

RESISTANCE AND BLACK POETRY: A READING OF "POEMS OF MEMORY AND OTHER MOVEMENTS", BY CONCEIÇÃO EVARISTO

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SUMMARY

This article aims to analyze Conceição Evaristo's contribution to Afro-Brazilian literature, highlighting her representation of Afro-Brazilian identity and the social, racial and gender issues present in her works. The research was conducted through a bibliographic review, which included books, academic articles and interviews with the author. The analyses focused on the work *Poems of remembrance and other movements* (2017) by Conceição Evaristo, focusing on how her texts, especially her poems, address the experience of black women in contemporary Brazil. The aim is to highlight how the author uses literature as a tool of resistance and empowerment, promoting a critical reflection on racial and social inequalities. The study aims to contribute to the appreciation of black-Brazilian literature and to increase the visibility of Afro-descendant voices in literary production. Conceição Evaristo is a central figure in contemporary literature, whose works challenge stereotypes and promote cultural diversity. Her writing not only enriches Brazilian literature, but also constitutes a powerful means of fighting for and affirming black identity, offering new perspectives on the social reality of Brazil. This research is based on possible readings, interpretations from a point of view in which racial prejudice and the injustices suffered by black female bodies will be the basis of discussion, in line with Conceição Evaristo's poetic construction. An attempt was made, albeit minimally, to provide a sensitive reading that is not exhaustive, on the contrary, it prompts new analyses.

Keywords: Afro-Brazilian literature, Conceição Evaristo, Afro-Brazilian identity, social issues.

ABSTRACT

This article aims to analyze Conceição Evaristo's contribution to Afro-Brazilian literature, highlighting her representation of Afro-Brazilian identity and the social, racial, and gender issues present in her works. The research was conducted through a bibliographic review, which included books, academic articles, and interviews with the author. The analyzes focused on Conceição Evaristo's work *Poemas da lembrança e Outubros Movimentos* (2017), focusing on the way in which her texts, especially her poems, address the experience of black women in contemporary Brazil. The aim is to highlight how the author uses literature as a tool of resistance and empowerment, promoting a critical reflection on racial and social inequalities. The study aims to contribute to the appreciation of Afro-Brazilian literature and to increase the visibility of Afro-descendant voices in literary production. Conceição Evaristo is a central figure in contemporary literature, whose works challenge stereotypes and promote cultural diversity. Her writing not only enriches Brazilian literature, but also represents a powerful means of fighting for and affirming black identity, offering new perspectives on the social reality of Brazil. This research is based on possible readings, interpretations from a point of view in which racial prejudice and the injustices suffered by black female bodies will be the basis of discussion, in line with Conceição Evaristo's poetic construction. The aim was, albeit minimally, to provide a sensitive reading that is not exhaustive, but rather prompts new analyses.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Afro-Brazilian literature is a rich and diverse field, reflecting the experiences, struggles and voices of a population that has historically been marginalized. In this context, the choice to analyze the work of

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Conceição Evaristo is justified not only by the relevance of her writing, but also by the importance of her approaches to identity, race and gender. Evaristo stands out as an author who illuminates the experiences of black women in contemporary Brazil, bringing to light issues that require critical reflection on social inequalities.

The central focus of this work is to understand how Conceição Evaristo's work represents Afro-Brazilian identity and addresses themes such as resistance and empowerment, especially with regard to the female experience. The question we seek to answer is: in what way does Evaristo's literature serve as an instrument of struggle and affirmation of black identity?

The intended objectives include the analysis of some poems in the work *Poems of remembrance and other movements*, published in 2017, by Conceição Evaristo, for Afro-Brazilian literature and the identification of its contributions to literature and society, aiming to highlight the transformative role of literature in promoting the visibility and recognition of Afro-descendant voices. To this end, we used a bibliographic review, which includes books, academic articles and interviews, allowing an in-depth and contextualized analysis of Evaristo's narratives.

The relevance of this work extends beyond the academic field, impacting social and cultural aspects. By highlighting Afro-Brazilian literature, we contribute to the appreciation of a diversity that enriches the literary and social panorama of Brazil. Furthermore, this analysis can serve as support for public policies that promote inclusion and equity, encouraging greater recognition of Afro-Brazilian culture in various spheres, including the government and the private sector. Thus, the study of Conceição Evaristo's work not only enriches literature, but also becomes a vital tool in the fight for social justice and equality.

