


Narrative heterogeneity in “We combined not to die”, Conceição

Evaristo /

Heterogeneidade narrativa em “A gente combinamos de não morrer”, de Conceição Evaristo

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ABSTRACT

This article presents a critical-reflexive reading, through the literature and psychoanalysis bias of the tale “We agree not to die”, from the book “Olhos d’Água” (2016), by Conceição Evaristo. We seek to highlight the narrators’ configurations, the heterogeneity of the narrative, the presence of death that permeates the whole story, the writing as a way to symbolize what lies in the subject’s unconscious and the use of a poetic language in the environment. of violence. In this tale we address issues of violence and the fear of death, which are among the tensions experienced by favela residents. For that, we use as theoretical foundation texts of Conceição Evaristo (2016, [2014]), Gancho (2004), Dalcastagnè (2012) and Lacan (1998, [1964]). Evaristo, in his tale, gives voice to the socially excluded, such as slum dwellers, street boys and girls, beggars, the unemployed, drunkards and prostitutes, using a daily and heterogeneous but also poetic language, thus transposing it to the literature. different contexts of violence they are subjected to the / characters .

KEYWORDS: Conceição Evaristo; Tale; Violence; Heterogeneous Voices.

RESUMO

O presente artigo apresenta uma leitura crítico-reflexiva, pelo viés da literatura e da psicanálise do conto *A gente combinamos de não morrer*, do livro *Olhos d’água* (2016), de Conceição Evaristo. Buscamos destacar as configurações dos narradores, a heterogeneidade da narrativa, a presença da morte que permeia todo o conto, a escrita como uma maneira de simbolizar o que se encontra no inconsciente do sujeito e o uso de uma linguagem poética em meio ao ambiente de violência. Nesse conto, abordamos questões de violência e do medo da morte, que estão entre as tensões vivenciadas pelos moradores da favela. Para tanto, utilizamos como bases para reflexões os estudos de Althier-Revuz (2014), Dalcastagnè (2012), Gancho (2004), Kristeva (2005, [1974]) e a teoria de Lacan (1998, [1964]). Evaristo, em seu conto, dá voz aos excluídos sociais, como favelados, meninos e meninas de rua, mendigos, desempregados, bebedores e prostitutas, utilizando uma linguagem cotidiana e heterogênea, mas também poética, transpondo, assim, para a literatura diferentes contextos de violência a que estão submetidos as/os personagens.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Conceição Evaristo; Conto; Violência; Heterogeneidade.

1 Initial Considerations

Nothing is everything, everything is nothing, and everything will return to the dust that gave it. Nothing is not born, and everything that exists lives only in the lack of being. (LACAN, 1988, p. 353).

This critical-reflective reading, from the perspective of literature and psychoanalysis of “We agreed not to die”, from the book *Olhos d’água* (2016), by Conceição Evaristo, presents itself as a possibility of analyzing a contemporary narrative. Knowing that many other readings are possible, we point out some aspects that stand out in the story. A literary text goes beyond any attempt to represent “reality”, since it is the materiality of reconstruction and resignification, which occur



through linguistic choices and literary techniques. The book *Olhos d'água*¹ (released in 2014) consists of fifteen narratives, in which Evaristo (re) tells in some moments her writexperience². For this reason, the readers are provided with an approach that borders on the feeling of the real which is worked in multi dimensions and created to imply the contexts of violence to which many characters of the referred work are submitted. Whilst, Evaristo inserts her poetic language into fiction, even though she uses a strong vocabulary, emphasizing on an everyday language, which is rough and raw in some stories.

We emphasize that Evaristo is an Afro-Brazilian writer, owner of a particular trajectory in the national literature scene. The second of nine brothers, she was born in 1946 in a family of black women and lived in extreme poverty in a favela in Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais. Coming from a very tough life, she heard her mother's and her aunts' stories and created her own. Thus, fiction becomes fundamental to camouflage the harsh reality in which she lived. In her writing (writexperience), she gives voice to people excluded from society: the neglected, silenced and / or invisible groups.

