed time - there is another time that is called *Aion*, which is a time without measurement an indefinite time, which never ceases to divide itself when it arrives, it is always already there (the immemorial) and it is not there yet (the unprecedented) always too soon and too late, the time of "something that is going to happen" and simultaneously of "something that has just happened," in other words, bifurcated, non-metric, non-pulsed time, made of pure speed, which is a floating time that we see in psychosis, in poetry, in dreams, in catastrophe.

Going back further in the western tradition, it could be said that Heidegger (2010),¹ a German thinker, takes an ontological turn and brings time as a way of being of the *Dasein* (*Being-there*) in the world. In his phenomenological understanding, it is from temporality that the everydayness of existence can be understood. The being-in-the-world in its complicated way of being, is a project of history, because it's a being thrown into the world and constructed by existential and ontological temporality. Therefore, for the German thinker, the being cannot be understood outside of the time. It's in the time that we *ek-ziste* as beings, which means that the being projects and launches itself into the world. This way metaphysical time dominated a good part of thought, establishing a certain factual grammar that guided the *being-there* of anyone in the world. It was this conception of time that already emerged, in a certain way in Saint Augustine, that crossed, to a certain extent, Kantian thought, and spread on much of western metaphysical thought, perpetuating what Paul Ricoeur (1990)² later called the aporia of being and the non-being of time.

Then, by making time emerge from an immanent gaze, thinkers of difference such as Gilles Deleuze (1997),³ a reader of Bergson, makes us think about time from the point of view of simultaneity, of duration, where temporal moments are interpenetrated, forming an indivisible whole. Time stops being a metaphysical entity, the enclosure of being, and reveals all its strength no longer in the of consciousness, but in nomadism and in the philosophical process of life. Deleuzian time finds in plasticity and movement new folds and forms of reinvention of life, since it translates itself under the sign of the event, as it is alive, immanence, deterritorialization and pure *becoming*.

What is evident is that we are hostages of a Western, Christian and Cartesian time that allowed us to look at the world from a cosmological rectitude, originating from a time marked by vision (Worldview), that is, an ontological perspective of time, which dramatized a certain binarism, characteristic of the Western tradition such as being and non-being, being and entity, veiling and unveiling, figure and background, visible and

¹ HEIDEGGER, Martin. *Being and Time*. Translated by Joan Stambaugh. Revised with a Foreword by Dennis J. Schmidt. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010.

² RICOEUR, Paul. *Time and Narrative*. Translated by Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer. Volume 1. Chicago and London. University of Chicago Press, 1990.

³ DELEUZE, Gilles. *Cinema 2. The Time-Image*. Translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997.

invisible, just to name a few examples of the tradition arising from the classical representation of time that permeates the tradition.

When we try to decolonize, broaden, erase and defy this notion of western time, it's possible to affirm that we live in a maladjusted, nomadic, unreconciled and discontinuous time. A time that tried to get out of the cloister, to leak out of classical representation. A displaced time that rises under the sign of the crossroads, and has, without a doubt, Exu as potency and as a possibility for reinventing life. The Exu time, we dare to say, is the time of "cosmoperception," as it summons all the senses, polyphonies, flavors, knowledge and voices in a complex movement of deterritorialization⁴ and reterritorialization. In one sentence, time and ancestry were born out of the same womb.

That said, due to the conciseness and broad training of Edimilson de Almeida Pereira, his writing transits in the "terreiros" [sacred grounds] (also known as the 'sacred ground places') of sociology, anthropology and literature. Therefore, given the length of his works, we will focus here on the issue that leads us directly to the main theme that will be problematized, that is, the focus on time and ancestry. For this movement, we will focus on *O ausente* [The Absent] (2020), and *Orfe(x)u e Exunouveau: análise de uma estética de base afrodiaspórica na literatura brasileira* [Orfe(x)u and Exunouveau: analysis of an Afro-diasporic aesthetic in Brazilian literature] (2022). At times, however, the notion of ancestry seems empty. After all, what constitutes it? If the future is ancestral, what is its relationship to time? Evidently, we will not answer all these questions here for two reasons: First, because it is an extremely complex problem and that it is impossible to exhaust it in these lines. Secondly, because we believe that we need to always ask new questions so that we don't remain inert and sedentary in our thinking, but rather make our thinking nomadic, in constant becoming and plasticity so that we can invent new possibilities for life. Perhaps we can rehearse some key ideas as provisional answers.

⁴ The notion of deterritorialization here is taken from a Deleuzian perspective, i.e. time is a complex immanent-rhizomatic agency and, as such, is affirmed in nomadism and difference. It is a shifting plastic time, full of folds that multiply thought to infinity. A time that eschews Western dichotomies such as inside and outside and calls for an absolute exteriorization, that is, an outside that is not external. Through this perspective of the crossroads, Exu, as the inventor of his own time, is the absolute deterritorialization of everything and everyone, since he, under the sign of the crossroads, territorializes, deterritorializes and reterritorializes at the same time, multiplying to infinity.

To try to answer these questions, albeit provisionally, from the point of view of spiral time, we have the intellectual Leda Martins, who was in fact one of the black thinkers to pave this ground in a surgical and punctual way from the crossroads, a space that was constituted for her as performative and that does not fit within the limits of linear time:

Ancestral time is not contained within the limits of a progressive linearity, towards an inexhaustible end and pathos, nor does it modulate itself in closed centripetal circles of repetitions of the same (Martins, 2021, p. 206).⁵

That said, in Leda Martins, ancestral time is not fixed within fixed limits, nor does it repeat itself in closed circles. In Edimilson Pereira, time is ancestral, circular and reproduces itself in infinite ways. Therefore, we also reiterate that the issue is deeper and more delicate, because ancestry, under the sign of immanence, can only be thought of because we have a body, and this body being dynamic and revealing its plastic activities in time and space.

In a simple and sophisticated way, our ancestor Leda Martins teaches us: “The ancestor is an accumulation of knowledge that encompasses all existence in its surroundings, including nature, of which it is part and on which it is nourished.” (Martins, 2021, p. 205).⁶ Thus, according to the thinker of spiral time, Leda Martins, ancestry is directly related to wisdom and life experience, encompassing all of nature and all accumulated experience.

Therefore, ancestry is an embodied experience that emerges from the life trajectory of each individual subject and, in turn, hatches in the collective experience. However, Exu, as the individual and collective mouth, is, in a way, the synthesis of this experience, because he rises at the same time under the sign of individuation in individuality and collectivity, that is, in ancestral experience, the individual and the collective are not separate. There is no subject separated from the object and no reason separated from emotion, as the racist, Cartesian and inhuman colonial project proposed.

⁵ In Portuguese: “O tempo ancestral não se contém nos limites de uma linearidade progressiva, em direção a um fim e a um *páthos* inexauríveis, e nem se modula em círculos centrípetos fechados de repetições do mesmo.”

⁶ In Portuguese: “O ancestral é acúmulo de conhecimento que abrange toda a existência em seu entorno, inclusive a natureza, da qual faz parte e na qual se nutre.”

The crossroads shatters dichotomies, enhances between-places, borders and becoming of all kinds.

Going a step further, we could say that ancestry is translated from the “now,” from what happens in the pure immanence of life, and for this we need to recognize all collective life lived and experienced from the imaginary. In *Candomblé* ritual practices, for example, the experience of initiation and the expression “giving food to the saint” or “giving food to the head,” translates the complexity of what ancestry is, because ancestry, in these terms, “eats,” feeds and serves as food for other heads, like a shifting and plastic web that connects us infinitely with the other, with the world and with ourselves.

Therefore, recognizing our ancestral past is fundamental to finding ourselves. It is no surprise that expression of the black feminist Jurema Werneck “our footsteps come from afar”⁷ became so well-known. Recognizing the trajectory of each person’s life and all ancestral memory is fundamental to knowing where we are going, because it is this recognition of ancestral experience in time that brings us closer and closer to ourselves. In other words, ancestral knowledge is relational, rhizomatic,⁸ it proliferates and multiplies in connections, in multiple couplings, i.e. it happens through confluence, briefly recalling the ancestral Brazilian *quilombola* [black slave origin] intellectual Antônio Bispo dos Santos.

Unaware and unrelated⁹ there is no ancestry, because it requires recognizing all the voices and knowledge that came before so that we can feed other heads and ways of

⁷ The expression in Portuguese “*nossos passos vêm de longe*” [our footsteps come from afar] has become widespread in black feminism and was coined by black feminist Jurema Werneck in her 2009 in the essay: *Nossos passos vêm de longe! movimentos de mulheres negras e estratégias políticas contra o sexismo e o racismo* [Our Footsteps Come from Afar: Black Women’s Movements and Political Strategies against Sexism and Racism] in 2009.

⁸ We borrowed from the thinkers of difference Deleuze-Guattari (1987) [In: DELEUZE, Gilles; GUATTARI, Felix. *A Thousand Plateaus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Translation and Foreword by Brian Massumi. Minneapolis and London: University of Minneapolis Press, 1987]. For them, the rhizome is a radical critique of classical representation, that is, the thought of the unity and univocity of being. The rhizome, under the sign of multiplicity, neither begins nor ends. Deleuze and, to a certain extent, Édouard Glissant influenced Edimilson de Almeida Pereira, both from the point of view of thinking about a poetics of relationship and the rhizome itself, which occurs in connection, in the breaking down of hierarchies, in movement, in *becoming*, *intermezzo*.

⁹ The notion of relationship here is based on Édouard Glissant. In his *Poetics of Relation*, Glissant proposes an aesthetic of relation based on the notion of chaos-world. Glissant (2021) sees the relationship as a living poetics and treats reality as displacement, a field of tangled threads and not as something fixed. Edimilson de Almeida Pereira himself, when he prefaced Glissant’s book in partnership with Ana Kiffer, highlights the importance of treating reality as displacement (rhizome) and not fixation (root), towards the moving, relational corporeal. According to him, this requires a certain wisdom in the face of the tangle of being. Therefore, evoking a certain living poetics of the relationship from a constellation of poetical images is only possible from a thought of errancy. The relationship is the knowledge of this abyss, that is, the

life. This is how ancestry gains strength, as it promotes a kind of fusional or confusional “we.” In one sentence, ancestry and the ethics of life, i.e. an ethics of time that emerges in the very immanence of life, are not separate. Therefore, this ethic only exists when it affirms an aesthetic of existence. It is also worth saying that this is not a western ethic, based on the other (alterity), but an ethic of connection, of the we. Hence, notions of gathering, from the *quilombo*, circle, *gira* and *roda* displace any hierarchy constructed by the West. Ancestry can only be thought of from an ethics of conjunction.

As Eduardo Oliveira pointed out, “wisdom is precisely the combination of mystery with knowledge, of the already given with the not yet” (Oliveira, 2023, p. 39).¹⁰ In other words, wisdom is the conjunction, the fusion of what has already been thought with the unthought and from the unthought we can invent new possibilities for life, through the “demon” of creation and the appetite for the new, the unthought. Knowledge is constituted as unity and reveals itself as multiplicity, as difference, as heterogeneity, as plurality and diversity (Oliveira, 2023, p. 39).