2. THEORETICAL BASIS

2.1 About Conceição Evaristo

Maria da Conceição Evaristo de Brito is a prominent feminist activist and linguist, recognized as one of the most influential writers of the postmodernist movement in Brazil. Born in Belo Horizonte in 1946, Conceição came from humble origins and, in the 1970s, moved to Rio de Janeiro in search of better opportunities. Her career is marked by overcoming obstacles and the struggle for recognition, having graduated in Literature from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ). During her youth, she faced the difficulties of working as a domestic servant, but her determination led her to become a teacher, completing her higher education and advancing in her academic education (Evaristo, 2011).

Conceição Evaristo has an admirable academic career, having obtained her master's degree in Brazilian Literature from the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro (PUC-Rio), whose dissertation addressed the theme "Black Literature: a poetics of our Afro-Brazilianness" (1996). She later completed her doctorate in Comparative Literature at the Fluminense Federal University (UFF), defending the thesis "Poemas malungos, cânticos irmãos" (2011), in which she analyzes the poetic works of Afro-Brazilian authors, such as Nei Lopes and Edimilson de Almeida Pereira, in dialogue with the Angolan Agostinho Neto. This research demonstrates her commitment to the valorization of Afro-Brazilian culture and the interconnection between different literary contexts (Evaristo, 2011).

Evaristo's work spans a variety of genres, including poetry, novels, short stories, and essays, reflecting her versatility and literary depth. Her writing is marked by a strong female voice and the exploration of the experiences of black women, bringing to light social, racial, and gender issues. The author not only enriches Brazilian literature, but also uses her voice as a means of resistance and empowerment, influencing new generations of writers and readers (Evaristo, 2011).

2.2 Writings

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The term "Escrivência" was created in 1994 by Conceição Evaristo, from a play on words that combines "escrever", "viver" and "se ver". In 2020, Evaristo stated that "Escrivência" is a process that reflects the experience of Afro-Brazilian experiences, highlighting the importance of subjectivity and memory in the construction of literature. This statement can be found in interviews and essays by the author, where she explores how her writing is deeply linked to her identity and the social reality of her community. This perspective is fundamental to understanding how literature can be a means of resistance and affirmation of black identity (Evaristo, 2020). Morphologically, it derives from the association between "escrever" and "viver" and from the meanings allowed by the expression "escrever vivências" or even "escritor"

“Escrivivência” describes a diasporic and universal phenomenon, arising from the image of the black mother, that is, from the figure of the enslaved woman inside the big house, forced to care for the colonizers’ children (Hermínio, 2020, p. 22).

Conceição Evaristo highlights the importance of listening and sharing stories in her creative process. She states: “I like to listen, but I don’t know if I’m a skilled counselor. I listen a lot. From someone else’s voice I make my own, and the stories too” (Evaristo, 2016, p. 7). This quote illustrates how “escrevivência” is based on lived experience, where personal and collective narratives intertwine. For the author, *escrevivência* is not limited to an objective representation of facts; on the contrary, it values subjectivity and the recreation of events. This allows writing to be a space for creative expression, where experiences are transformed into art, expressing both the author’s internal reality and the experiences of his/her community.

This concept highlights how the stories we tell and write are not mere records of events, but rather constructions that feed on our perception, memory and imagination. Writing, therefore, can be a way of exploring and expressing the complexity of experiences, without being limited to the fidelity of real events. In other words, this process values personal and collective interpretation, allowing for a freer and more innovative approach to literary creation. In this sense:

Do I invent? Yes, I do. Without the slightest shame. So stories are not invented? Even real ones, when they are told. I challenge anyone to faithfully report something that happened. Between the event and the narration of the fact, something is lost and therefore added. The real experience is compromised. And when one writes, the compromise (or lack of compromise) between what was experienced and what was written deepens the gap even more. However, I affirm that by recording these stories, I continue in the premeditated act of tracing a writing experience (Evaristo, 2016, p. 7).