We present, although summarized, the tale selected for analysis. We agree not to die. Told by different narrators, divided into eight parts separated by only one space, it narrates the story of the characters: Dorvi, Bica, Esterlinda (Bica's mother), Idago and Neo. The tale gets its name due to a pact, an oath made by a group of boys who were the same age and had grown up together in a favela (which is not named in the story). The deal was to face death, because the boys agreed not to die. The life deal turns upside down and the vow made is interrupted when, due to the circumstances experienced by them, we see one by one was receiving the death sentence, as we can follow in the speech by the character Dorvi: "Our life deal turned inside out. We die, even though we agree not to die". (EVARISTO, 2016, p. 106)³. Thus, in the story there is a life-pact, but the game of this pact crosses a (no) deal that is embedded in the faces of death, thus, the dangerous survival of being in the world here and now, under the sign of the margin of exclusion or the struggle of the less fortunate. In this article, even though we selected only one story as a corpus of analysis, we emphasize the importance of the others, as they deal with issues such as urban violence, misery, social exclusion, racial, gender and class discrimination. In *Olhos d'água* (2016), there are different stories set in the favelas that bring attention to black women speech

¹ The edition used in this work is from Editora Pallas Fundação Biblioteca Nacional (RJ), of 2016

² Evaristo used the term/neologism writexperience (junction of writing + experience), because her writing also narrates facts that are part of her experiences. New translation made by the authors of this paper.

³ "Nosso trato de vida virou às avessas. Morremos nós, apesar de que a gente combinamos de não morrer".

(commonly victims of racism, discrimination and violence). Thereby, the narratives impact and hold the reader's attention, and the structure of literary writing affect us, approach us (with their magnifying glasses) and call us, recall us to look at the social illnesses and / or many everyday situations (of barbarism and violence) present in our society.

2 Evaristo gives voice to silenced groups

The object of this study is a tale, a short story, a short narrative and, despite presenting a small number of characters, Evaristo manages to exploit to the full the powers of meaning and senses. As Cortázar reminds us (2006, p. 150-151)⁴:

A tale, ultimately, moves on a man's plan where life and the written of that life engage in a fraternal battle, if I may use the term; and the result of that battle is the tale itself, a living synthesis at the same time as a synthesized life, something like a tremor of water inside a crystal, a fugacity in a permanence.

For this purpose, the tale is a written expression of life, like a brief snapshot of reality, and yet it does not lose its complexity. Cortázar (2006) compares the tale to a photography where both are a "fragment" of a wider reality.

Death hovers around the lives of the characters in the tale *We agreed not to die* (2016). Dorvi, Idago and Neo were involved in crime and drug trafficking. We can directly notice the violence that affects the residents of poor communities (but, we know the violence is not restricted to it). What the tale presents are women and men in a situation of social vulnerability. The narrative in its internal construction brings voices from poor communities, from those who are often on the margins of society. According to Regina Dalcastagnè (2012, p.18) "In the contemporary Brazilian narrative, there is an absolute absence of representatives of the popular classes. I'm talking about literary producers here, but the lack extends to the characters [...]". It is these "unauthorized" voices that make noise, which will cause discomfort, hence the term "loud literature". In fact, Gilroy 1993

⁴ "[u]m conto, em última análise, se move nesse plano do homem onde a vida e a expressão escrita dessa vida travam uma batalha fraternal, se me for permitido o termo; e o resultado dessa batalha é o próprio conto, uma síntese viva ao mesmo tempo que uma vida sintetizada, algo assim como um tremor de água dentro de um cristal, uma fugacidade numa permanência".

apud Cruz 2009, understands that loud literature is “[...] constituted by contemporary narratives of violence, produced by voices from stratum”. (GILROY, 1993, apud CRUZ, 2009, p. 90)⁵.

In the tale, we observed the presence of characteristic elements of a “loud literature”, such as the exposure of various points of view about a group of people who live on a *favela*, with a view to the sea “Looking down, you can see the sea [...] All the sea down there, all of it. Great is the sea.” (EVARISTO, 2016, p. 103-104)⁶. In addition, we have elements of Afro-Brazilian culture “Who knows our Orixas who are Humans and Gods [...]” (EVARISTO, 2016, p. 108)⁷ and also of the mass culture “A nanny Lidiane, from the soap opera at eight, ended up alone. I didn't like the ending. I watched another soap opera in which the nanny married her boss' son.” (EVARISTO, 2016, p. 104-105)⁸ and “I have a problem with my mother's soap operas. However, I know she is able to separate the two realities. She knows that the truth on screen is the fiction”. (EVARISTO, 2016, p. 108-109)⁹. This way, Evaristo is plotting the narrative composition of the story in a polyphonic way and the characters leave their socio-cultural and ideological marks printed on the fabric of the voices and circumscribe different paths and performances throughout the plot.