Nonetheless, we can see that ancestral knowledge is revolutionary, because it brings everything inwards, abolishing Western dichotomies such as inside and outside. It is capable of not thinking in opposition, but of bringing out an ethics of conjunction that is made from the crossroads, which is the place of plurality, diversity, difference, multiplicity, in other words, the space par excellence of the heterogeneity that makes up the philosophy of ancestry:

Perhaps this is the central part of the philosophy of ancestry, which is aesthetically based on the philosophical vindication of the humanity of black people and the knowledge of traditions of African matrices in Brazil. (Oliveira, 2023, p. 9).¹¹

In other words, ancestry is built on knowledge that has been accumulated and shared in relationships. As Leda Martins has rightly argued, “the ancestral accumulation

knowledge of the devastated traces, in the opening up of the creative imagination. Thus, in Edimilson de Almeida Pereira’s view, in order to lead the way, it is necessary to create new paths, allow mistakes and bewilder the mind in order to continue the journey.

¹⁰ In Portuguese: “a sabedoria é justamente a junção do mistério com o conhecimento, do já dado com o ainda não.”

¹¹ In Portuguese: “Esta talvez seja a parte central da filosofia da ancestralidade, que se assenta esteticamente na reivindicação filosófica da humanidade das pessoas negras e dos saberes das tradições de matrizes africanas no Brasil.”

of knowledge that encompasses all the existence around it, including nature, of which it is a part and in which it is nourished” (Martins, 2021, p. 205).¹² Encouraged by this exercise in sensitivity and in agreement with the ancestral regime, Eduardo Oliveira problematizes and theorizes the Afro-Brazilian aesthetics of liberation when he says that “what western epistemology has separated through analysis in order to dominate, black-African and diasporic epistemology relates in order to live together” (Oliveira, 2023, p. 12).¹³

We dare to add another argument when we say that ancestry is a word, it’s a connection, it translates as knowledge of the relationship with the world of life and with the web of human relationships. Our bodies gain new meaning because we have a living awareness of our ancestry. The sound of words is one of the most exciting ways we have of reconnecting with our ancestry. It is inspired by this exercise in ancestral sensitivity, in defense of aesthetic experimentation and freedom, that Edimilson Pereira, in an interview with several writers in a collection organized by Eduardo Assis Duarte in 2011, defended:

The permanent defense of freedom for aesthetic experimentation: the search for dialogues between traditions and contemporaneity; the understanding of poetry as an opportunity to deepen critical thinking, creative sensitivity and the bonds of affection between people (Pereira, 2011, p. 124).¹⁴

According to Edimilson Pereira, for there to be aesthetic experimentation, there has to be freedom, relational knowledge between traditions and contemporaneity, bringing together the erudite and the popular, sensitivity and critical thinking, linked to bonds of affection. In this sense, when Exu rises under the sign of Afro-Brazilian ancestry, he becomes the one who urges us to create from the diverse, thus claiming the appetite for the new, the unthought and the urgency of empowering new poetics of relationships. It is this curved, recurring and ringed ancestral time that drives us towards freedom

¹² In Portuguese: “o ancestral acúmulo de conhecimento que abranger toda a existência em seu entorno, inclusive a natureza, da qual faz parte e na qual se nutre.”

¹³ In Portuguese: “o que a epistemologia ocidental separou, por meio da análise, para dominar, a epistemologia negro-africana e diaspórica relaciona, para conviver.”

¹⁴ In Portuguese: “A defesa permanente da liberdade para a experimentação estética: a busca de diálogos entre as tradições e a contemporaneidade; a compreensão da poesia como oportunidade para aprofundar o pensamento crítico, a sensibilidade criadora e os laços de afetividade entre as pessoas.”

through aesthetic experimentation, affection and sensitivity, as Leda Martins taught us so well:

Ancestry is cleaved by a curved, recurring, ringed time; a spiral time, which returns, restores and also transforms, and which affects everything. A time ontologically experienced as contiguous and simultaneous movements of retroaction, prospection and reversibility, dilation, expansion and containment, contraction and relaxation, synchrony of instances composed of present, past and future (Martins, 2021, p. 204).¹⁵

By warning that ancestral time does not close in on the limits of linearity that progresses to an end, nor does it close in on the repetition of the same, Leda teaches us the wisdom of Exu as a representation of ancestral time and of our body, it is what dwells in the folds of our skin and from it we evoke ancestry, because Exu is our Afro-Brazilian ancestor who allows us to go wild and makes us unite knowledge, art and life. This was what the thinker of the crossroads, Luiz Simas, taught us when he said that “we will have to be inspired by Exu in order to practice trickery in knowledge, in life and in art” (Simas, 2018, p. 23).¹⁶

It was undoubtedly this place that inspired Edimilson Pereira when he told us: “I have always hoped that my poetry could be enriched by the poetry that exists in Yoruba mythology” (Pereira, 2011, p. 118).¹⁷ In other words, his poetry feeds directly on the Afro-Brazilian diaspora, from the *terreiros*, the source of Yoruba mythology:

I wanted to write poems that aroused emotion and showed the poet’s effort. The epigraph of the book speaks of Exu, who swallows all things and then returns them to the world. I felt the need to internalize or swallow the beauty of the myths in order to give them back to the world. Bringing the myths inside me was a way of getting to know them, even if only partially. And what appealed to me most was giving the myths back some extra meaning, beyond the sacred meanings they have in candomblé (Pereira, 2011, pp. 118-119).¹⁸

¹⁵ In Portuguese: “A ancestralidade é clivada por um tempo curvo, recorrente, anelado; um tempo espiralar, que retorna, restabelece e também transforma, e que em tudo incide. Um tempo ontologicamente experimentado como movimentos contíguos e simultâneos de retroação, prospecção e reversibilidades, dilatação, expansão e contenção, contação e descontração, sincronia de instâncias compostas de presente, passado e futuro.”

¹⁶ In Portuguese: “haveremos de nos inspirar em Exu para praticarmos estripulias nos conhecimentos, na vida e na arte.”

¹⁷ In Portuguese: “eu sempre alimentei a vontade que minha poesia pudesse ser enriquecida com a poesia que existe na mitologia iorubá.”

¹⁸ In Portuguese: “Eu queria escrever poemas que despertassem emoção e mostrasse o esforço do poeta na epígrafe do *Livro* fala de Exu, que engole todas as coisas e depois as devolve ao mundo. Eu sentia a

In the epigraph of his *Livro de falas* [Book of Lines], Exu, anthropophagically swallows all things and then gives them back to the world. According to the author Edimilson de Almeida Pereira, even at the time of his work *Livro de falas* there was a personal need to internalize and swallow these myths in order to give them back to the world. This inspiration is the main motivation behind this writing, because if today it is possible to talk about ancestry coupled with the idea of time, it is only possible because Exu reveals himself as a walker, capable of transfiguring himself as he moves through the world. This is only possible because, according to Muniz Sodré (2017), Exu is the inventor of his own time.

If time is not separate from ancestry, no one better than the native people, those with their feet on the ground, those who connect and eternalize themselves in ancestry, to launch us into this “ancestral future,” marked by the immanence of time that happens in our bodies, in our memory and in our lives. In other words, if the future is ancestral, it’s because the immanence of the present surrounds us, makes us turn around and look for the thread of our memory and ancestry in our ancestral wisdom.

What we know is that time and ancestry constitute an inseparable unit. When problematizing the relationship between education and the future, the original native thinker Aílton Krenak talks about possible alliances and the importance of listening to the heart in the rhythm of the earth, that is, the importance of diving deep into the earth to be able to recreate possible worlds.

The orishas, like the indigenous ancestors and other traditions, established worlds where people could experience life, sing and dance, but it seems that capital’s desire is to impoverish existence. (Krenak, 2022, p. 38).¹⁹

It was with this sensitivity that the intellectual Aílton Krenak taught us, from a native point of view, the importance of all of us being transformed into spectators:

necessidade de internalizar ou de engolir a beleza dos mitos para devolvê-los ao mundo. Trazer os mitos para dentro de mim era uma maneira de conhecê-los, ainda que parcialmente. E o que me atraía mais era devolver os mitos com algum sentido a mais, além dos sentidos sagrados que eles possuem no candomblé.”

¹⁹ In Portuguese: “Os orixás, assim como os ancestrais indígenas e de outras tradições, instituíram mundos onde a gente pudesse experimentar a vida, cantar e dançar, mas parece que a vontade do capital é empobrecer a existência.”

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This invoking of ancestry is educational. It brings a poetic image based on a very ancient rite of consecration of the fire, in which people, after the wood had been consumed, were able to walk barefoot over the embers without burning their feet. (Krenak, 2022, p. 96).²⁰

By evoking the poetic image of myth, Krenak tells us that ancestry is educational. From this it is possible to see that both the Orishas and the indigenous ancestors established worlds for us to experience life through song and dance, but which have, according to Krenak, been overshadowed by capitalism, resulting in the impoverishment of existence.

Now, according to Maria José Somerlate Barbosa, “the quantitative and qualitative dimension of Edimilson’s work has attracted the attention of specialized critics who, when analyzing his literary production in a broader context, turn to general aspects of the work” (Barbosa, 2011, p. 246).²¹

Therefore, we will not undertake an exhaustive review²² of literature, but we will look for areas of possible neighborliness in his poetic criticism. In his writings, I could

²⁰ In Portuguese: “Essa invocação da ancestralidade é educativa. Traz uma imagem poética apoiada num rito muito antigo de consagração do fogo, em que as pessoas, depois de a lenha ter sido consumida, eram capazes de passar descalças sobre as brasas sem queimar os pés.”

²¹ In Portuguese: “a dimensão quantitativa e qualitativa da obra de Edimilson tem atraído a atenção da crítica especializada que, ao analisar a sua produção literária num âmbito mais amplo, volta-se para aspectos gerais da obra.”

