

# Writing to heal racial complex and memorialist narrative

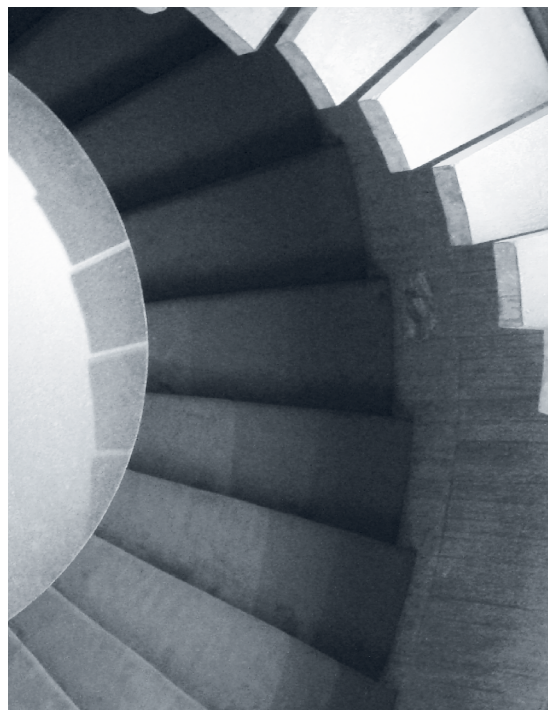
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## Abstract

This paper aims to reflect on a Jungian perspective, the contributions of memorialist narratives to the transformation of the racial complex. We emphasize that individual memory is intertwined with collective memory and we point out the traumatic impacts resulting from the annihilation of the memories of Afro-descendants as a result of colonialism throughout our history. Thus, the novel *Alleys of Memory* by the writer Conceição Evaristo was analyzed, considering the symbolic-archetypal dimension present in this work as well as aspects of the author's individuation process. Her literary work, based on what she has called *escrevivência*, is an example of how traumatic memories, carried by the pow-

er of complexes, when re-edited through writing, can trigger psychic transformations both in the individual and the collective. ■

**Keywords**  
Racial complex, memory, narrative, literature.



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### About memories and narratives

We are human beings, woven by threads “tangled in memory” through which we daily confirm and re-elaborate our identity. As a psychological function, memory is related to the idea that today we are the continuity of what we lived in our past. Jung considers memory and forgetfulness as polarities of the same function, which are alternated and regulated by the movement of psychic energy (JUNG, 2015).

According to Bachelard (1988), recalling is a composition from the imagination that moves through a dynamic and creative flow. Therefore, the language capable of accessing the content of the significant memory is not the objective description but poetic language.

The neuroscientist Oliver Sacks said, “We are not able to have direct access to a historical fact, and what we feel or affirm to be true depends as much on our imagination as on our senses” (2017, p. 73). On the other hand, we built as “genuine narratives” the stories we tell to ourselves and to others, continually categorizing and refining them. Memories are fragile but also flexible and bearers of immense creativity.

We are also woven through collective memory. Halbwachs (1990) defends that our remembrance remains collective because, in fact, we are never alone; the other is present even in absence, “[...] In fact, we are never alone. It is not necessary for others to be there, materially separated from us: because we always have several people with us” (p. 26)

Weil (1996) developed the concept of “rooting” characterizing it as a fundamental necessity of the human soul. According to the author, human beings must keep alive certain treasures from the past to constitute their social and collective existence. Thereby, the transmission of accumulated knowledge over the history of cer-

tain people enables access and recognition of cultural and ancestral wealth sedimented over time. Collective values intertwine with individual history, allowing a human being to take possession of their ancestral heritage.

The collective memory implies the strengthening of individual and collective identity and enables groups to maintain affective bonds and resistance during conflicts and adversities. In this context, preserving memories is promoting life. In contrast, the dismantling of collective memory can imply collective traumatic experiences that promote the experience of uprooting.

A traumatic mark that constitutes Brazilian memory and history refers to the processes of erasing the memory of the African people enslaved in our territory over many centuries. In the history of the Black diaspora, memory is in the field of resistance.