3 The construction of the narrator and the effects on the text

Every narrative has a type of narrator, since it is the structuring element of the story. Using Gancho (2004) again, to designate the role of the narrator in the story, the manuals of literary analysis use two terms: “the narrative focus and point of view” (GANCHO, 2004, p.19)¹⁰. It is very important to choose the narrative focus to obtain specific effects in a narrative. In the case of the story analyzed in this work, Evaristo opted for the use of the 3rd person narrator, who tends to be more impartial, also known as a heterodiegetic narrator (omniscient or not). But they are not the

⁵ “Na narrativa brasileira contemporânea é marcante a ausência quase absoluta de representantes das classes populares. Estou falando aqui de produtores literários, mas a falta se estende às personagens [...]”. São essas vozes “não autorizadas” que dão origem aos ruídos, que vão provocar incômodos, de onde provém o termo “literatura ruidosa”, aliás, Gilroy 1993 apud Cruz 2009, entende que a literatura ruidosa é “[...] constituída pelas narrativas contemporâneas da violência, produzidas por vozes advindas de estratos”.

⁶ “Olhando para baixo, se vê o mar [...] O mar lá embaixo todo, todo. Grande é o mar”.

⁷ “Quem sabe os nossos Orixás que são Humanos e Deuses [...]”

⁸ “A babá Lidiane, da novela das oito, acabou sozinha. Não gostei do final. Assisti outra novela em que a babá casou com o filho do patrão.”

⁹ “Vivo implicando com as novelas de minha mãe. Entretanto, sei que ela separa e separa com violência os dois mundos. Ela sabe que a verdade da telinha é a da ficção”.

¹⁰ “o foco narrativo e ponto de vista”

only one present in the narrative, nor the predominant one, since their voice is interrupted by the voices of the characters who also narrate their stories, appearing as character narrators (they are voices in the first person, therefore, autodiegetic and participating directly in the plot).

When an announcer produces perceptible forms (linguistically) in the other's sentence or speech, it is called marked heterogeneity, according to Authier-Revuz (2004). Regarding the marked forms of heterogeneity shown by the author defines as being the forms pointed out easily, due to the linguistic marks that evidence the presence of another voice, for example, the direct speech, the indirect speech and the quotation marks. While the unmarked forms, on the other hand, are not evident, they are veiled, since linguistic marks are not easily recognized, but they can be recovered, using resources such as: free indirect speech, irony, metaphors, word games, among others. Authier-Revuz (1990) proposes that behind the enunciative linearity of a single voice, it is possible to hear a plurality of voices. For that, one must observe the place that the author makes available to the other, since the constitution of the discourse occurs by crossing the discourse of the Other. Thus, we have the unconscious which is structured as language. In her approach, the author takes psychoanalysis to the proposition of the subject cleaved by the unconscious, divided by other voices

In 'We agreed not to die' (2016): Dorvi, Bica and dona Esterlinda are included in the narrator's enunciation. The heterogeneity narrative is presented through free indirect speech. Thus, the voices that cross the narrator's enunciation appear without being announced, as does the unconscious that "breaks out" and manifests itself without prior notice. The other voices present in the narrative allow the reader to have access to different perspectives on the same fact of the story, differently from what happens, for example, with the narrator character Bentinho, in *Dom Casmurro*, by Machado de Assis, in which the character Capitu's point of view is unknown.

We can notice that Bica and Dona Esterlinda are witnesses when they narrate the events in which they participated. Dorvi appears as an autodiegetic narrator, since he is a central character in the story he narrates. The story begins with a brief presentation of the observer narrator in 3rd person, then Dorvi expresses his speech, taking the floor for himself.

The narrative revolves around Dorvi's oath to his friends not to die. According to the development of the narration, heterogeneity is shown in the speeches of the characters that appear spontaneously, marked by the 1st person, mixing in the narrator's speech that is in the 3rd person, being the narrator's speech grammatically, but that conveys the meaning of the character's speech as we can see in the excerpts below: "Dorvi breathed and took a deep breath. But shit,

contaminated powder, it even looks like talcum powder to put on baby's ass. Well, my son was born. A slip of a child. [...] I don't know (bold in the original) why fear, thought Bica". (EVARISTO, 2016, p.100)¹¹

Thus, in the story, heterogeneity is the discontinuity of the narrator's discourse which crosses by the voices of the characters that lead the narrative in a plot / network of voices that instigate the reader in the discursive construction of each one. These marks of heterogeneity will produce effects of meaning that will raise social stereotypes, from which the images of favelas residents are constructed.

When Evaristo uses these narrative resources, she emphasizes what we have previously mentioned about "loud literature" using Gilroy's terms, 1993, apud Cruz 2009, in which voices take over the scene and the narrative establishes visibilities for the silenced / invisible groups, commonly, those in the favelas are marginalized (by instances of power). Therefore, the residents of the poor communities assume the narrative and circumscribe the events not by the voice of the other (or the others), but by the existential locus itself, they are experiences and dramas of existence that take place through the body. And, the tale is tailored by a network of voices, just as the subject itself is constituted.