Writing is a form of literary and cultural expression that emerges from the historical and everyday experiences of women in Brazil (but not only), especially black women. This approach seeks to highlight and value narratives that reflect the experiences of these women, often intertwined with their life trajectories and the historical legacy left by enslaved women and their descendants. Making writing a space of resistance and resignification, where experiences of pain, struggle and overcoming are transformed into art. This concept not only recognizes the importance of female voices in literature, but also illuminates the social, cultural and emotional realities that shape the lives of these women. By emphasizing subjectivity and lived experience, it proposes a narrative that challenges stereotypes and promotes the appreciation of black identity, creating a legacy of empowerment and self-affirmation.

The figure of the black mother and the role of enslaved women in the mansions are central aspects in the reflection on writing, as they represent the reality experienced by black women who, despite their subordinate and exploited position, played fundamental roles in the formation of Brazilian society and culture. These women, often invisible, were responsible for transmitting knowledge, traditions and care, shaping the country’s daily life and cultural heritage. This form of storytelling carries with it a powerful representation and a critical denunciation, using poetry and narrative to describe often painful realities. Through their words, Conceição Evaristo and other authors of the movement seek not only to tell stories, but to transform these narratives into instruments of female empowerment and political struggle, with a sensitivity that dialogues with the realism of everyday experience.

Despite taking sides with personal experiences, Conceição Evaristo’s writings are not restricted to herself, because “it is not the writing of oneself, because this is exhausted in the subject itself. It carries the experience of the collective and not a spectacularization of life and our pain.”³.

Based on this premise, it is possible to think of the word and writing as a method of acceptance, dialogue and awareness. Soares and Machado (2017), for example, discuss the possibility of writing as an investigation in which the life narrative presents itself as a self-forming dimension. The authors state that:

The subject is capable of forming himself from the appropriation of his path, that is, of his life story, since what was lived, when narrated, becomes an experience that will help us to know how to do, to become” (Soares, Machado, 2017, p. 207).

In other words, for the authors, this process of “self” (self-knowledge, self-formation, etc.) is subscribed to later take on a universal dimension, in which the other subjects are affected and crossed; the writings reach experiences. This exchange generates new reflections and political and social discourses, without emptying the words, which now become powerful and expressive.

Studies on works written by women alter our perceptions of the past and destabilize the configuration of this identity, integrating themselves into a movement that Hugo Achugar characterizes as “foundational” in the sense that, through research, the past is reconstructed post-facto by generations of the present through the location in the past of the “moment that perhaps did not have the meaning that the present attributes to it, thus inventing the beginning of memory”. This movement, which has nothing to do with the resumption of historicist reason in the sense of establishing a narrative of origins and purpose, drives reflections on the processes of constitution of national canons as authorized and privileged places of imaginary projections of identity that sustain the symbolic representations of nationality, reflections that inevitably lead to considering literary history as one of the reference points of national memory since it constitutes a narrative that aims to describe the literary past (Schmidt, 2010, p. 132).

The figure of the black mother and the role of enslaved women in the manor houses are often reduced to telling stories to entertain the colonizers. In this context, the question arises: How can one of the pillars of the creative process of black people be associated with such a violent image? Conceição Evaristo proposes a return to the figure of the black mother, not only as a symbol of enslavement, but as the cornerstone of families and the bearer of stories. In this sense, writing offers a path inverse to the narratives that, historically, were told for the mere entertainment of the masters and ladies of the manor house. It represents a process of appropriation of writing and insubordination to the colonizer, privileging the point of view of the black woman and addressing the specificity of the intersectional experience between race and gender.

When we focus on this type of writing, we broaden the scope of discussions. Although themes such as racism, marginalization, and slavery are fundamental, writing also serves as a space for affirmation and self-affirmation. This concept, promoted by Conceição Evaristo and other contemporary writers, proposes a new perspective on colonialist, slavery, gender, and race issues, enriching academic debate.

Conceição Evaristo intensely explores the experiences of black women, using poetry to address the experiences of oppressed women. Her works transform these experiences into powerful tools of self-care and resistance, denouncing the psychological violence of everyday racism and showing how the poetic space can become a form of empowerment and healing. By supporting anti-asylum and anti-racist feminism, Evaristo recognizes aesthetic practices as essential rights.