²² Although we don’t have time here to do a careful review of the critical reception of Edimilson de Almeida Pereira, it’s worth mentioning here a fundamental study which is Daviane Moreira e Silva’s Doctoral Thesis, entitled *No ritmo da lapassada: leituras do projeto crítico-poético de Edimilson de Almeida Pereira* [In the Rhythm of *Lapassada*: Readings of the Critical-Poetic Project of Edimilson de Almeida Pereira], defended in 2014, at University Of São Paulo, Faculty of Philosophy and Letters, through the lens of the manifestations of Afro-descendant culture. Coincidentally, at the same time, Breno da Silva Lacerda did his Master’s Dissertation entitled *Rastros memoriais da cultura afro-brasileira em a casa da palavra, de Edimilson de Almeida Pereira* [Memorial Tracks of the Afro-Brazilian Culture in the *Casa da Palavra* [House of Words], by Edimilson de Almeida Pereira at UNILASALLE, Canoas. The focus is on social and cultural memory and its traces in Afro-Brazilian literature. In this way, Edimilson de Almeida Pereira’s approach to ancestry and temporality has been timid. Maria Jose S. Barbosa (2011) is the closest to our research, because as well as establishing a symbiosis between the author’s life and work, the researcher highlights the word as a line of force in his poetics, and we cannot forget, of course, Prisca Agustoni (1999), who has contributed not only to disseminating, but also to thinking and poeticizing from the diaspora. The most recent essay on *O ausente* is by critic Carlos Augusto Ferreirinha (2023), written in partnership with Maria Aparecida Junqueira, who articulates negativity, the lyrical self and the potentiality of language in their essay “Silêncio: tessitura de linguagem em O Ausente by Edimilson de Almeida Pereira” [Silence: Language Weaving in *O ausente* by Edimilson de Almeida Pereira]. The critic Michel Mingote Ferreira de Ázara (2021), I could say, is the one who is currently most concerned with the dimension of poetry and philosophy from what he calls the “imaginary of the diaspora.” From a rhizomatic, refined perspective, like a fine stylist of contemporary criticism, Mingote broadens and updates his gaze by thinking about Edimilson de Almeida Pereira’s poetry from the perspective of theorists such as Glissant, Gilroy, Agustoni, Cesare, Deleuze-Guattari and the cameroonian Achille Mbembe.

say that they are crossed by diasporic ancestry and are part of a certain tradition of criticism forged from within the *terreiros* that has paved and strengthened paths and crossroads in the universe of criticism and emerged what Henrique Freitas (2016) called *terreiro* literature.

It's important to point out that issues related to ancestry, for example, are to some extent related to broader issues stemming from Afro-Brazilian literature, militancy, the black women's movement, black feminism and especially *terreiros*, because it is important to recognize that there has been a growing interest in the dialogue between candomblé literature, what we call *enterreirado* [internalized by the sacred ground place] thought or Nagô epistemology, in the field of literature, thus forging what the black intellectual Henrique Freitas (2016), Professor of Literature at the Federal University of Bahia, author of the book *O arco e a arkhé: ensaios sobre literatura e cultura* [The Arch and the Arkhé: Essays on Literature and Culture] named it *literatura-terreiro* [terreiro-literature]. In this case, we are taught:

In this proverbial sacred-ground-place-literature, an ethical dimension, a black-diasporic aesthetic and a dialog with a canonical literary production intersect, challenging the *oris* to incorporate other paradigms to the sound of *alujás*, *opanijés* and other rite-rhythms, while the atabaques-words fold in repetition, in the letter-by-letter incision in the text produced from the body as afrorizomas (Freitas, 2016, p. 81).²³

According to Henrique Freitas, Mama Stella of Oxóssi gives us her *adjá*-word, conjuring up a literary criticism that emerges from the epistemologies of the *terreiros* and thus puts a certain hegemonic literary tradition in check by incorporating other paradigms crossed by the sounds of the *atabaques*-words, reintroducing new *arkhés* or, what he brilliantly calls, an “epistemological platform.” What we are trying to say is that a number of studies have tensioned, questioned and thought about other epistemologies than those seen through the sieve of the imperial West.

In other words, there has been an increase in crossroads literature, both in literary and theoretical-epistemological production, thus emerging a certain Nagô epistemology

²³ In Portuguese: “Nessa literatura-terreiro proverbial, uma dimensão ética, estética negro-diaspórica e de diálogo com uma produção literária canônica se encruzilham, desafiando os *oris* a incorporarem outros paradigmas ao som de *alujás*, *opanijés* e outros rit(m)os, enquanto os atabaques-palavras dobram na repetição, na incisão letra a letra no texto produzido desde o corpo como afrorizomas.”

based on the myths, orality, performances and knowledge lived in the *terreiros*, eroding white, Christian and western subjectivation.

Therefore, the *terreiro*, more than a space in which the sacred culture of the orishas is dramatized and performed, has become a space for culture and thought, in which new ethics and new aesthetics of existence are evoked, thought about and questioned, broadening us and allowing a new direction in criticism, what I would call “Nagô criticism,” a critique to the sound of atabaques, making a brief reference to Muniz Sodré, since he paved this way in his *Pensar nagô* [Thinking Nagô] by bringing a philosophy to the sound of atabaques. In this sense, we can think that we have all the necessary elements to propose a new turn of the analytical key based on ancestral knowledge, and the crossroads become a powerful force line.

We say this because the *terreiros* are these crossroads that we have used to think and decolonize Eurocentric thinking, and as a way of making an epistemic turn and inventing new creative sparks from our multiple processes of subjectivation, that is, from the “giras” of the orishas, as has been done in the past, for example, the admirable intellectual, essayist, critic and poet Edimilson Pereira de Almeida when thinking about the logos of Exu and poetic creation in his book *Entre Orfe(x)u e Exunouveau: Análise de uma estética de base afrodiaspórica na literatura brasileira* [Between Orfe(x)u and Exunouveau: Analysis of an Afro-diasporic Aesthetic in Brazilian Literature]. Just to give an example, there’s a whole Nagô tradition that crosses over from the classic *Os nagô e a morte* [The Nagôs and the Death] by Juana dos Santos, which served as inspiration for all ancestral traditions, such as Muniz Sodré (2017) and one of the most widely read contemporary authors, Luiz Rufino (2019) and his pedagogies of the crossroads.

In order to deal with these issues of time and ancestry, we will outline three intersecting topics: The first is entitled “Edimilson Pereira: The Word Sharpener,” where we explain the author’s main aesthetic inspirations and motivations and bring into the conversation the author himself, Edimilson Pereira (2008; 2011; 2020) and Leda Martins (2021). The second topic is entitled “Displacements of Time,” where we present a dive into the work *The absent*, with time as the focus. Here we call for discussion Leda Martins (2021), Henrique Freitas (2016), Muniz Sodré (2017) e Reginaldo Prandi (2013). The third and final topic, entitled “Exu: the Ancestral Crossroads,” brings the power of Exu

and the crossroads in Edimilson Pereira (2022) in dialogue with Muniz Sodré (2017), Eduardo Oliveira (2023) and the crossroads of Luiz Simas (2021).

1 Edimilson de Almeida Pereira: The Word Sharpener

Without a doubt, Edimilson Pereira is a sharpener of words, a craftsman and weaver who makes language into a kind of goldsmith's work, that is, a sophisticated, careful, creative and renewed work. He translates language through verse and continuous creation. He is a sharpener because he reveals myths in verse. It sharpens by shifting time and space. Finally, he is a sharpener because he looks to his ancestry for instigating ways to renew language. It was because of this sensitivity to words that Reginaldo Prandi, in May 2007, in the preface to his *Livros de falas*, called him the "word sharpener"

Then the *word sharpener* comes along and reveals the myth in reworked verses, which scrape away the old word to see what's under the shell, to show what's hidden. The poet knows how to do this, it's his profession, he's the *word sharpener*. In sharpening the blunted words of myth, he removes the shiny blade from the human face of the orisha that still cuts through time. Then he starts talking about the world, everything, the rest. It speaks of itself and of us. In the remade speech, as predicted in the myth, the new is seen in the old, and the old is no longer the same. The *word sharpener* learns that everything is as it was before and, at the same time, that everything is diferente (Pereira, 2008, pp. 7-8; author's highlights).²⁴

By repeating several times that Edimilson Pereira is a word sharpener, the anthropologist Reginaldo Prandi sensitively gives the right place to the poet Edimilson Pereira, because by sharpening words, he makes this art his profession. In this act of sharpening words, the poet has the power to remove the shiny blade from the human face and begins to talk about the world, where he includes himself and us, where the world presents itself in a new way at every moment.

²⁴ In Portuguese: "Então vem o *afiador de palavras* e revela o mito em versos refeitos, que raspam a palavra antiga para ver o que há sob a casca, para mostrar o que está escondido. O poeta sabe fazer isso, é a sua profissão, é o *afiador de palavras*. No afiar das falas embotadas do mito, ele tira brilhante lâmina do rosto humano do orixá que ainda corta o tempo. Aí ele começa a falar do mundo, de tudo, do resto. Ela fala de si e de nós. Na fala refeita, como está prevista no mito, o novo se enxerga no velho, e o velho já não é mais o mesmo. O *afiador de palavras* aprende que todo é como era antes e, ao mesmo tempo, que tudo é diferente."

It is this pact with Exu, the owner of the word and dynamizer of the universe, that makes Edimilson Pereira a fine stylist and sharpener of words. By directly associating the word with Exu and ancestry, Leda Martins points out that the word is dynamic: “the word is materially sound, and as such is part of the structuring synthesis of the entire continent of dilated and full-bodied sonorities in the dynamics of kinesics” (Martins, 2021, pp. 92-93).²⁵

So, Exu rises under the sign of the word worked from that thin blade of the word, materializing in the sound that energizes the body and sets language in motion, in becoming. Leda Martins adds:

The word has the power to make happen what it releases in its vibration. In the word, it is the divinities, the ancestors, the iniquities, the prayers that heal, that perform the oracular time of enigmas, the past and the future, the sound that emits, transmits, conceals, unveils, darkens and illuminates (Martins, 2021, p. 93).²⁶

In this sense, the word is what makes poetry happen in its sonorous, poetic and plastic vibration. The word, without its synesthetic vibration, is poetry’s first food. In the word dwells ancestry and in it all times develop, amalgamate in a complex spiral movement in which time adjusts, develops, watches, unveils, darkens and illuminates, stirring and renewing life, making an ethical-aesthetic and dynamic principle of the world happen.

Edimilson Pereira achieves this movement to the extent that he drags us (through Exu) out of the usual grooves of language and turns the word into a poetic event. This happens, above all, when his poetic work has Exu as the creative process par excellence, because it’s he who devours and makes the new happen through the recreation of language and the reinvention of life:

This question is relevant to the individual who creates poetry, especially the one who, like the lord of the roads, fertilizes the soil of language with

²⁵ In Portuguese: “a palavra é materialmente som, e como tal é parte da síntese estruturante de todo o continente de sonoridades dilatadas e encorpadas na dinâmica das cinesias.”

²⁶ In Portuguese: “A palavra detém o poder de fazer acontecer aquilo que libera em sua vibração. Na palavra, são as divindades, os ancestres, os iniquices, as rezas que curam, que performam o tempo oracular dos enigmas, o passado e o devir, o som que emite, transmite, esconde, desvela, escurece e ilumina.”

his metaphors and wordplay, even though he knows that these and other instruments of communication are precarious (Pereira, 2022, p. 171).²⁷

That being said, in order to move forward in our critical journey, it is necessary to delve into the poetic intimacy of the writer. Therefore, in order to get to know the paths taken by an author, as well as their poetic and aesthetic interests and inspirations, there is nothing better than listening to his narratives. In an interview with literary critic Noemi Jaffe, in a book *Escrita em movimento: sete princípios do fazer literário* [Writing in Motion: Seven Principles in the Literary Making] Edimilson Pereira teaches us:

Experimentation as a practice precedes any other writing issues. In prose, before outlining the plot or inventorying the actions of the characters, I worry about how the language will be articulated so that I can even fail in my attempts to complete a narrative circuit (Pereira, 2023, p. 179).²⁸

According to Edimilson Pereira, experimentation emerges from practice and the way language is articulated. He goes on explaining that “the difficulty in expressing this is a stimulus to test language and learn, through it, that it is not always necessary to decipher the world” (Pereira, 2023, p. 179).²⁹ It is from this stimulus to test language and push it to its limits that his art survives and is pronounced in the world. Pereira experiments and invites us to make of language an “experiment.”