4 Enjoyment tastes like death

Death, as a theme, permeates the whole tale, whether due to proximity, due to the violent environment in which they reside, or due to the dangerous activity that Dorvi and his friends are involved in, the fear of dying or even the loss of a friend or relative. For Freudian psychoanalysis, human life develops in a symbolic context. The symbolic order "[...] is beyond the principle pleasure, outside the limits of life, and for this reason Freud identifies it with "the death drive" (Lacan apud CASTRO, 2011, p.1415)¹². For Freud, every drive has a source (Quelle), pressure (Drang), an object (Objekt) and a purpose (Ziel). Therefore, the drive is not determined by nature, it is self-regulated by the principle pleasure. For Lacan, "the drive is virtually a death drive" (LACAN, 1998

¹¹ "Dorvi respirou e aspirou fundo. Mas que merda, pó contaminado, até parece talco para pôr na bunda de neném. Pois é, meu filho nasceu. Um pingo de gente. [...] **Não sei** (negrito do original) porque o medo, pensou Bica. Se ao menos o medo me fizesse recuar, pelo contrário, avanço mais e mais na mesma proporção desse medo".

¹² "[...] tende para além do princípio do prazer, fora dos limites da vida, e por isso Freud a identifica a pulsão de morte"

[1964])¹³. According to Freud, all human beings live permanently with the duality of the two antagonistic drives: the drive of life and the death drive

The character Dorvi brings with it a symbolic determination / dimension, which leads him to reproduce it. Starting with the name given to him: “pain I saw” (Dorvi), which refers to the pain that comes or is seen. According to Lacanian psychoanalysis, the individual is determined by language even before he is born, because “[...] even during pregnancy, symbolic coordinates are drawn around the infant, through, for example, choosing the name and of the plans that parents make to their respect” (CASTRO, 2011, p. 1419)¹⁴. Thus, according to Freud's studies (that is, psychoanalysis), *jouissance* refers to the death drive and this is an unbridled impulse for pleasure. In the tale in question, Dorvi can symbolize the undifferentiated reality of *jouissance* and death, in this way:

In the middle of the shooting, I spurted, I came. And I swear it wasn't from fear, it was from pleasure. Joy filled my entire body. I felt it when my cock grew upright, firm, hard like the gun I held in my hands. I shot, I came, I shot, I came, I came ... I came in pain and joy, like another moment of joy that happened to me in childhood. [...] Today another pleasure or displeasure tingles my body inside and out. I will kill, I will die. (EVARISTO, 2016, p.106-107)¹⁵.

This way, the character Dorvi, involved in this tough reality of the struggle for survival, sees himself in this tension of the life / death drive, in which he assumes his enjoyment in the face of death, of killing / dying: “I will kill, I will die” (EVARISTO, 2016, p.107)¹⁶. In this case the symbolic object is the weapon, with which Dorvi, feels strong and manlike that provokes his enjoyment. The character compares this moment of enjoyment with another that happened in childhood, when he was six or seven years old and pulled out a baby tooth with his own hands. He says that he felt an intense pleasure that ran throughout his body, almost had an erection, he felt like a man. Thus, the live / dead body is a mixture of pleasure and pain. This is because in situations where the death drive overlaps life, the pain becomes innocuous, becoming joy.

¹³ “[...] toda pulsão é virtualmente pulsão de morte”

¹⁴ “[...] ainda durante a gestação, são traçadas coordenadas simbólicas em torno do infante, através, por exemplo, da escolha do nome e dos planos que os pais fazem a seu respeito”

¹⁵ “No meio do tiroteio, esporrei, gozei. E juro que não era de medo, foi de prazer. Uma alegria tomava conta de meu corpo inteiro. Senti quando o meu pau cresceu ereto, firme, duro feito a arma que eu segurava nas mãos. Atirei, gozei, atirei, gozei, gozei... Gozei dor e alegria, feito outro momento de gozo que me aconteceu na infância. [...] Hoje outro prazer ou desprazer formiga o meu corpo por dentro e por fora. Vou matar, vou morrer”.

¹⁶ “Vou matar, vou morrer”.