Thus, writing is revealed as a form of writing that is at the same time a body, a condition and an experience. In her fictional works, Evaristo portrays characters who are mostly women who face the world from their social conditions, often marginalized. The narratives, based on everyday life, demonstrate the strength of black women's writing through a subjective, literary and poetic instrument, connecting experiences, pains, joys and the strength of many women.

2.3 Characteristics of Conceição Evaristo's work

Conceição Evaristo's works are marked by female protagonism and incisive denunciation of racial discrimination, positioning themselves as important contributions to contemporary Brazilian literature. The author addresses issues of gender and ethnicity in a realistic manner, reflecting on the complex web of oppression faced by black women.

Evaristo values Afro-Brazilian culture, bringing to light the richness and diversity of traditions and stories that have often been silenced. His texts are permeated by socio-historical criticism that contextualizes Brazilian reality, revealing the power structures that perpetuate inequalities. The author's lyrical prose, at once sensitive and forceful, provides the reader with an immersion into the experiences of her characters.

Another essential aspect is the presence of socially marginalized characters, who live in vulnerable situations and face social injustice. Evaristo uses everyday elements to illustrate the struggle of these women, highlighting their experiences of oppression and resistance. The theme of social injustice is often intertwined with issues of gender and ethnicity, allowing the lyrical self to explore how these intersections affect the lives of its protagonists.

Furthermore, his texts strongly value ancestral memory, highlighting the importance of the past in the formation of contemporary black identity. Evaristo denounces the historical exclusion that the black population has faced since the colonial period, revealing how this marginalization persists today. By addressing the urban violence that affects the black community, she takes a critical look at realities that are often made invisible.

In this way, Conceição Evaristo's work not only tells stories of pain and struggle, but also serves as a powerful vehicle for resistance and affirmation of black identity, providing a profound reflection on Brazilian society and its complexities.

Analysis of poems.

Death certificate.

Death certificate

The bones of our ancestors
collect our perennial tears
for the dead of today.

The eyes of our ancestors,
black stars stained with blood, rise
from the depths of time, watching
over our painful memory.

The land is covered in ditches
and at any carelessness in life
death is certain.

The bullet doesn't miss its target, in the
dark a black body sways and dances. The
death certificate, the old ones know,

It was carved out by the slave traders.

Our current reading of the poem "Certidão de morte" by Conceição Evaristo reveals the depth and richness of poetic language, which is intertwined with social criticism and historical memory. Maia (2007, p. 44) highlights that "language is a symbolic asset, the possession and domination of which create relations of linguistic power, in which some have the right to a voice and others have the right to silence". This statement is central to understanding how Evaristo uses language to rescue and reclaim voices that have historically been silenced, especially those of black men and women.

In the poem, language is used in an evocative and symbolic way, creating an atmosphere that mixes pain and resistance. The first lines, which mention "the bones of our ancestors" and "our perennial tears", establish a deep connection with ancestry, highlighting how the collective memory of those who suffered is essential in the construction of identity. This memory, although painful, also carries the strength of resistance of those who came before. The image of the "black stars stained with blood" is striking, as it not only refers to the beauty and grandeur of black ancestry, but also exposes the historical violence experienced by these people. This duality between light and suffering is a striking characteristic of Evaristo's poetry, which, when addressing themes of oppression, also highlights struggle and hope.

The reference to "land covered in ditches" and the certainty of death suggest a scenario of systemic violence, where the black body is vulnerable and constantly threatened. The expression "the bullet doesn't miss its target" illustrates the brutality of contemporary reality, which aligns with the history of oppression and exclusion. The verse that says that "a black body sways and dances" evokes the fragility and, at the same time, the resilience of the black body, that even in its vulnerability, maintains a connection with life and culture.

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The poem's final sentence mentions that "the death certificate, as the ancients know, was drawn up by the slave traders," and is a statement about the legacy of slavery. Here, the lyrical self points to the continuity of suffering and marginalization, suggesting that death and oppression are not mere circumstances, but rather the results of a system that has been established and perpetuated throughout history.

In terms of genre, poetry is a form of expression that allows the author to explore subjectivity and emotions in an intense way. The characteristics of poetry, such as musicality, economy of words and the use of visual and sensory images, allow it to create a strong emotional impact. The use of metaphors

ras and the construction of evocative images are elements that enrich the text, providing the reader with an aesthetic experience that goes beyond simple reading, leading to critical reflection on social reality.