For him, “those who deal with EXPERIMENT language need to forge their measuring instruments, aware that there is no absolute parameter for writing in this or that way. Each work created under the EXPERIMENT language is specific” (Pereira, 2023, p. 181).³⁰ That said, for Edimilson Pereira, anyone who turns language into a laboratory of experiments must be able to forge their instruments and enter into a kind of creation and invention, since, according to him, there is no parameter and each work

²⁷ In Portuguese: “Essa questão é relevante para o sujeito do fazer poético, sobretudo aquele que, como o senhor dos caminhos, fertiliza o solo da linguagem com suas metáforas e jogos de palavras, embora saiba que esses e outros instrumentos da comunicação sejam precários.”

²⁸ In Portuguese: “A experimentação como prática antecede quaisquer outras questões de escrita. Na prosa, antes de delinear a trama ou inventariar as ações dos personagens me preocupo em saber de que modo a linguagem será articulada para, inclusive, falhar nos intentos de concluir um circuito narrativo.”

²⁹ In Portuguese: “the difficulty in expressing this is a stimulus to test language and learn, through it, that it is not always necessary to decipher the world.”

³⁰ In Portuguese: “quem lida com a linguagem-EXPERIMENTO precisa forjar seus instrumentos de medida, ciente de que não há parâmetro absoluto para se escrever dessa ou daquela maneira. Cada obra elaborada sob a linguagem-EXPERIMENTO é específica.”

happens from this “language-experiment” and in this field of experimentation something is always gained and lost:

This means that, if we gain something from the word, we also lose something that it has failed to represent. So I risk writing on the boundaries between the inaugural word and the exhausted word, between the archaic and the contemporary, between the individual and the collective. Worth saying *this is a project that only the passage of time will tell us whether it works or not*. (Pereira, 2011, p. 123; author’s highlights).³¹

With regard to the word and representation, Edimilson Pereira risks writing within these limits that exist between the inaugural and exhausted word, where archaic and contemporary, individual and collective merge and become confused and who is to say whether it works or not is what he calls it the “scroll of time.” But this experiment process is not separate from working with words. Edimilson Pereira, when making a pact with Exu, makes an agreement with the word, as his ancestry is not disconnected from language, the experiment that takes place through words:

One of them is to work on the common, habitual word in order to discover in it its lost link (the rupestrian sense applies here). But, in addition to this aspect of recovering the origin (which is always a desire, an almost impossible realization), there is also the awareness of the fractures that the word imposes on us (Pereira, 2011, p. 123).³²

This is how Edimilson Pereira, as a man who lives in the heart of language and a craftsman of the word, calls on us to make the word a force and extract from it a living power that is capable of bearing witness to life. For him, working with language means experimenting with it, recovering its lost link and making it alive again.

My work with writing has taken the form of poetic creation (through which I venture out in the hope of sowing a landscape in which experiences with language, historical research and metalinguistic inquiry allow me to communicate my desire to learn about life and the

³¹ In Portuguese: “Quer dizer, se ganhamos algo com a palavra, também perdemos algo que ela não alcançou representar. Assim, me arrisco a escrever nos limites entre a palavra inaugural e a palavra exaurida, entre o arcaico e o contemporâneo, entre o individual e o coletivo. Vale dizer, *isso é projeto que só a rolança do tempo vai dizer se funciona ou não*.”

³² In Portuguese: “Uma delas é a de trabalhar a palavra comum, habitual para descobrir nela o seu elo perdido (vale aqui o sentido rupestre). Mas, além desse aspecto de recuperação da origem (que é sempre desejo, uma quase impossível realização), há também a consciência das fraturas que a palavra nos impõe.”

world); theoretical reflection on popular cultures (through which I dedicate myself to essays, written in co-authorship, on different aspects of popular cultures); and the creation of poetry and prose for children (through which I try to maintain a dialogue with the rest of my work) (Pereira, 2011, p. 124).³³

By taking on poetic creation as the main motif of his approach to writing, the author ventures into an experience with language, where, based on historical research and the insistence on metalanguage, he witnesses the learning of the world of life and extracts its grooves from it and proposes, from there, the use of freedom, because for him, “The poetry I write proposes freedom to readers in order to speak of freedom” (Pereira, 2011, pp. 123-124).³⁴

In this way, the author brings freedom into his writing as a way of motivating readers to talk about freedom. “There are no recipes in my poetry. I can’t say that my concept of freedom is good for everyone, because my poetry is also *aroeira* [mastic tree]: it calls for interpretation and dialogue” (Pereira, 2011, p. 120).³⁵ This sovereign freedom only happens when we are moved to experiment with language. From this freedom, he invites us to think about and reinvent everyday experience, in other words, the text becomes a possibility for reinventing life.

The text as a “reinvented everyday experience” is one of the possibilities for literary creation. And it is undoubtedly one of the most fascinating because it places us between the desire to transform reality (in order to transcend it) and the need to represent it (in order to understand it). I see here the image of the pendulum that makes writing oscillate, losing and gaining as everyday life - identified with reality - shows itself as a wide window to our eyes. Because of this, living with the Arturos and other communities in the interior of Minas Gerais has been decisive for my poetics. These communities speed up the pendulum movement of my poetry by opening the window to a multiple everyday life, impregnated with poetic appeals (Pereira, 2011, pp. 123-124).³⁶

³³ In Portuguese: “Minha vida com a escrita tem ocorrido na criação poética (através da qual me arrisco na expectativa de semear uma paisagem em que as experiências com a linguagem, a investigação histórica e a perquirição metalinguística me permitam comunicar o desejo de aprendizagem da vida e do mundo; na reflexão teórica sobre culturas populares (por meio da qual me dedico aos ensaios, escritos em coautoria, sobre diferentes aspectos das culturas populares); e na criação de poesia e prosa para crianças (através da qual procuro manter um diálogo com o restante de minha obra.”

³⁴ In Portuguese: “A poesia que escrevo propõe liberdade aos leitores para falar de liberdade.”

³⁵ In Portuguese: “Não há receitas em minha poesia. Eu não posso afirmar que meu conceito de liberdade seja bom para todos, pois minha poesia é *aroeira* também: pede interpretações e diálogo.”

³⁶ In Portuguese: “O texto como “vivência cotidiana reinventada” é uma das possibilidades para a criação literária. E é, sem dúvidas, uma das mais fascinantes porque nos coloca entre a vontade de transformar o

His texts are born out of this everyday experience, because experience is filled with knowledge and life. This experience is one of the possibilities for literary creation, placing us between the transformation and representation of reality, either to transcend it or to understand it. For this reason, Edimilson Pereira considers his contact with the communities of Minas Gerais and the *Arturos* to be fundamental to the process of creating his poetics. In other words, his poetic appeals emerge from a multiple everyday life, where the windows open and he is called upon to reinvent everyday life.

Edimilson Pereira's poetic criticism not only displaces the criticism established by the canon and the authorized discourse, centered on a certain white hegemony, but also creates fissures and deterritorializes not only the reader, but also the universe of criticism itself. But, after all, where does the inspiration for this poet and essayist come from? He answers in an interview, in which Prisca Agustoni questioned how his poetic side was born:

In a way, my experience since childhood has been surrounded by a poetic universe. Not written poetry, related to the canon, with which it is so often confused. My family environment provided me with the initial opportunities to come into contact with words used in the ludic sense of recreating and expanding reality. Through my father and his dialogues with the world, his narratives and his interest in the metaphorical vision of reality, I experienced my first poetic perceptions (Pereira, 2011, p. 117).³⁷

Given this, it is clear that Edimilson Pereira has been involved in poetry since childhood. Poetry offered by the family environment, from a playful aura, where he could expand and recreate reality. His father's inspiration provided him with a source of dialogue with the world and a particular interest in the metaphorical view of the world in

real (para transcendê-lo) e a necessidade de representá-lo (para compreendê-lo). Vejo aqui a imagem do pêndulo que faz a escrita oscilar, perdendo-se e ganhando-se enquanto cotidiano-identificado com o real-se mostra como uma larga janela para os nossos olhos. Por conta disso, a convivência com os Arturos e outras comunidades do interior de Minas tem sido decisiva para a minha poética. Essas comunidades aceleram o movimento pendular de minha poesia ao me abrirem a janela de um cotidiano múltiplo, impregnado de apelos poéticos.”

³⁷ In Portuguese: “De certo modo, minha vivência, desde a infância, esteve envolvida por um universo poético. Não o da poesia escrita, relacionada ao cânone, com o qual tantas vezes é confundida. O ambiente familiar me ofereceu as oportunidades iniciais de contato com a palavra utilizada no sentido lúdico de recriação e ampliação da realidade. Através do meu pai e dos seus diálogos com o mundo, das suas narrativas e do seu interesse pela visão metaforizada da realidade, experimentei as primeiras percepções poéticas.”

Bakhtiniana, São Paulo, 20 (3): e66043e, July/Sept. 2025

life. It was there, according to him, that he had the opportunity to experience his first perceptions and poetic experimentations:

Family life has given me the satisfaction of socializing with others, sharing the ludism of language and an enchanted gaze on the world. But there comes a time when we need to develop an approach, I wouldn't say a more conscious one (because, in a way, the awareness of the world also touches us through affection, in the family), but a more accurate and systematic approach to this enchanted gaze, which presents the world to us and which can act as a spark for poetic experience. The poet signs his biography when, from a certain distance, he asks himself why he made this or that gesture, why he gave himself to poetic creation and not to another activity. For me, this distancing began at school (Pereira, 2011, p. 118).³⁸

However, it can be seen that Pereira's writing and poetic inspiration are not separated from life. In other words, family life, living with others, he had, through the playful bias of language, a look of enchantment at the world. In this sense, for Edimilson Pereira, the poet is enchanted by the world from a language marked by ludicity, where consciousness is not separated from the affectionate gesture with the other, with what touches us. This enchanted gaze must serve as a spark for the poetic experience. In other words, the poet needs to have a certain distance from the world and, from there, he signs his biography and gives himself over to poetic creation:

I've always hoped that my poetry could be enriched by the poetry that exists in Yoruba mythology. But I haven't been initiated in the rituals, so I don't know its constitution of the sacred as deeply as I should and would like to. On the other hand, I didn't intend to simply tell the myths of Candomblé with my words. (...) I wanted to write poems that aroused emotion and showed the poet's effort to get to know the words (Pereira, 2011, p. 119).³⁹

³⁸ In Portuguese: "A vida familiar me ofereceu a satisfação de conviver com o outro, partilhando o ludismo da linguagem e o olhar encantado pelo mundo. Mas há um momento em que é preciso desenvolver uma abordagem, não diria mais consciente (por que, de certa maneira, a consciência do mundo nos toca também através do afeto, em família) porém mais aguda e sistemática desse olhar encantado, que nos apresenta o mundo e que pode funcionar como centelha para a experiência poética. O poeta assina a sua biografia quando, a partir de certo distanciamento, ele se pergunta o porquê desse ou daquele gesto, da entrega à criação poética, e não a outra atividade. Para mim, esse distanciamento começou na escola."