5 “Writing is a way to bleed”

For Freudo-Lacanian Psychoanalysis, the individual is determined by language. Therefore, one must consider the subjective aspect present in language. Writing becomes a way of symbolizing what is found in the individual's unconsciousness. Thus, the individual gives logic to what has been repressed. Michèle Petit (2010, p. 228)¹⁷ says “[...] writing is leaving a scar and is still an active way of taking possession of the world ”. Bartolomeu Campos de Queiroz, quoted by Petit (2010), says that he writes to stand everyday life. In this sense, writing would therefore be the result of the outside that is “inside”, and always returns to the outside. It takes us back to the body, to the flesh, to the reality of sex, of death; “the verb becomes a body”, as stated by Adélia Bezerra de Meneses, (1995, p.27)¹⁸, in her work entitled: *The Power of the word: literature and psychoanalysis essays*.

The character Bica says: “I write and remember a verse I read one day. Writing is a way of bleeding. I add: it is a lot of bleeding, a lot and a lot [...]” (EVARISTO, 2018, p. 67)¹⁹. For Bica, writing helps her with that violent environment, with the reality that she experiences daily; only in this way she can symbolize violence and fear. We can relate Bica's speech intertextually to a piece from a letter by Caio Fernando Abreu to José Márcio Penido (2014), in which the writer describes what the act of writing would be like for him. Let's look at the selected fragment:

Do you really want to write? Isolating the charges, do you still want to? So go on, dig deep, as the gaucho poet, Gabriel de Britto Velho says, “put out the cigarette in your chest / tell yourself what you don't like to hear / say it all”. That is writing. Draw blood with your nails. And it doesn't matter the form, it doesn't matter the “social function” or anything, it doesn't matter that, at first, it's just a kind of self-exorcism. But you have to bleed pro-fu-se-ly-. (ABREU, 2014, p. 300)²⁰.

Blood could be a kind of code transducer or what pulsates in the poetic and / or fictional infra languages, marking the presence of the body in its own movements when speaking, writing

¹⁷ “[...] escrever é deixar uma cicatriz e é ainda uma ‘maneira ativa de tomar posse do mundo’”

¹⁸ “o verbo se faz corpo”

¹⁹ “Eu aqui escrevo e relembro um verso que li um dia. Escrever é uma maneira de sangrar. Acrescento: e de muito sangrar, muito e muito [...]”

²⁰ “você quer mesmo escrever? Isolando as cobranças, você continua querendo? Então vai, remexe fundo, como diz um poeta gaúcho, Gabriel de Britto Velho, “apaga o cigarro no peito/diz pra ti o que não gostas de ouvir/diz tudo”. Isso é escrever. Tira sangue com as unhas. E não importa a forma, não importa a “função social”, nem nada, não importa que, a princípio, seja apenas uma espécie de autoexorcismo. Mas tem que sangrar a-bun-dan-te-men-te”.

(or creative writing), as the Brazilian writer emphasizes, writing is a kind of self-exorcism, which bleeds for perhaps removing abundantly the vital emanations of what the body supports, carries and communicates, even more in terms of creation, especially because it bears witness to a need that is materially encoded in writing, expressing a set of gestures, processes and experiences, like the ever-renewing blood and vital forces. Also, according to Freudo-Lacanian psychology, "[...] it is a braid between Real, Symbolic and Imaginary" (BORGES, 2019, p.139)²¹. The transition from the real to the symbolic happens through writing, which in turn is traversed by the imaginary, and it opens the place for the symbolic to establish itself. For Lacan, what drives someone to write is enjoyment.

For Bica, writing is a way of moving from the real world to the imaginary one, thus writing becomes a device to symbolize the two worlds and bring together the different signs of these worlds. Furthermore, writing starts to mean the moments the character can feel she is in control, commuting and moving freely to environments never experienced by her. With the blank sheet of paper in her hands, Bica can write her own story, escape from reality and live, even if for few moments, in a different way, because in the narrative she reveals that she writes since she was a child and she loves creating stories.

For this reason, writing, for Bica, means expressing what marks her existence, such as pains, fears, ghosts, etc.; writing brings up what is repressed in her unconsciousness. There is a kind of outburst in the character's writing, a possibility of revealing what is "stuck" within her. In the tale, Bica mentions an event that happened at school, when she was about seven to eight years old, a request to go to the board to write the words she had formed, in response to the exercise the teacher had proposed: "And I wrote powder, bullshit, marijuana. And I was writing more and more words. Crack, shoot, command east, west, north, south, red and green too". (EVARISTO, 2016, p. 108)²². Then she realizes she said (wrote) more than she wanted to say / write.

Thus, we can see that in the words we say other words are said, perceptible by the structure of the language which is surprising, showing the non-homogeneity (AUTHIER-REVUZ, 2004). In the excerpt mentioned above, the presence of the Other appears in the discourse in the form of a failure, which makes the character Bica regret what she wrote. It is written to what was repressed, unconsciously.