Thus, "Death Certificate" is not limited to being a record of pain; it is also an affirmation of resistance and a call to action. Through his poetry, Evaristo reclaims the voice of the silenced and challenges the reader to confront the injustices that still persist. The work bears witness to the power of poetic language as a tool for rescue, valorization and social transformation.

The poem *Certidão de Óbito* can be analyzed as a reading of ancestors and a reflection on structural racism and the marks of slavery in society with a language full of realism, with the delicacy in the selection of words and expressions from everyday life. In a memorialistic tone, the lyrical voice deals with the violence suffered by the enslaved black body, a legacy of the colonial period.

For Machado (2014), the poem exposes a strong memory of ancestors, alluding to the suffering, violence and inequality of the present, emphasizing the erasure of people marked by the color of their skin. Such notes can also be seen as a protest and denunciation of racism.

This poem serves as an example of the manifestation of Afro-Brazilian literature, which, understood as a voice of resistance, grants those who have been silenced the right to a discourse that was, and still is, denied to them. Therefore, it is an instrument of manifestation of an identity that was made invisible throughout a vast process of enslavement, leaving marks that are still alive in contemporary times.

The following verses, "The bones of our ancestors / collect our eternal tears / for the dead of today", suggest a continuity between past generations and the present. The "bones" of the ancestors symbolize the heritage and the marks left by them, which now "collect" the tears of the living. It indicates that the pain and mourning for the dead are constant and never-ending. The act of "collecting" tears can be seen as a recognition or a lament that unites past and present.

In the verse where the eyes of the ancestors are described as "black stars stained with blood," the "black stars" symbolize suffering that, even in the midst of the darkness of time, maintains a strong presence. The idea that these eyes "rise from the depths of time" suggests that the past is not only over, but remains active and influential, observing the present.

The expression "caring for our painful memory" indicates a vigilance over the way we confront historical injustices and pain. This vigilance is a reminder of the responsibility we have to recognize and confront the legacy of oppression that still impacts the lives of individuals and communities. Thus, the image transcends mere representation, becoming an invitation to reflect on the continuity of memory and its role in the formation of identity and the struggle for social justice.

The verses "The land is covered in ditches / and with any carelessness in life / death is certain" convey a morbid image of pain and a reflection on the fragility of life and the inevitability of death, especially when it comes to black bodies. A scene of desolation, solitude and death. The "ditches" can symbolize graves or pits that are scattered across the ground, indicating a landscape marked by loss and death. The image of a land "covered in ditches" creates a sense of sadness and the ubiquity of death.

Together, these lines portray a pessimistic and realistic view of the human condition, highlighting the prevalence of death and the continued vulnerability of living beings. It conveys that this is how most black people feel, for example, when leaving their homes every morning, because as the verse "The bullet does not miss the target, in the dark", denouncing that most black bodies represent 75% of those killed by the police in Brazil, according to data presented in the report *Racism, the engine of violence* (2020).

"The bullet does not miss its target" suggests the precision and certainty with which racial violence hits its targets. The "dark" may represent the invisibility or marginalization of black people in society, while the "black body sways and dances" implies physical violence that transforms the black body into a target of brutality. The idea of swaying and dancing can be interpreted as a cruel irony, in which suffering and violence are treated as something inevitable and almost theatrical.

6 The verse "The death certificate, as the ancients know, / was drawn up since the slave traders" points to the historical origins of racism and systematic violence against the black population. The "death certificate" symbolizes not only physical death, but also the prolonged suffering and dehumanization that have marked the trajectory of black people throughout history.

By stating that this certificate "came from the slave traders", it refers to the era of slavery, specifically the terrible slave ships that transported enslaved people. At that time, black people were treated as commodities, stripped of their identity and dignity. They were seen as worthless objects, whose lives could be taken without remorse, reflecting a worldview that disregarded the intrinsic humanity of these individuals.

This verse suggests that the violence and oppression faced by the black population today are not isolated phenomena, but have deep roots in the practices of enslavement and systematic dehumanization that have been established for centuries. The continued suffering and social exclusion that black people face is an echo of this past, where the brutality of slavery is transformed into a story not only of pain, but also of struggle and resistance. Thus, Evaristo calls on the reader to recognize this historical connection, underlining the urgency of confronting and dismantling the structures of oppression that persist to this day.

