



MEDEA: EXPERIENCE IN VIDEO PERFORMANCE

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DOSSIER WORLDS IN PERFORMANCE: 20 YEARS
NAPEDRA

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The creation of the video-performance MEDEA arose from the desire to record a theatrical scene in an audiovisual format, as a possible artistic experience, during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021 in São Paulo (Motim mito rito cartografias feministas nas artes, 2022). Beyond the impulse of a poetic (re)existence in difficult times, MEDEA inaugurates my partnership as actress-researcher with the director Ana Cecília Costa, underlining my investigations as professor at the UERJ¹, leader of the group MOTIM², and researcher of the group NAPEDRA³ in feminist agendas in articulation with myths/rites in the field of performance.

1. I joined the State University of Rio de Janeiro in 2015 and I work in the Department of Art Teaching and Popular Culture (DEACP) as an associate professor. I also currently coordinate the Postgraduate Programme in Arts (PPGArtes) where I am a permanent professor in the Art, Thought, and Performativity areas. <https://www.ppgartes.uerj.br/>

2. *MOTIM – Mito, Rito e Cartografias Feministas nas Artes / MOTIM – Myth, Rite, and Feminist Cartographies in the Arts* is a research group certified by CNPq since 2015 and founded at the State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ). It also has affiliations with the State University of Santa Catarina (Udesc) and the Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte (UFRN). <https://amotinadas.wixsite.com/motim>

3. The nucleus of Anthropology, Performance, and Drama (Napedra) emerged in 2001, within the PPGAS of the University of São Paulo, from the initiative of students and professors interested in exploring interfaces of anthropology with theatre and other performing arts. In 2005, the nucleus gained impulse with the entry of researchers from the Institute of Arts at Unicamp. Napedra was born from the encounter of performing arts researchers interested in anthropology and anthropologists in search of knowledge associated with the performing arts.

I should point out that my theatrical MEDEA was born well before, in 2014, when I was called for the first dramatic reading of *Um Berço de Pedra* (A Cradle of Stone), text by Newton Moreno, in the project *Leituras Em Cena* (Readings on Stage), at the MASP, in São Paulo. In 2015, this reading was performed again at the NET São Paulo theatre, precisely when it won the staging award from the Cultural Action Programme of the São Paulo State Culture Secretariat (ProAC/SP).

In late August 2016, the process of theatrical creation began and, on the journey, many references of my researches were restudied, from *Joan of Arc*⁴, passing through the *Ladies of the Engenho*⁵, to the *Warriors of Tejucupapo-PE*⁶, as well as my memories of migration, of my Northeastern origin, and of motherhood were taken up again. Other cinematographic references about Medea, such as the homonymous films by Lars Von Tries and Pier Paolo Pasolini, were also accessed. In short, a field of creative impulses that ended up fomenting a track for the elaboration of my MEDEA was presented, then with a grandiloquent and inevitably tragic performance.

The play *Um Berço de Pedra*, directed by William Pereira, had a season at the Centro Cultural São Paulo (São Paulo Cultural Center), at the Theatre of the University of São Paulo, and, finally, at the SESC Ginástico Theatre, in Rio de Janeiro. After the end of this libel about motherhood—that is Moreno's text—warped in fragments about the mother, MEDEA, which erupts from a short story created by the dramatist and published in book⁷, was presented by me as a highlighted scene in feminist events promoted by UFSC, Udesc, and USP, from 2017 to 2018.


The online version of MEDEA, directed by Ana Cecília in 2021, highlights Newton's text by placing the scene in a scenographic cell and investing in an intimate performance, without giving up the tragic nature. Such production could be achieved by featuring expressionist contours and

4. Between 2003 and 2005, I developed my master's thesis in Scenic Arts at Unicamp. The research is about the articulations between tradition and contemporaneity, between Cavalo-Marinho (Bumba-meu-boi from Pernambuco) and Performance Art, having as a motto the scenic experience with the myth of Joan of Arc, French saint of medieval times.

5. Between 2007 and 2010, I undertook a research about the matriarchs of my family, formed between Pernambuco and Paraíba, instigated by the project of staging the play *Memória da cana*, directed by Newton Moreno, from the cross between the play *Álbum de família*, by Nelson Rodrigues and *Casa grande senzala*, by Gilberto Freyre. Staged by Cia. Os Fofos Encenam, the play has been shown for several seasons and in numerous theatre festivals throughout Brazil.