²¹ "[...] é trança entre Real, Simbólico e Imaginário"

²² "E escrevi pó, zoeira, maconha. E fui escrevendo mais e mais. Craque, tiro, comando leste, oeste, norte, sul, vermelho e verde também"

Writing is a process that takes place between the real and the symbolic, and causes enjoyment. As Bica says, in the short story “[...] writing is in the palm and soul of each one. You must always bring an open hand.” (EVARISTO, 2016, p. 102)²³, or, “writing works for me like an uncontrollable fever, which burns, burns, burns ...” (EVARISTO, 2016, p. 108), and which brings hunger peaks of another nature: “The other day, late at night, I heard a writer saying that he was perplexed by the hunger of the world. Perplexed! I asked him to have the kindness, the Christian charity and to include all kinds of hunger there, including mine, which may be different from the hunger of others”. (EVARISTO, 2016, p. 108)²⁴

Burning, desire, be hungry of what makes you bleed and bleed. In the constitution of language, there is the dimension of a missing individual, since language itself has a presence / absence relationship, as writing “eternalizes” what could be lost in a spoken enunciation, in the same way that it presents the lack it makes with which the language is lost. Thus, the individual is always trying to fill the lack that constitutes him.

6 Poetics and violence

Evaristo brings in her book the presence of a poetic language in the midst of violence. However, without using idealizations. She addresses the social and existential dilemmas, as well as the situations of vulnerability of the residents of poor communities, properly portraying their conflicts, using a language that combines violence and lyricism, forming textual heterogeneity.

In *We agreed not to die* (2016), there is the presence of drug trafficking, violence, fear, hope and life x death dichotomy. As we can see in Bica's words:

It is as if fear is a reverse courage. Fear, courage, fear, courage, pain and panic. The party goes on. Bullets adorn the heart of the night. I don't like the TV movies where dying and killing is a lie. Not here. Sometimes death is as light as dust. And life is confused with any white powder. Sometimes it is a sweet smoke filling our lungs. One slap, two slaps, three shots [...] (EVARISTO, 2016, p. 100)²⁵.

²³ “Mas, escrever funciona para mim como um febre incontrolável, que arde, arde, arde...”

²⁴ “Outro dia, tarde da noite, ouvi um escritor dizer que ficava perplexo diante da fome do mundo. Perplexo! Eu pedi para ele ter a bondade, a caridade cristã e que incluísse ali todos os tipos de fome, inclusive a minha, que pode ser diferente da fome dos meus”.

²⁵ “É como se o medo fosse uma coragem ao contrário. Medo, coragem, medo, coragemedo, coragemedo de dor e pânico. A festa está se dando. Balas enfeitam o coração da noite. Não gosto de filmes da tevê. Morre e mata de

Or, in the words of Dorvi, our protagonist: “It is there at sea that I will be dying. Sea-love, sea-love, sea-death” (EVARISTO, 2016, p. 107)²⁶. As the story goes on, the narrators place the reader in the violent environment and in the life they lead. A vicious circle, perhaps, without escape, because the violence that appears on TV is not frightening, it is not even close to that of real life, in which each day represents the uncertainty of staying alive. The text is woven through this alternation of the poetic presence and the brutality of the environment. As we can see in the excerpt that follows:

I want a slow and calm death. I want to float deep in the sea. I want the bottom of the sea -love, where calm must reign. It is deep down there that I am going to build a castle for my son's home. Bica, my favorite, is going too. She knows that the tip of the shotgun also comes out of affection. Under the sea, no world explodes. Bica, my dear, life explodes. Explode, ode, ode, ode [...] (EVARISTO, 2016, p. 104)²⁷

In the tale, television is a resource to escape from the sad reality and the novels become the sign of evasion, it is in them that the endings are almost all happy, it is in fiction (with aspects of reality) that a nanny can marry the boss' son and change her life. Well, real life is built “[...] with iron wires” (EVARISTO, 2016, p. 109)²⁸. And so the marginalized groups are resisting.

We also have the polysemy of the word powder, which sometimes presents itself as the drug consumed or sold, and sometimes it is the ash of the body. In an intertext with the book of Genesis (3:19)²⁹: “because you are dust and to the dust of the earth you will return!”. Dorvi says: “What we have in common is the dust from which we are made. It is the dust that makes us, nothing. But my powder is in more danger. My powder turns to ashes quickly” (EVARISTO, 2016, p.104)³⁰.