The poem, in general, offers a strong critique of the continuity of racism and violence against black people, from the times of slavery to the present day. They reveal how racial oppression is not only a present problem, but a historical legacy that persists and manifests itself in brutal and dehumanizing ways.

The dreams

The dreams

Dreams were bathed
in the waters of misery
and they all melted.

Dreams were shaped
with iron and fire and
took the form of nothing.

The dreams came and went. But
children with hungry mouths,
eager, they resurrected life by
playing hooks in the currents
deep.

And the dreams, submerged
and misshapen

grew larger,
ringing each other
pulsed like root-blood
in the dried veins
of a new world.

The poem "Os Sonhos" is a reflection on the reality faced by black people in Brazil, addressing issues of racism and social inequality. The verses of the poem reveal the frustration and despair that many face. The work is an invitation to raise awareness about the structural conditions that perpetuate racism and poverty, and about the need for social transformation so that these dreams can have a chance to come true.

The poem addresses the transience and frustrations associated with the dreams and aspirations of black people in a society marked by racism. It highlights the ability of children (and, by extension, marginalized people) to find and create moments of life and hope, even when facing harsh and challenging conditions. The metaphor underscores both struggle and inventiveness in a context of hardship.

"Dreams were bathed" suggests that people's dreams, or aspirations and hopes, were deeply affected. The use of the word "bathed" indicates an immersion or contamination, signaling that these dreams were negatively influenced.

The "waters of misery" symbolize the conditions of extreme poverty and oppression that impact the lives of individuals. The metaphor of melting can be understood as, in the face of adverse conditions, dreams fade away or fall apart. Iron and fire is a reference to the way cattle and people considered inferior are marked. Indelible marks that go beyond the flesh and reach the soul. Thus, just as animals are marked to identify their owners, black men and women are also the property of white masters. As in the song by Seu Jorge, Marcelo Yuka and Ulisses Cappelette, "The cheapest meat on the market is black meat."⁴

This passage also indicates an arduous and painful process of formation, intense and destructive, that dreams go through. The use of "iron and fire" is a metaphor that evokes an image of forced and rigorous transformation, similar to the forging of metal, indicating that dreams have been subjected to a severe process, that these dreams have undergone a rigorous test every day, implying struggle and suffering. In the context of racism,

4 Music to the flesh, performed and recorded by Elza Soares in 2002, in the song "From the coccyx to the neck".

This may reflect how the hopes and dreams of black people are constantly tested and shaped by adversity and injustice.

"And they took the form of nothing." This part of the verse indicates a deep disillusionment. Despite strength and resilience, dreams ended in vain, disintegrating into "nothing." This can symbolize frustration and a feeling of helplessness in the face of a system that does not offer real and equitable opportunities, resulting in a void for those who fought to realize their dreams.

In the end, these dreams "took the form of nothingness," which, despite all the effort and suffering, resulted in a lack of meaning or fulfillment. In short, the text may reflect the idea that efforts and sacrifices in the pursuit of dreams or ideals can often result in frustration or emptiness.

The expression can also reflect the persistence of dreams, even in the face of adverse reality, but, at the same time, the difficulty in transforming them into something concrete. The "they were and they were", the continuity of the struggle and hope, as well as the frustration due to the lack of progress or success; reinforcing the idea that, despite dreams, they often do not come true, highlighting the ongoing struggle against the barriers imposed by racism and inequality.

The passage "But children with hungry mouths, / eager, resurrected life / playing hooks in the currents / deep" offers a vivid and complex image, loaded with social and emotional meaning. This beginning highlights the poverty and urgent need faced by many children, which symbolizes the inequality and deprivation that predominate in the lives of many black and marginalized people. Hunger here can be both literal and metaphorical, reflecting a deprivation of resources and opportunities.

The term "eager" conveys an intense desire and a search for something vital, not only for the body, but also for the soul. "Resurrecting life" implies that these children, despite adversity, manage to find a way to revitalize and give new meaning to their existence, demonstrating resilience and creativity, even under extremely difficult conditions.