³⁹ In Portuguese: "Eu sempre alimentei a vontade de que minha poesia pudesse ser enriquecida com a poesia que existe na mitologia iorubá. Mas eu não sou iniciado, por isso não conheço sua constituição do sagrado tão profundamente quanto eu deveria e desejaria conhecer. Por outro lado, eu não pretendia simplesmente contar os mitos do candomblé com minhas palavras. (...) Eu queria escrever poemas que despertassem emoção e mostrassem o esforço do poeta para conhecer as palavras."

In this way, when Edimilson Pereira shows us that his poetry is enriched by Yoruba poetry, he makes us understand not only the ancestral power that emerges from his writing, but also launches a new arrow against a racist canon that delegitimizes the production of black people, as well as making it invisible and deauthorizing it.

Edimilson Pereira, by assuming that he is not only interested in retelling or reproducing the myths of candomblé, shows that his intention was to write poems that awakened emotion and showed the poet's effort to know the words. It was this ancestral pact that he made with Exu. Moreover, Edimilson Pereira makes a pact with time, displaces it and brings it into the narrative. That will be our next journey.

2 Displacements of Time

In what sense does Edimilson Pereira displace the notion of Western time? How can we think about time and ancestry in Edimilson Pereira? In order to try to answer these questions, we have to put ourselves at the height of his work *The Absent*, because in it time is impelled. Time that refuses to follow a straight line, that circulates, comes and goes, curves, converges, thickens and shortens, encompasses, challenges the clock, logic, common sense, tongue twisters, is outside language, lives in life, in the body-territory, in the rites of birth and also of death.

This temporal regurgitation unfolds in the plot of *O ausente* in a language-mode, densified by syntax and widened by semantics, between the end of the night and dawn, in the so-called Chronos time spiraled into *kairós*:

Under the cotton sheet Djanira sleeps. - You can see the lumps of thread on the fabric that hasn't been stretched properly. Deja drifts off into the time of dreams that does her so much good. It's four o'clock in the morning, there's no sign of the sun, which enters the corral and makes the flies shine... I don't even know how long we've been here (Pereira, 2020, p. 11).⁴⁰

⁴⁰ In Portuguese: "Sob o lençol de algodão Djanira dorme. — dá para ver no tecido os grumos do fio que não foi estirado direito. Deja se interna no tempo, o dos sonhos, que tanto bem lhe faz. São quatro horas da manhã, não há sinal do sol, que entra pelo curral e faz as moscas brilharem...nem sei há quanto tempo estamos aqui."

In the excerpt above, it is possible to see at least three possible times, as Antônio Bispo dos Santos would say, converging ⁴¹ simultaneously: the oneiric time in the body of the other, in the case of the character Deja, who goes inside the time of the dream and simultaneously shares the Chronos time at *four o'clock in the morning* with *Inocencio*, who wanders between sleep and wakefulness, through the past-present-future, by remembrance, digression and the projection of *becoming-to-be*. Inocência, also called as *Inoc*, relates to the time of subjective perceptions, of the *dream*, or by the nature alluded to in creatures, like *the glow of the sun on flies*. Even so, he isn't sure enough about the measure of time that fades into the narrative of the dawn.

In his reverie, in the midst of insomnia, the mind of the man who will also be known as *Esse de agora* [This from now] orbits, spiraling and stretching towards ancestral places and the becoming-to-be being. His thought-voice is tonal, that is, stuttering ⁴² of his own idiom tells us of another arc, another *arché*, where the black-indigenous-Brazilian gnosis signals different crossroads for apprehending existence through time. Spiral time, in which Leda Martins (2021) states “does not abolish chronology, but subverts it.”⁴³ The time that spreads out in the *becoming* of life and in the flow of memory:

The primacy of ancestral movement, the source of inspiration, nuances the curves of a spiral temporality, in which events, removed from a linear chronology, are in the process of perpetual transformation. Birth, growth and death therefore become natural events, necessary in the mutational and regenerative dynamics of all vital and existential cycles.

⁴¹ Confluence is a concept used by Antônio Bispo dos Santos (2021), or Nego Bispo, about the relationship between discourse and practice, in the process of counter-colonization, allowing what the author calls the coexistence of elements that are different from each other, and which are close in their cosmovisions. According to him, confluence is what has mobilized the thinking of traditional people, coming from the pluralist worldview of polytheistic nations.

⁴² The notion of stuttering here is based on the nomadic thinking of Deleuze (1997) [In: DELEUZE, Gilles et al. *Essays on Critical and Clinical*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, Verso Books, 1997]. In *Critique and Clinic*, Deleuze problematizes that a writer who stutters on his own language is the one who is able to turn the idiom into a foreign language, like Proust. It is on the basis of this prodigious stuttering that Edimilson de Almeida Pereira, in his intensive language, becomes a stutterer of the idiom, by making it vibrate in another way, i.e., it is no longer the character who is a stutterer of speech, it's the writer who becomes a stutterer of the idiom. Using this Deleuzian approach, we could extend it to the notion of minor literature, since for Deleuze, in partnership with Guattari, the great writer rests on the ability to establish within a minor exercise of a language, that is, an absolute deterritorialization of the major language. For them, a minor literature does not belong to a minor language, but an idiom that a minority constructs in a major language.

⁴³ In Portuguese: “não elide a cronologia, mas que a subverte.”

In the spirals of time, what goes around, comes back around. (Martins, 2003, p. 75).⁴⁴

Martins alludes to the non-linear movement of time in Afro-diasporic ancestral mythology, where death is not the end, nor the end of what no longer exists in the world of the living, because “everything that is alive today must die, so that the dead may live” (Pereira, 2020, p. 73).⁴⁵ Hence the idea of the wheel brought up as a metaphor by Antônio Bispo dos Santos for the cycle of existence where “the relationship with time is cyclical: it has a beginning, a middle and a beginning. Because anywhere on the wheel is the beginning.”⁴⁶

An artist of words, Edmilson Pereira created *Inocência*, whose black skin is referred to only twice in the narrative: “we are two old blue-black men, standing, lucid, looking at the burnt-out barrel” (Pereira, 2020, p. 11) and, later on, “it took intelligence itself, Deja, for us to be two old red-black men” (Pereira, 2020, p. 122).⁴⁷

In the author’s case, the choice to point out the color of the characters’ skin, instead of leaving it to the reader’s imagination, is intimately linked to Afro-Rhizomatic choices, which, according to Henrique Freitas, “spread by linguizing the black diaspora in conventional and unconventional literary expressions” (Freitas, 2013, p. 55),⁴⁸ which Pereira uses to craft the mimesis I of his novel, filled with Afro-Indian gnosis, their mythologies, oral literatures and temporalities. *O ausente* invites us to dive into the world of the enchanted, the outspoken, the prayed, the manifested, the very simple people who deserve to be heard:

We, people in flesh, bone and spirit, live by what we are told and what we dare to recount. That’s why these people, who are arriving - a father,

⁴⁴ In Portuguese: “A primazia do movimento ancestral, fonte de inspiração, matiza as curvas de uma temporalidade espiralada, na qual os eventos, desvestidos de uma cronologia linear, estão em processo de uma perene transformação. Nascimento, maturação e morte tornam-se, pois, eventos naturais, necessários na dinâmica mutacional e regenerativa de todos os ciclos vitais e existenciais. Nas espirais do tempo, tudo vai e tudo volta.”

⁴⁵ In Portuguese: “tudo o que está vivo hoje deve morrer, para que os mortos vivam.”

⁴⁶ In Portuguese: “a relação com o tempo é cíclica: tem começo, meio e começo. Porque qualquer lugar da roda é começo.”

⁴⁷ In Portuguese: “somos dois velhos negros azuis, de pé, lúcidos, mirando o paiol incendiado” (Pereira, 2020, p. 11); “foi preciso ser a própria inteligência, Deja, para sermos dois velhos negros vermelhos.”

⁴⁸ In Portuguese: “disseminam-se linguajando a diáspora negra em expressões literárias convencionais e não convencional.”

a mother and their child - in great need, but well adjusted in their transportation, deserve to be heard (Pereira, 2020, p. 55).⁴⁹

This warning that the author gives us, disguised in the narrative voice, awakens us to the exercise of attentive listening, so that we can be affected by our culture that is on the margins, silenced and excluded from the canonical narrative. Thus, Pereira brings to graphocentrism the narratives of the excluded, the subjugated. Therefore, it makes perfect sense that the character Inoc is a healer and takes care of the things of his people, especially his afro-diasporic ancestry, which Leda Martins states:

It can be conceived both as a philosophical principle of African civilizing thought and as a channel, a vehicle through which the vital force, the dynamo and repository of moving energy, the sacred original kinesis constantly in the process of expansion and catalysis, is spread throughout the cosmos. (Martins, 2021, p. 60).⁵⁰

This ancestral mission, mentioned by Leda Martins, is born with the main character. ‘*Inocência*,’ ‘*Inoc*’ or ‘*Esse de agora*,’ the names the character adopts throughout the narrative, was born caulked. The distinction of being brought to life while still inside the gestational sac, in the midst of the matricidal water, gives Inocência the gift of walking through time and exercising, with the help of the spirit world, the trade of healer, where “everything started in reverse, that is, the evils arriving at my door and I healing” (Pereira, 2020, p. 41).⁵¹

This deference of birth will make him a man-nature-myth, because, embedded in the element of water, he receives in his *orí* the distinctive mark of his Afrodiasporic ancestry, his orisha, which will make him sacred ground:

Starting with the notion of the individual, which implies the integration of different souls: it is the orisha, which links us to nature; the reincarnated spirit, or *egum*, which links us to the family, the social group, society, in a circular time that makes the world reset and repeat

⁴⁹ In Portuguese: “Nós, pessoas em carne, osso e alumbramento, vivemos daquilo que nos contam e que nos arvoramos a recontar. Por isso, esses, aí chegando – um pai, a mãe e o seu filho deles – em muita carência, mas ajustados no seu transporte, merecem que os escutemos.”