It is interesting to mention the way the characters in the tale face death and life. The fact that life is so harsh and severe makes them see death as light and mild while living is an arduous task, a heavy burden. In Dorvi's words "Life is grass, weeds, garbage, it is skin and hair".

mentira. Aqui, não. Às vezes a morte é leve como a poeira. E a vida se confunde com um pó branco qualquer. Às vezes é uma fumaça adocicada enchendo o pulmão da gente. Um tapa, dois tapas, três tiros [...]

²⁶ “É lá no mar que vou ser morrente. Mar-amor, mar-amar, mar-morrente”

²⁷ Quero a morte lenta e calma. Quero boiar no profundo fundo do mar. Quero o fundo do mar-amor, onde deve reinar calma. É lá no profundo fundo que vou construir um castelo para a morada de meu filho. Bica, predileta minha, vai também. Ela sabe que da ponta da escopeta também sai carinho. No fundo do mar, mundo algum explode. Bica, dileta minha, a vida explode. Explode, ode, ode, ode [...]

²⁸ “[...] com fios de ferro”.

²⁹ “porque tu és pó e ao pó da terra retornarás!”

³⁰ “O que temos em comum é o pó do qual somos feitos. É o pó que nos faz, mais nada. Mas o meu pó corre mais perigo. Meu pó vira cinza rápido”

(EVARISTO, 2016, p. 100)³¹. In other words, for her, life is insignificant, worthless and fleeting. For Bica, “Sometimes death is as light as dust. And life is confused with any white powder. Sometimes it is a sweet smoke filling our lungs [...] Life is so much nuisance” (EVARISTO, 2016, p. 100)³². In Bica's view, life is dust, smoke, nuisance. In other words, life is intoxication, it is asphyxiating. Dona Esterlinda recalls the way Idago, her son, saw life by paraphrasing the elephant song as follows: “a mother teases us, a sister tease us, an enemy teases us, a policeman teases us and was saying a lot of things that teased his life. I think that for Idago, life was just a nuisance” (EVARISTO, 2016, p. 102)³³. For Idago, his family, the enemies, possibly rival groups of the traffic, the police, all teased him, chased him.

Faced with these considerations, we realized that the difficulties experienced by the characters in the story made them believe that dying was better than living. Somehow they wanted to escape reality, either through death or entering the world of fiction, as is the case with Dona Esterlinda who says: “It is so good to see the novels, I don't like to see crimes, robberies or even news of war. Novels relieves me, it's my *cachaça* [...] When I cry in front of a soap opera, I also cry for other things and for life to be so different” (EVARISTO, 2015, p. 102-105)³⁴. At the same time that Bica is questioning herself in an attempt to find out if there is a way not to die so soon and to live a less cruel life, she knows that “not dying is not always living” (EVARISTO, 2016, p. 109)³⁵. For those characters who faced daily shootings, deaths, cruelties, being alive, it did not mean living, but, perhaps, surviving; or would it be resisting?

Some outstand features of the analyzed story (and very characteristic of Evaristo's writing also in other works), which enrich the narrative, are the use of neologisms such as: *couragemedo* (fear + courage), *Dorvi* (pain + see = pain for coming). Hyphenated compound words such as: *river-sea*, *smoke-girl*, *sea-love*, *world-canal*. The use of metaphors: life is grass, weeds, garbage, it is skin and hair; magic talc; the misfortune seeps from the pores of the earth which make the stories softer, despite representing harsh and tragic realities, as well as the use of antitheses: fear / courage, innocent / malicious, comparisons: Sometimes death is as light as dust and hyperbole:

³¹ “A vida é capim, mato, lixo, é pele e cabelo”.

³² Às vezes a morte é leve como a poeira. E a vida se confunde com um pó branco qualquer. Às vezes é uma fumaça adocicada enchendo o pulmão da gente [...] A vida é tanta amolação”.

³³ “*uma mãe amola a gente, uma irmã amola a gente, um inimigo amola a gente, um policial amola a gente* [grifo do original] e foi dizendo uma porção de coisa que amolava a vida dele. Acho que para Idago a vida era só amolação”.

³⁴ “É tão bom ver novela, não gosto de ver os crimes, roubos e nem noticiários de guerra. Novela me alivia, é a minha *cachaça* [...] Quando choro diante de novela, choro também por outras coisas e pela vida ser tão diferente”

³⁵ “não morrer, nem sempre é viver”

the world explodes; beings with a thousand hands grab everything. We believe it is important to talk about the way the author retains the characters' speeches to writing.