"Playing with hooks in the deep currents." Playing with hooks in the deep currents is a bold and perhaps dangerous interaction with the forces that govern their lives. The "deep currents" can represent the hardships and oppressive structures of society. The action of playing with hooks can infer an attempt to capture or transform something in the midst of these adversities, or perhaps, to try to capture a lost childhood. The current alludes to the currents of life, the river of life. The shackles that bind and also enslave. Children try to fish for dreams, illusions while satisfying their hunger.

And dreams, submerged / and formless". Dreams are described as submerged and formless, indicating that they are hidden or repressed and have no defined form. This may express how people are often suppressed or distorted by adverse conditions and by oppression and marginalization, that they do not see themselves and are not seen as capable of dreaming.

Despite being submerged and shapeless, the dreams "swelled and grew," suggesting growth and intensification; and indicating that, despite the difficulties, these dreams continue to grow and strengthen, even if there is no hope.

The expression "Yearning for one another" is interpreted as a representation of the interconnection between collective dreams and aspirations, highlighting the solidarity that emerges in communities that fight for justice and equity. This union of desires is a mutual support, individuals intertwine in their hopes, reinforcing the idea that the fight for social transformation is a joint effort.

The metaphor of "pulsing like root blood / in the dried veins / of a new world" carries a connotation of vitality and renewal. The "root blood" symbolizes ancestry and the strength that is transmitted through generations. This vital energy runs through the "dried veins", which evoke a world worn out and exhausted by injustices. The "new world", in this context, represents the hope of transformation and social renewal, fueled by the persistence of collective dreams and hopes.

Although there is a movement toward a "new world," the mention of "root blood" emphasizes that issues of oppression and injustice have not disappeared. Even though the fight against slavery has taken on a
8 In new forms, such as structural racism, it persists in ways that may not be immediately visible but continue to affect individuals' lives. Thus, Evaristo reminds us that, although the struggle evolves, connection to ancestry and collective resistance remain central to the search for justice and dignity.

Even in the face of great adversity and oppression, dreams have the power to grow and strengthen, connecting with one another and pulsing with a renewing vitality. It is a celebration of resilience and the ability to create a new future from the hardships faced.

Slum
Slum
Shacks
mount sentry
at night.
Blood bullets
melt bodies
in the air.
Drunk Alleys
winding labyrinthine
watch over the scarce time
to live.

In “Favela” the image of “shacks” is used as a metaphor for the surveillance that plagues poor black lives; it explores the dignity and strength of people living in precarious situations. The surveillance mentioned can be seen as a sign that these communities are aware of their realities and continue to fight for their rights.

The phrase “Shacks stand sentinel at night” suggests that these precarious constructions, often associated with poverty and social exclusion, play an active and significant role. They are not limited to being mere shelters; they are configured as figures of resistance, observing and protecting their occupants in a context of vulnerability. The mention of “night” symbolizes moments of insecurity and adversity, in which the presence of shacks becomes even more crucial.

However, it is important to recognize that dangers do not wait for the darkness. In places like favelas, threats manifest themselves both during the day and at night, making the struggle for safety a constant in the lives of residents. Thus, the image of shacks standing guard reveals not only the need for protection, but also the resilience of communities that, even in adverse conditions, organize themselves to face daily challenges. This dynamic highlights the complexity of life in the favelas, where precariousness is accompanied by collective strength and the search for dignity in the midst of adversity. The lyrical self uses prosopopeia, or personification, to humanize the shacks, to demonstrate that there are vigilant lives there.

In the excerpt “Blood bullets melt bodies in the air,” the image of violence and brutality is intensified. The “blood bullets” evoke the idea of firearms that are not only causing injuries, but also transforming bodies into something even more desolate and disturbing. In poetry, they “melt bodies in the air” can be interpreted as a violence that is relentless and devastating, affecting people in an almost supernatural way that is often unseen. The word “air” shows that this is already part of their daily lives, becoming the “air.” These are stray bullets that are not so stray, considering that the lethality of the bullets hits black and poor bodies, and often innocent ones. They tear up the sky in the same proportion that they tear up flesh. I convey the devastating impact of violence, both physical and emotional, and how it disintegrates lives and communities. The combination “blood” and “melt” is a fusion of pain and destruction, reflecting the cruel reality that affects people in contexts of oppression and violence.