⁵⁰ In Portuguese: “Tanto pode ser concebida como um princípio filosófico do pensamento civilizador africano quanto pode ser vislumbrada como um canal, um meio pelo qual se esparge por todo o cosmos, a força vital, dínamo e repositório da energia movente, a cinesia originária sagrada constantemente em processo de expansão e catalização”

⁵¹ In Portuguese: onde “tudo começou invertido, é dizer, os males chegando a minha porta e eu curando.”

itself indefinitely; it is the *orí*, or the head, which contains the individuality and carries the destiny of each man and woman, which makes each person who they are. The importance of the *orí* demands rite, sacrifice and ceremony, placing the individual at the center of religious attention. And that's just the beginning (Prandi, 2013, p. 10).⁵²

As Reginaldo Prandi rightly explains, African gnosis, especially that of Yoruba origin, links man to different souls, but also to a spiral time that repeats itself indefinitely. Perhaps that's why Edimilson Pereira also chose to spiralize the poetics of his narrative, mimicking in the plot the idea of being around with something incomprehensible. It's a metalanguage form that makes the reader experience the idea of walking in circles, going back and forth, picking up elements of temporal cognition here and there, after all, as Inocência himself says "study is a medicine" (Pereira, 2020, p. 12).⁵³

The narrator-character Inocência is telling the story in the first person from the point of view of thought, and sometimes he shares this role with Deja, his wife. This action of speaking through thought, from the fragments of memory, immediately brings us back to the historical silencing imposed by racism on black people and, subsequently, internalized in our bodies. Many words for us can only belong to the world of ideas, but like Inoc, we have learned that it's in the world that they gain power because "the world is the grinding stone for words" (Pereira, 2020, p. 38).⁵⁴

The world acts on time and on the body, Inocência's territory, above all in his identity, which changes in his relationship with the other characters. Thus, he changes skin, accepting other films and new identities. He ceases to be the named and names himself in the transition between the three parts of the plot: "absent," "rumors" and "ever-living." He takes us with him to the crossroads of becoming decolonized and invites us to reflect on the dilemma of changing destiny, acting on his own judgment, assuming the transgression of being the master of his choices, refusing predestination and manichaeism. And so he takes on the storytelling of his own new story, because "the only

⁵² In Portuguese: "A começar pela noção de pessoa, que implica a integração de diferentes almas: é o orixá, que nos vincula à natureza; o espírito reencarnado, ou egum, que nos liga à família, ao grupo social, à sociedade, em um tempo circular que faz o mundo se repor e se repetir indefinidamente; é o *orí*, ou a cabeça, que contém a individualidade e carrega o destino de cada homem e mulher, que faz de cada um o que é. A importância do *orí* demanda rito, sacrifício, cerimônia, situando o indivíduo no centro das atenções religiosas. E é apenas um começo."

⁵³ In Portuguese: "estudo é remédio."

⁵⁴ In Portuguese: "o mundo é a pedra de amolar a palavra."

way to get the past off our shoulders is to retell what we have lived as if we were someone else” (Pereira, 2020, p. 46).⁵⁵

Inocência’s ideology dialogues with the thought of narrating the ancestral word presented to us by Leda Martins:

In the circuit of tradition, which preserves the ancestral word, and in that of transmission, which updates it and moves it around in the present, the word is breath, diction, event and performance, an index of wisdom. This knowledge becomes an event not because it has crystallized in the archives of memory, but mainly because it is re-edited in the performance of the performer/narrator and in the collective answer. (Martins, 1997, p. 146).⁵⁶

In this way, Innocent breaks with his predestination by birth, which imposes on his fate a god over all who denies the god in everything. This process begins when Inoc decides, by request of his patient, not to complete the healing procedures:

Suddenly, Zé Vitor’s hand interrupted me. I let him put out the fire because the other orders were also burning me. He continued. No. You have to do it, but you don’t have to go on until the third tool. Although it was a whisper, I heard him inside me fist with the sheer clarity of his words. You don’t have to use the last key (Pereira, 2020, p. 19).⁵⁷

Zé Vitor is the moribund, also predestined, born caulked, who challenged God, preferring to accumulate a “track record” of misbehave. The one who chose the most petty villainy, the one that seduces to the point of becoming “an evil that cannot be killed because it is tender and leads many people to bitterness” (Pereira, 2020, p. 19).⁵⁸

The caulked Zé Vitor would be a kind of double of Inocência. But the other side of the force, the debauched, transgressive face, the troublemaker, who refuses the halter of guilt. The profane, a skilled communicator of human hypocrisy. In Brazilian Afro-

⁵⁵ In Portuguese: “a única maneira de tirar dos ombros o passado é contar outra vez o vivido como se fôssemos outra pessoa.”

⁵⁶ In Portuguese: “No circuito da tradição, que guarda a palavra ancestral, e no da transmissão, que a reatualiza e movimenta no presente, a palavra é sopro, hálito, dicção, acontecimento e performance, índice de sabedoria. Esse saber torna-se acontecimento não porque se cristalizou nos arquivos da memória, mas, principalmente, por ser reeditado na performance do cantador/narrador e na resposta coletiva.”

⁵⁷ In Portuguese: “Súbito, a mão de Zé Vitor me interrompeu. Deixei que pousasse o fogo porque as outras ordens também me queimavam. Ele prosseguiu. Não. Tens que fazer, mas não tens de prosseguir até o terceiro apetrecho. Embora fosse um murmúrio, escutei dentro de mim seu punho com a pura clareza suas palavras. Não tens que usar a última chave.”

⁵⁸ In Portuguese: “um mal que não se pode matar porque é terno e leva muita gente à amargura.”

diasporic mythology, in the Yoruba language, in the Ketu tradition, the vital energy in Zé Vitor would be exuistic. As Muniz Sodré tells us about Exu:

His unique aspect is his ability to communicate, to innovate, to transform: Exu belongs viscerally to communication, since he results, as the prototypical son in the creation of human beings, from the interaction of water (the masculine element) and earth (the feminine element), and is thus the mythical bearer of semen and the ancestral womb (Sodré, 2017, p. 177).⁵⁹

The meeting between the two caulked at the crossroads of death, whose action depends on the corruption of the sacred, the case of Inocencio himself, will narrow and tense Inoc's ancestral time and forcibly encase him in the now, as he admits in an outburst: "My life is a life without yesterday or tomorrow, concentrated on what it is: in the now, within the now."⁶⁰ In an instant, Inoc decides the future of his life in the death of Zé Vitor's future past tense: "I broke a pact, I was born to heal, but, due to despising for the convictions, I understood that doubting gave me more joy" (Pereira, 2020, p. 18).⁶¹

With Zé Vitor discarnate, Inocência, or rather the one in the now, can finally follow another arché and, "forcing his body forward in an arc" (Pereira, 2020, p. 124),⁶² follow the wheel of time inside time. "I launched myself, I made the bow my impulse. I went, I will go."⁶³ This is how the author of *O ausente* draw his word by spiraling time, bringing within it the mythological complexity of Exu and his ancestral crossroads. This will be our next step.

3 Exu: The Ancestral Crossroads

The crucial question is what does ancestry consist of? What is the relationship between crossroads and ancestry? Eduardo Oliveira teaches us:

⁵⁹ In Portuguese: "A sua face inigualável é a capacidade comunicacional, inovadora, transformadora: Exu pertence visceralmente à comunicação, uma vez que resulta, enquanto filho prototípico na criação do ser humano, da interação de água (elemento masculino) e terra (elemento feminino) sendo assim o portador mítico do sêmen e do útero ancestral."

⁶⁰ In Portuguese: "minha vida é uma vida sem ontem, nem amanhã, concentrada no é: no agora, dentro do agora."

⁶¹ In Portuguese: "rompi um pacto, nasci para curar, mas, pelo desprezo à convicção, entendi que duvidar me dava mais alegria."

⁶² In Portuguese: "forçando o corpo em arco para frente."

⁶³ In Portuguese: "Eu me lancei, fiz do arco meu impulso. Fui, irei."

The concept of ancestry that I envision, seeks the major greatness that fits into the smallest measure. As a concept, it seeks the vastness of mystery and the extension of knowledge; the cosmological/cosmogonic principle, as much as the epistemic principle (Oliveira, 2023, p. 28).⁶⁴

According to diasporic ancestry thinker Eduardo Oliveira, ancestry is a vastness of mystery that acts as a cosmogonic and cosmological principle, and also as an epistemic principle. In this sense, Exu becomes an epistemology and a way of thinking about the complexity of the diaspora. The dynamics of the black-African universe in Yoruba culture are sustained by Exu, because Elegbara holds the power that preserves and continues Olódùmarè's Creative project. Exu, however, is ambivalent. He serves the Creator-God as much as he relates to Misfortune (Oliveira, 2023, p. 29). Luiz Simas adds:

Legba is the power of transformation incarnated in the actions of women and men. It is a state of willingness to transform the world in which we live. We are, in a state of Legba, those who can lead us, against horror, to the widest grounds of joy (Simas, 2021, p. 16).⁶⁵

In this sense, *Legbá* is intimately linked not only to the power of transformation, but also to the actions of women and men, because through its availability, it creates and transforms everyone's world, making us fight against horror and elevating us to joy and the affirmation of life. In his book *Entre Orfe(x)u e Exunouveau: análise de uma estética de base afrodiaspórica na literatura brasileira*, black thinker Edimilson Pereira brings diasporic ancestry from Exu, the philosopher's stone. For him, literary aesthetics emerges from the symbolism of Exu, because he is the master of time, that is, he invents his own time.

For a better understanding of the literary aesthetics derived from the symbolism of Exu, we will take into account how some anthropological research carried out in the field of Afro-Brazilian religions has been reappropriated by some authors who, by organizing their works based

⁶⁴ In Portuguese: "O conceito de ancestralidade que vislumbro busca a maior grandeza que caiba na menor medida. Como conceito, busca a vastidão do mistério e a extensão do conhecimento; o princípio cosmológico/cosmogônico, tanto quanto o princípio epistêmico."

⁶⁵ In Portuguese: "Legba é a potência da transformação encarnada na ação das mulheres e dos homens. Ele é um estado de disponibilidade para transformar o mundo que vive de cada um. Nós somos em estado de Legba, os que podemos nos conduzir, contra o horror, até os terreiros mais amplos da alegria."

on dialogue with the social sciences, contribute to expanding the aesthetic heritage of Brazilian literature (Pereira, 2022, p. 118).⁶⁶

In his literary criticism, Edmilson Pereira recognizes the power of the *terreiros* and, in doing so, proposes a different way of looking at criticism outside of Western and imperial moulds, recognizing the richness of the literary collection, the orishas and especially the presence of Exu, a determining sign for understanding this logic implied in destruction and reconstruction that serves as the substance and support for Yoruba culture.