This way, many oral linguistic resources are activated, coming from everyday speech and that elaborated the construction of the story. At all times in the narrative, it is common to find marks of orality, traces, moreover, quite recurrent in Evaristo's works and which are important in the production of meaning, when taking into account the environment experienced by the characters. Based on the assumption that orality is produced in / by interactivity between interlocutors, we can understand why one can be so familiar when reading the works of the Brazilian writer. This resource used by the author, in addition to allowing greater proximity to the contemporary reader, who is a user of this language modality (or speech), sets the tone for her literary style.

Another very interesting and very present factor in the story is the intertextuality and the quotes used as references to illustrate the story. It is what we can see at the beginning of the narrative when Dorvi nibbling the pain felt when she saw the smoke from a body that was set on fire in the trash, sings Raul Seixas' song: "Those who don't have eye drops wear sunglasses". In another moment, Dona Esterlinda recalls the Elephant's parody, a music Idago, her son, sang: "a mother teases us, a sister teases us, an enemy teases us, a policeman teases us". On the other hand, when Mrs. Esterlinda complained about the pain in her legs, she referred to the carnival march, Bucket of water (composition co-authored by Luiz Antônio and Jota Jr, from 1952)³⁶: "bucket of water on head, there goes Maria". While in the march, Maria goes up the hill with the bucket of water on her head and can't get enough. In the story, Dona Esterlinda gets tired of this dance of going up and down the hill. In the same paragraph, Dona Esterlinda mentions that she only had two children and "spit out about four or five", she refers to the Holy Angel"³⁷.

In this regard, as Kristeva (2005, p. 68)³⁸ suggests, "every text is constructed as a mosaic of citations, every text is absorption and transformation of another text. In place of the notion of intersubjectivity, that of intertextuality is installed". Thus, we believe that the recognition of intertextual relations in the reading of a certain text is an essential factor for the construction of meanings.

³⁶ "Lata d'água na cabeça, lá vai Maria"

³⁷ "Eu confessor, me confesso a Deus, meu zeloso guardador, bendito sois vós, que olhe por mim"

³⁸ "todo texto se constrói como mosaico de citações, todo texto é absorção e transformação de um outro texto. Em lugar da noção de intersubjetividade, instala-se a de intertextualidade"

Final considerations

In this article, we aim to show the resources mobilized by Evaristo in the tale *We agreed not to die* (2016), as strategies to give voice to groups previously silenced, thus, through a heterogeneity of voices formed by the various narrator characters present in the narrative, the author brings us into her fictional truths, which border the reality, from various points of view. This way, heterogeneity has specific effects on writing, especially providing the reader with different perspectives on the same reality. Without sentimentality, the author touches on the social problems that involve marginalized groups in our contemporary and urban society. She gives voice to the silenced groups, which she knew so well, so her writexperiences end up legitimizing the voices of these groups, in a very unique way.

At the same time, the author brings the harsh reality experienced by residents of the poor communities, with its dramas and dilemmas, based on a strong language that mixes with poetics. The tale in question exposes a symbolic character for death; life and death are central themes in this story. The central character Dorvi experiences the struggle for survival, wrapped in the tension of the life / death drive and ends up assuming her enjoyment in the face of death. The dichotomy life X death present in the narrative passes through the characters in the story, so that they come to believe that dying was better than living.

In light of the critical-reflexive readings produced in the course of the story's analysis, the corpus of the work, we could see there are many meanings and that understanding requires from the reader much more than just the decoding of the linguistic material, since the meaning goes beyond the words, as it is built on the relationship between reader and writer. In other words, the production and reception of the text, in our specific case, the tale, are built through an interactive and complementary activity.

We ratify that the meanings of a literary text are continuously constructed and they can always be different, so the story is always open to new readings and different interpretations. Furthermore, we understand that it is not the simple knowledge of the grammar and lexicon of the language that allows the reader to interpret this kind of text, but several other factors outside the language, which unfold in the possible readings of a literature text, are still the cognitive aspects, social, cultural and historical that configure the reader. In the case of Evaristo's tale, it is necessary that the reader have contextual knowledge to reach a broader interpretation.

In conclusion, we must emphasize that heterogeneity holds the reader from the beginning to end of the narrative. They are voices that show their perspective of the same reality, in which violence and hope pervade. In the analyzed story, Dorvi can symbolize the undifferentiated reality of jouissance and death, through his weapon, which assumes the function of a symbolic object, which makes him feel masculine and achieve enjoyment. The character Bica, on the other hand, expresses through written language what was repressed, since writing is a process that occurs between the real and the symbolic, and causes enjoyment. Language is directly related to the unconscious, according to what Lacan suggests, the unconscious is structured as a language. Thus, Literature is an environment that allows the unconscious to manifest itself.

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