6. Between 2007 and 2011, I developed my doctoral dissertation in Scenic Art at the Unicamp. The research gives continuity to the studies about the warrior woman, at this moment braiding an art-ethnographic journey in the community of Tejucupapo, in the *Zona da Mata Norte* (North Grass Zone) of Pernambuco, historically marked by the fight of women against Dutch soldiers in 1646. This research, besides yielding the thesis, unfolded into dramaturgy and staging of the play *Guerreiras* (2009), also the subject of my post-doctoral research in Anthropology at the USP and research clippings as part of NAPEDRA's investigations.

7. The short story MEDEA, by Newton Moreno, was published in 2016 by the publisher Cubzak-SP, in the book *Opera and other short stories (Ópera e outros contos)*.



colors, sipped from German and Brazilian xylography; not to mention the beautiful composition by musician Erika Nande, who, in an epic melody, fills the scaffold of the northeastern foreigner in southeastern lands, condemned and imprisoned for the infamous infanticide, motivated by disloyalty committed by her traitor consort.

To wit, Medea is, etymologically, “she who knows” or “she of good advice.” Medea, the poisoner, the witch, with the magic kettle, who induced Pelias’ daughters to quarter and cook their father; Medea, the infanticide, is the predecessor of these victims of a collective paranoia, which was fueled by men’s fear of the obscure power of women.

To approach this myth is to reach that obscure power, which I believe I have as a woman. Like Medea, I am a migrant, I come from the Northeast, like the mythical figure taken by Moreno. Like Medea, the act of migrating has also meant for me a sacrifice of my personal life; it makes me resume the reflection on motherhood. I have tried, like Medea, to live in the plot with the image of the woman who acts, mobilizes times and spaces, and is able to provoke changes from her own strength.

In my perspective, Medea’s “voice” is loud in contrast to the terrifying image that individualizes her, determining a “standpoint” of women from the rupture with the domestic space of confinement of the one who, historically, is subjected to the male speeches and penalties that conduct the public, political, and also the narrative space. Medea, by Newton Moreno, which I bring to life on stage, spotlights a mother who is a child murderer and her refusal to conform to patriarchally determined modes of behavior.

I understand that the scene has represented Medea and her act of infanticide repeatedly, but the central point of our videoperformatic endeavor is to liberate a densely wronged woman’s voice that is highly critical of male behavior and the institutionalization of their power. Anyway, I do not know if we can trace back to a contemporary “matriarchy” but perhaps to a matrilineal throughline, which this myth helps us visualize through effective interpretive designs for feminisms that incorporate myth in their political affirmation and the critique of *phallogentric* behavior.

To present and discuss the online version of my MEDEA, in the NAPEDRA 20 years event, is to retrace eighteen years of research on myth, rite, and the feminist cartographies in the field of arts, which NAPEDRA group has become an important driving force, especially by placing me in front of performance studies, anthropology, and its irreversible crossings and wefts.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

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ABSTRACT

Written in first person, this text aims to present the video performance MEDEA, performed by Luciana Lyra, directed by Ana Cecília Costa for the text by Newton Moreno. Created in 2021, the videographic action, with duration of 18 minutes, seeks inspiration in images from German and Brazilian woodcuts, with expressionist tones, to account for the dense narrative that unfolds about this iconic character of Greek tragedy, revisited here in a Brazilian context. Since MEDEA, in this video-performed narrative, is a northeastern woman in the diaspora to the Brazilian Southeast, the work ends up denouncing the state of oppression suffered by migrant women, giving feminist contours to the artistic action, a sign of the performances and staging championed by Lyra, a member of Napedra (Nucleus of Anthropology, Performance and Drama – Universidade de São Paulo), since 2004, and founder of the research group Motim – Mito, Rito e Cartografias Feministas nas Artes (Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico, CNPq – Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, UERJ), in 2015.

KEYWORDS

Medea; Video performance; Feminisms; Napedra; Motim.

Luciana Lyra is an actress, director, playwright, and writer. She is a coordinator and permanent faculty member of the Postgraduate Program in Arts at the State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ), associate professor of the Department of Art Teaching and Popular Culture, at the Institute of Arts of the same university. Collaborating Professor in the Post-Graduation Programs in Scenic Arts at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte (UFRN) and the State University of Santa Catarina (UDESC). PhD in Anthropology (FFLCH/USP) and PhD in Performing Arts (UFRN). Master and PhD in Scenic Arts (IA/UNICAMP). Researcher leader of the MOTIM – Myth, rite and feminist cartographies in the Arts (UERJ/CNPq), research Group. Founding artist of the studio Unaluna – Research and Creation in Art – SP. Websites: <https://amotinadas.wixsite.com/motim> <http://www.unaluna.art.br>/<http://www.lucianalyra.com.br/>. Email: lucianalyra@gmail.com

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