In the literary archive referring to the orishas, the presence of Exu is crucial to understanding the logic of destruction and reconstruction that underpins Yoruba cosmogony. Let's remember that one of the sacred narratives reveals that the world came into being as a result of Exu. (Pereira, 2022, p. 124).⁶⁷

By gaining power over crossroads, Exu allows us to cross knowledge, to take up arrows from the past and launch them forward, in a complex and wide-ranging process of invention and reinvention of language and life. This is what Nagô thinker Muniz Sodré argues when he stresses the importance of thinking about Exu and time:

The statement on the screen referring to Exu could well be interpreted as a moral axiom that seeks in the present the driving force behind the actions unleashed in the past, in reflexive opposition to the law of cause and effect or the western idea of progress as the effect of past actions. It would, therefore, be an appreciation of the past, of the group's founding strength (Sodré, 2017, p. 171).⁶⁸

In other words, according to the ancestor Muniz Sodré, Exu, like an axiom, is the one who searches the present for the matrix and driving force behind all the actions unleashed in the past. In this sense, Exu displaces Western notions of time and space,

⁶⁶ In Portuguese: "Para uma melhor compreensão da estética literária derivada da simbologia de Exu, levaremos em conta o modo como algumas investigações antropológicas realizadas no campo das religiões afro-brasileiras tem sido reapropriadas por alguns autores e algumas autoras que, ao organizarem suas obras a partir do diálogo com as áreas das ciências sociais, contribuem para a ampliação do patrimônio estético da literatura brasileira."

⁶⁷ In Portuguese: "No acervo literário referente aos orixás, a presença de exu é determinante para compreendermos a lógica da destruição e da reconstrução que sustenta a cosmogonia iorubá. Recordamos que uma das narrativas sagradas revela que o mundo surgiu regurgito de Exu."

⁶⁸ In Portuguese: "O enunciado em tela referente a Exu bem poderia ser interpretado como um axioma moral que busca no presente a chave motriz das ações desencadeadas no passado em contraposição reflexiva à lei de causa e efeito ou à ideia ocidental de progresso com efeito de ações passadas. Seria, portanto, uma valorização do passado, do vigor de fundação do grupo."

because he becomes the force that kills a bird yesterday with the stone he threw today. He deterritorializes time and space. The crossroads becomes a plastic and dynamic space, marked by ancestry:

Exu is the first-born, therefore, but equally - because he holds the primacy of the structuring process over his own children - he is the ancestral father, to which another representation corresponds (Exu Obá). As Exu Bará, he governs the interior of the body, ensuring circulation in the internal pathways, as well as defecation, the function of filtering out impurities or the inessential, which can be etymologically read in the name itself - Exu- an agglutination of the prefix 'é' with the verbal matrix 'xu' (literally means "to defecate") and semiotically similar to the first greek meaning of *arkhé*, which is "anus," in other words, the last mouth of the body, which logically refers to the mouth of absorption. And so on, there are many representative modulations, which are never entirely closed off to interpretation, but open up to other symbolic appropriations (Sodré, 2017, p. 179).⁶⁹

By assuming the role of first-born, Exu becomes the ancestral father, as he also rules over the interior of the body. At the same time, he represents the mouth of the world, which devours everything, and the anus, the purifying part of the body, from where everything that no longer serves us is purged. Hence the expression 'xu,' which means to defecate, as the original principle of existence and the ultimate mouth of the body. Expanding on the semantics of exu from a dynamic and aesthetic point of view, Eduardo Oliveira says:

Now, let's go back to Exu. He is the one who established the major greatness in the smallest measure, the one who is Orumilá's friend, who visits the house of Wisdom and who understood together with Wisdom that there are no opposing pairs, but complementary elements, that unity presents itself as a difference, as a multiplicity. This Exu is a witness to everything and everyone, and also an expression of the singularity of each thing, he is Olódumarè's messenger, he is the sign itself, the code, the secret and the expression, he is the one who interconnects things,

⁶⁹ In Portuguese: "Exu é primogênito, portanto, mas igualmente- por deter o primado do processo de estruturação sobre seus próprios filhos- é pai- ancestral, a que corresponde outra representação (Exu Obá). Como Exu Bará, ele rege o interior do corpo, assegurando a circulação nas vias internas, assim como a defecação, função de filtro das impurezas ou do inessencial, passível de ser etimologicamente lida no próprio nome- Exu- uma aglutinação do prefixo é com a raiz verbal *xu* (literalmente "defecar") e semioticamente afim ao primeiro significado grego de *arkhé*, que é "anus", ou seja, a boca última do corpo, que remete logicamente à boca da absorção. E assim por diante, são muitas as modulações representativas, que jamais se fecham inteiramente na interpretação, abrindo-se para outras apropriações simbólicas."

who has the function of mediating, negotiating and relating all things, he is also the one who personalizes the ethical principle in the world; he is the one who applies Olódùmarè's norm and punishes those who deny Olódùmarè's Project through the setbacks that he is a master at producing. Exu says no to those who say no to Olódùmarè (Oliveira, 2023, p. 42).⁷⁰

In considering the figure of Exu and his ancestral crossroads, Eduardo Oliveira teaches us that he established the utmost greatness in the smallest measure and had Orumilá as a friend and learned from his wisdom that the crossroads run against the current of opposites, because they are signs that complement each other, where unity is presented as difference, as multiplicity and becoming. Exu, as a witness to everything and everyone, expresses himself in the singularity of each thing, in other words, the dynamic, ethical and aesthetic principle of existence, Exu interconnects things, mediating, relating, negotiating and linking.

This attribute allows the Lord of the Roads to change our perception of events, placing us in situations of apparent nonsense, since we are instructed to *experience the passage of time as a succession of events* (Pereira, 2022, p. 165; author's highlight).⁷¹

Now, by altering our perception of the world, the lord of the paths makes us experience time from a non-Western perspective, because with this spiral plasticity, Exu allows us to experience the passage of time based on the succession and simultaneity of events. Exu is this time-wind or "event" which, by involving us, alters our perception of the world and ourselves in an intense movement of territorialization and deterritorialization. Within this cosmological complexity of time, Edimilson Pereira becomes the thinker at the crossroads by bringing the power of time and Afro-diasporic

⁷⁰ In Portuguese: "Voltemos a Exu. Ele é aquele que estabeleceu a maior grandeza na menor medida, aquele que é amigo de Orumilá, que visita a casa da Sabedoria e que entendeu junto com a Sabedoria que não existe pares opostos, mas elementos complementares, que a unidade se apresenta como uma diferença, como uma multiplicidade. Esse Exu é testemunha de tudo e de todo, e também, expressão de singularidade de cada coisa, é o mensageiro de Olódùmarè, é o próprio signo, o código, o segredo e a expressão, é ele quem interliga as coisas, que tem a função de intermediar, de negociar e de relacionar todas as coisas, ele também é quem personaliza o princípio ético no mundo; é ele quem aplica a norma de Olódùmarè e pune quem nega o Projeto- Olódùmarè através dos reveses que ele é mestre em produzir. Exu diz não a quem diz não a *Olódùmarè*."

⁷¹ In Portuguese: "Esse atributo permite ao senhor dos caminhos alterar a percepção que possuímos dos acontecimentos, colocando-nos diante de situações de aparente *nonsense*, uma vez que somos instruídos a *vivenciar a passagem do tempo como uma sucessão de eventos*."

ancestry. In a way, he inaugurates what he calls the logos of Exu and poetic creation. Edimilson says:

Exu's ability to reorder the world by dismantling habitual practices is related to the possibility of *reversing temporal dimensions* (Pereira, 2022, p. 165; author's highlights).⁷²

In other words, it is this capacity for transmutation, i.e. the power to transport and transform us, that allows Exu to reorder the world through the disarrangements and disarticulations of habitual practices. There is an inversion not only of time, but also of space, because Exu, as the nomad that he is, is everywhere and nowhere, as he expresses the unspeakable and the unsayable. It becomes the leitmotif of discourse and action, that is, of the word(action):

Through this *modus operandi*, the Deity is presented as the main motif of the discourse, while the poet's voice is configured as a sounding board for the ways of acting and thinking that characterize Exu (Pereira, 2022, p. 145).⁷³

More than just speech, Exu allows us to constantly renew language, bringing it back to life. Edimilson Pereira leads us to think that there is a certain rupture with the linearity of time, allowing for the reinvention of the quotidian. Hence the well-known expression, "exu killed a bird yesterday with a stone he threw today."⁷⁴ Therefore, by allowing us to know relationally known, the world and thought become more complex, because everything is possible. Hence the complexity and broadness of Exu:

Exu's ambivalence is not relativity, but a relational one. He is both structure and singularity. The unity that maintains the dynamics of the black-African universe, as well as the movement of singularity, which dynamizes differences in a relational paradigm. This brings me to the aesthetical principle (Oliveira, 2023, p. 43).⁷⁵

⁷² In Portuguese: "A capacidade de Exu para reordenar o mundo a partir de desarticulação das práticas habituais está relacionada à possibilidade de inversão das *dimensões temporais*."

⁷³ In Portuguese: "Através desse *modus operandi*, a divindade é apresentada como o motivo principal do discurso, enquanto a voz do poeta se configura como uma caixa de ressonância dos modos de agir e pensar caracterizadores de Exu."

⁷⁴ In Portuguese: "exu matou pássaro ontem com pedra que atirou hoje."

⁷⁵ In Portuguese: "A ambivalência de Exu não é relatividade, mas relação. Ele é, ao mesmo tempo, a Estrutura e a singularidade. A unidade que mantém a dinâmica do universo negro-africano, bem como o

By bringing with him the complexity of ambivalence, according to Eduardo Oliveira, Exu transforms himself into a relational sign, because being unity, he dynamizes differences through the movement of singularity. This is the ethical-aesthetic principle that populates the figure of Exu, because it is a dynamic, plastic, rhizomatic aesthetic principle that inspires us in ways of life based on relational knowledge.

And it is in the relationship that we find, who knows, that sovereign freedom that Edimilson Pereira spoke of, that is, in the “permanent defense of freedom for aesthetic experimentation.” But this requires courage, because this is how he designs his literature: “It’s a literature of courage, of strength, of hope” (Pereira, 2011, p. 120).⁷⁶ It is from this courage, strength and hope that we allow ourselves the movement of freedom and life.

Closing Remarks

Here we propose to think about the notion of time and ancestry in Edimilson Pereira. As we know, the number of poets and writers who think about and problematize the world from the perspective of the Afro-Brazilian diaspora, culture and the crossroads of the *terreiros* is growing all the time. Edimilson Pereira is no different, as his writing provokes a new sieve in the chaos of literary criticism. Through his disconcerting writing, he has promoted not only fissures and displacements, but also openings in what we understand as the canon. As Henrique Freitas (2016) rightly put it, the so-called “*terreiro*-literature” has grown in such a way that we see the emergence of a new poetic paradigm and a new discursive *ethos*.

The three topics of the paper are related, because at first we introduced the author Edimilson Pereira as a thinker of the word, what we call him “the word sharpener,” an excerpt in which we brought up his main aesthetic motivations. The second was a dive into the displacement of time in his work *The Absent*. The third and last, “Exu: the ancestral crossroads” was a dive into the figure of Exu as a Yoruba philosopher’s stone by gaining power over the crossroads.

movimento da singularidade, que dinamiza as diferenças num paradigma relacional. Isso me leva ao Princípio Estético.”

⁷⁶ In Portuguese: “defesa permanente da liberdade para a experimentação estética”; “É uma literatura de coragem, de força, de esperança.”