Bread
Under the tongue
The breadcrumb
plays with hunger

The poem “Bread” is a haiku⁵, and an example of how poetry can concisely and powerfully express aspects of the human experience. “breadcrumbs” are symbolic of food, but it also represents the scarcity and extreme poverty that thousands of families live in, about scarcity and unsatisfied desire, revealing a complex relationship between hunger and the crumbs that try, but fail, to satisfy it.

The poem is brief, with only three lines, which reinforces the idea that hunger is a fundamental and immediate issue. The simplicity of the structure also reflects the simplicity of the crumb, highlighting the contrast between the small amount of food and the great need for satiety, and symbolizing the size of the

⁵ Haikai is a poetic form, originating in Japan, which is characterized, roughly speaking, for conciseness and metric harmony.

text with the amount of crumbs.

The verb “brinca” portrays an ambiguous relationship between the crumb and hunger. The crumb, because it is small and insufficient, seems to have an almost playful or provocative relationship with hunger, a more “serious” and distressing element.

The poem can be read as a reflection on insufficiency and the complex relationship between desire and reality. The breadcrumb symbolizes an inadequate attempt to satisfy hunger, suggesting a contrast between the desire for fullness and the reality of deprivation. Furthermore, the image of having the crumb “under the tongue” conveys a constant desire, a frustrated expectation or the feeling that even the little one has is unsatisfactory, as if it were necessary to hide the hunger experienced.

In poems such as “Bread,” she reveals the complexity of the human experience, where elements such as the crumb not only represent material scarcity, but also deprivation and the struggle for dignity. The ambiguous relationship between the crumb and hunger illustrates the tension between desire and reality, highlighting how small things become significant in a context of great inequality.

This ability to transform everyday experiences into powerful metaphors makes Evaristo’s work resonate with those living on the margins of society, offering a voice for their anguish and hopes. Through concise language, she not only denounces social injustices, but celebrates the strength and resilience of marginalized communities. In this way, Evaristo’s poetry becomes a means of resistance and affirmation, capturing the essence of the struggle for recognition and change in a world that often silences these voices.

3. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The final considerations of this article highlight the importance of Conceição Evaristo's work for Afro-Brazilian literature and for reflection on social, racial and gender issues. The research showed that Evaristo's writing is not only an artistic expression, but a powerful tool of resistance and empowerment, which challenges stereotypes and promotes the visibility of Afro-Brazilian experiences.

When analyzing her poems, it became clear that the author uses realistic features to create a space for dialogue about the historical and contemporary inequalities that affect the black population in Brazil. The methodological approach, centered on the bibliographic review, allowed us to understand the depth of the themes addressed, revealing how the experience of black women is portrayed with sensitivity and complexity.

The academic relevance of research on Conceição Evaristo’s work is multifaceted and manifests itself in several aspects. First, by examining her contributions to Afro-Brazilian literature, this study amplifies the visibility of voices that are often marginalized in academia, promoting a necessary dialogue on issues of race, gender, and class.

Furthermore, the research highlights the importance of literature as a space of resistance and empowerment, highlighting the intersection between literature and social activism. The analysis of Evaristo's works offers new perspectives on the construction of Afro-Brazilian identities, enriching the fields of literary studies, sociology and cultural studies.

The literature review methodology applied in this study also stands out, as it provides a solid basis for future research. By articulating the individual and collective experience of black women, Evaristo's work becomes an object of study that can enrich academic debates around memory, history and black narratives.

Therefore, in concluding this brief study, Evaristo's relevance is highlighted not only as a writer, but as a fundamental voice in the fight for social justice and recognition of black identity. Her literature serves as an invitation to critical reflection and action, emphasizing that, despite persistent challenges, resistance and hope are fundamental pillars in the search for a more equitable future. The appreciation of her work is therefore an essential contribution to the construction of a society that recognizes and celebrates cultural diversity and the historical struggles of the Afro-Brazilian people.

Finally, the research on Evaristo is an invitation to understand the role of literature in promoting social justice and deconstructing stigmas. This academic relevance not only values Afro-Brazilian literary production, but also encourages academia to consider its implications for the formation of a more just and inclusive society.

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