These cosmoperceptions brought up in our analysis broaden, on the one hand, the semantics of what we understand as criticism and, on the other, introduce voices into the canonical literary field that have been erased and deauthorized. Time, in addition, is displaced to the extent that the crossroads, as a political agency, places us in new landscapes and new relational knowledge. On the other hand, we have a new time, which Leda Martins calls spiraling and brings us closer to ancestry and the Afro-Brazilian diaspora as a field in expansion, experimentation and [r]existence.

The category of ancestry is still in need of a deeper epistemology, because the impression we get is that this word has been emptied out and reduced to something that only concerns a group that evokes a certain mystique through rites and rituals. In other words, it seems to have become a word reduced to sorcery, shamanism and spirits from black or native people. It's important to recognize that we all have ancestry insofar as we have history, memory and orality trapped in our bodies. In other words, all it takes to have ancestry is to be alive and to have a body that communicates with the world of life.

The body, linked in symbiosis with multiple languages, communicates all the worlds within us. Evoking ancestry not only demands an ethical question from us, but also an aesthetic question of existence and life.

More than that, based on Edimilson Pereira's narrative, we have proposed here to amplify and complexify the notion of time and ancestry in accordance with a politics of immanence and life, uniting ancestry and aesthetics, as Eduardo Oliveira rightly pointed out. In other words, ancestry must be thought of from the point of view of ethics and aesthetics capable of relating knowledge and, to do this, we need to turn language into a laboratory, that is to say, a field of experimentation capable of apprehending and re-signifying what has already been thought in order to hatch the unthought of. "Here, ancestry is aesthetics and a certain ancestral aesthetics moves us within these key ideas of resistant creation and creative resistance that drifts between the Continent and its diaspora" (Oliveira, 2023, p. 9).⁷⁷

That's why, once again, Exu is so important because, anthropophagically, he's the one who allows us this intense movement with our thinking, because it's this defense of freedom that was so defended by Edimilson Pereira (2011) when he brought up "the

⁷⁷ In Portuguese: "Aqui, ancestralidade é estética e uma certa estética ancestral nos move no seio dessas ideias-força da criação resistente e da resistência criativa que se move em deriva entre Continente e sua diáspora."

permanent defense of freedom for aesthetic experimentation” and, along with it, “the search for dialogues between traditions and contemporaneity,” as a possibility to deepen critical thinking, “creative sensibility and the bonds of affection between people” (Pereira, 2011, p. 124).⁷⁸

Therefore, thinking about time and ancestry in Edimilson Pereira makes us think beyond time and ancestry, because it allows us, from the diaspora of the *terreiro*, from what we call “pensamento enterreirado” (thinking that comes from the *terreiro*), to think about new directions in the critique and, above all, to think about racism that is structurally constructed and institutionally maintained, because his literature is not separate from broader issues linked to racism.

In other words, Edimilson Pereira as a fine stylist and word sharpener, brings an updated and new language, because with his millennial wisdom he opens up new literary crossroads and updates racial reading, uniting culture, ancestral knowledge and literature, promoting in the critique a place of freedom, mobilizing us to work in and through language, while also thinking about the problems of our time, always inviting us to look back and search for our lost, silenced, dehumanized and invisibilized steps.

Bringing Edimilson Pereira’s Exu power is one of the ways of realizing that, by making literature a crossroads, we can cross knowledge and invent new possibilities for life. This was the inspiration that Edimilson brought us from a tradition of women from the crossroads who have already paved this ground from their ancestry. This is what Conceição Evaristo taught us when she affirmed the ancestry that populates the future:

[...] the future is ancestral, which is why we contemplate the flight of the bird. It’s necessary to follow the bird’s path. Sankofa teaches us to explore the paths of tomorrow. Sankofa teaches us that we need to know the past in order to move forward in building a better time to come. We need to return, search, seek, recover what has been forgotten, what has been lost (Evaristo, 2022, n.p.).⁷⁹

⁷⁸ In Portuguese: “a defesa permanente da liberdade para a experimentação estética” e junto com ela, “a busca de diálogos entre as tradições e a contemporaneidade”; “sensibilidade criadora e os laços de afetividade entre as pessoas.”

⁷⁹ In Portuguese: “[...] o futuro é ancestral, e, por isso, contemplamos o voo do pássaro. É preciso seguir a rota da ave. Sankofa nos ensina a desbravar os caminhos do amanhã. Sankofa nos ensina que precisamos conhecer o passado para irmos adiante na construção de um melhor tempo vindouro, é preciso retornar, buscar, procurar, recuperar o que ficou esquecido, o que se perdeu.”

Finally, it is this ancestry that allows us to look back and recognize ourselves. To recognize it, is to look into the eyes of our mothers, the “women’s voices” that make us contemplate the flight of the bird so that we can follow the route and have Sankofa as the guiding axis of our existences to explore the paths of tomorrow. Recognizing this past, i.e. where our footsteps come from so that, through this return, we can recover and retrace our history through writing, because, as Graça Graúna reminds us, when we write, we give an account of our ancestry, of the way back, of our place in the world. This is how Edimilson de Almeida Pereira makes us feel: acknowledging our ancestry, our way home and our place in the world.

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Statement of Author's Contribution

We hereby declare for all intents and purposes that we, the authors, have registered authorship of the article insofar as we seek to contribute substantially and significantly to literary criticism at the crossroads of the diaspora, and especially with regard to the philosophical aspect of time and ancestry in the writings of poet, essayist, and fiction writer Edimilson de Almeida Pereira. The project in question that was studied in this article is focused on what we researched about ancestry and time in contemporary Brazilian literature. The interpretation of the data was based on the critical analysis of the literary corpus, that is, the work *O ausente* by Edimilson de Almeida Pereira. The author Paulo Petronilio, as the doctoral student's advisor, contributed to the epistemological aspect, where he dealt with concepts linked to time and ancestry in the poetry of Edimilson de Almeida Pereira. The author Adelaide de Paula contributed to the extent that she helped to write about the theory of time. The author took care to look for aspects related to the author's interviews to strengthen the proposed discussion. The author made a careful analysis of the policies of limitations to verify that there were no repetitions. The article was drafted, revised and written by both authors involved. The author Paulo Petronilio contributed with the careful revision of the text, in attentive critical reflection, in dialogue with the proposal of the journal, focused on the theme of the crossroads. Both authors revised the text and made the final considerations returning to the central theme to give an idea of cohesion and coherence. Finally, both authors made a careful critical revision and cohesive organization in the final draft of the article, with theoretical depth and intellectual content, since it dialogues with contemporary and

Bakhtiniana, São Paulo, 20 (3): e66043e, July/Sept. 2025

post-structuralist philosophies. After this work with the writing, the final approval of the version to be published was made and we were informed of the need to do the translation into English. Both authors worked together to create a translation that was faithful to the text. We also declare that we are responsible for all aspects of the text, as it is an original, unprecedented perspective that makes a strong contribution to literary criticism, especially in contemporary Brazilian literature (taking into account that the author in question is still little explored and studied in Brazil). We can count on the accuracy and integrity of all aspects of the work and, finally, we recognize our authority, since the subject in question is part of a long career of studies, scientific seriousness and a great love for research. Furthermore, we thank you once again for the opportunity and we are at your disposal for any clarifications.

Research Data and Other Materials Availability

The contents underlying the research text are included in the manuscript.

Reviews

Due to the commitment assumed by *Bakhtiniana*. Revista de Estudos do Discurso [*Bakhtiniana*. Journal of Discourse Studies] to Open Science, this journal only publishes reviews that have been authorized by all involved.

Review I

The article presents a very current and urgent discussion: studies of a Brazilian epistemology based on Brazilian philosophy. In this sense, the choice of studies by the professor, poet and critic Edmilson de Almeida Pereira is correct and contemporary, especially when listing concepts such as *Orfe(x)u* and *Exunouveau*, based on his analysis of an Afrodiasporic-based aesthetic in Brazilian literature. The category as space-time in the literary object from a perspective of the ancestry of Afrodiasporic culture represents an innovative and critically aspect in the article, namely, its non-Cartesian and, at the same time, non-dichotomous Western reading. But not only, the political force that such philosophy/literature occupies in the scenario of a reception of literary theory is presented in a scientific and academic way, deconstructing problems inherent to the very knowledge about Brazilian Literature. APPROVED

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Reviewed on April 22, 2024.

Review II

The submitted article is appropriate to the theme proposed by the journal, more specifically considering the scope of the dossier to which it addresses. Therefore, the objective of the work is welcome in the dossier, but it should be better written in the title

Bakhtiniana, São Paulo, 20 (3): e66043e, July/Sept. 2025

and clarified in the initial pages of the text. In other words: the corpus is not explained in the title. Furthermore, the theory used to reflect on the creation process of Edmilson de Almeida Pereira focuses on poetry, while the text submitted for evaluation concentrates efforts on understanding prose (*O ausente*) and essays (*Orfe(x)u* and *Exunouveau*). Theory and object, therefore, are not properly connected, strictly speaking. Even though, at various times, there is a call for an adequate secondary theoretical reference, discussions about poetic creation can be noted which, strictly speaking, would need to be expanded for the desirable dialogue with the novel and essay writing. It would be welcome to know, in the summary and introduction, which authors will be discussed, that is, theorists who will help to elaborate the arguments of the text. It would be feasible to insert at least one review of the critical essays. On the other hand, it is necessary to recognize the solid and updated knowledge of the critical bibliography discussed.

Therefore, the high point of the article is to bring black voices that built the thought at a crossroads, to make allusion to the text. It is also necessary to underline the originality of the reflection proposed in the article, if we consider the excerpts and approximations established by the author's analytical movements. It is worth changing some generalizing statements without adequate contextualization, as can be seen in markings in the text sent for evaluation. Once the adjustments are made, the contribution of the article to the field of knowledge to which it is linked will be notorious. The text, finally, presents clarity, but lacks in elementary aspects of editorial correction and formatting. These are aspects that can be corrected, of course, and that, once contemplated, immensely increase the communicative capacity of the article. In this regard, I have also left markings in the text so that they can be reviewed. MANDATORY CORRECTIONS [Revised]

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Reviewed on May 07, 2024.

Review III

I maintain my favorable opinion. APPROVED

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Review IV

The submitted article is appropriate to the theme proposed by the journal, more specifically considering the scope of the dossier to which it addresses. Therefore, the objective of the work is welcome to the dossier. The objectives, corpus and theoretical framework were clarified in the initial pages of the text. The corpus and theoretical framework were already explained in the title. In addition, the theory used to reflect on

Bakhtiniana, São Paulo, 20 (3): e66043e, July/Sept. 2025

the creative process of Edimilson de Almeida Pereira was revised and adapted to the reading of the author's production studied. Theory and object, this time, are properly connected. Generalizing statements without contextualization were remade. Considering the retextualizations promoted by the author of the study, the contribution of the article to the field of knowledge to which it is linked is notorious. APPROVED

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