Jungian’s perspective allows the understanding of memory, the component of the individual psyche, as part of a collectivity. Therefore, Shamdassani (2005) pointed out that one of the distinct traits of Jung’s work was the way he conceived the inclusion of the individual in cultural history or how he considered the integration of cultural history in the psyche of the individual. Studies about cultural complexes make possible the expansion of understanding of this phenomenon.

In this paper, we explore the impacts of historical trauma on collective memory. Studies developed by Jungians and decolonial authors supports this study, which clarify how the condition of “otherness” imposed on Black by White had traumatic consequences for society, highlighting implications of the racial complex in the suppression and reactivation of Black memories.

We try to demonstrate this phenomenon through a symbolical analysis of the book *Becos*

*da Memória* by Conceição Evaristo. This novel is strongly permeated by the memories of the author, where marks of mourning and fighting are presented as a traumatic consequence of the Black diaspora and are brought back again in the experience of violence and oppression lived by the author and her community. In her novel, we observe that when recollections are changed by imagination, they become a fundamental element of resistance and preservation of individual and collective memory. Also, we search to relate Evaristo's creative process to her own individuation process.

### **Racism, cultural complex and trauma**

"Cultural complexes" is a term that has gained relevance in the Jungian scenario in the last few years. This concept was proposed by Kimbles and Singers in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, taking as a starting point the expansion of Jung's theory of affective complexes and the term "cultural unconscious" proposed by Joseph Henderson in the 1960s, considering the process of developing groups and communities (SINGER, KAPLINSKY, 2019). These authors defend the premise that there is another level of complexes that act in the psyche of collectivity. As well affective complexes, cultural complexes are also unconscious, act autonomously, and have large emotional mobilization around memories, ideas, and images "[...] that tend to cluster around an archetypal core and be shared by the individual within a defined collective" (SINGER, KAPLINSKY, 2019, p. 58).

Boechat (2014) highlights that cultural complex is related to conflictive issues that the collective has developed throughout history. He points out a parallel in the structure and origin of individual and collective complexes. The first can be structured at the beginning of life, coming from a trauma, but it will act in subsequent moments of life, requiring further elaboration. The second can originate at the beginning of the organization of a culture and it can have traumatic effects on the future organization and mobilization of a society.

Almeida (2019, p. 26) describes racism as "a systematic form of discrimination based on race and manifested through conscious and unconscious practices that culminate in disadvantages or privileges for individuals, depending on the racial group to which they belong." Racial prejudice can trigger discriminatory practices directly, such as ostensible rejection of individuals and groups – or indirectly, characterized by unconscious discriminatory practices without explicit intentionality.

Brazil has a historical mark of being the last country from the Western to abolish slavery. Boechat (2014) believes this feature makes the experience of slavery to be considered a potent cultural complex for Brazilian identity.

Dias e Gambini (1999) pointed out that the miscegenation superficially shared as the ideal of cultural synthesis in Brazil, concealed a fractioned and divided nation because Indigenous and Africans were not considered by the colonizer as individuals who have souls. This has remained in the collective imaginary over the years.

Souza (2020) and Gonzalez (2019) said that Black people, in order to affirm or deny themselves, should take White as an identity reference. Colonialism introduced a feeling of inferiority in the colonized through strategies of domination and the ideological diffusion of a supposed superiority of the colonizer. Hence, the colonizer is described as a bearer of superior and universal civilizing values, which should be models to be followed. In Brazil, it has prevailed the miscegenation and racial democracy theories, in which part of the population does not recognize racism as a present and active component in society. This alienation is supported by the ideology of whitening, which seeks to deny the existence of Black people through silencing and oppression disguised by the discourse of racial equality.

Kilomba (2019) emphasizes that the language of trauma is adequate to comprehend daily experiences of racism, as they are capable of promoting internal ruptures.

Although the theme of racial issues is part of the tradition in social psychology, in clinical psychology, otherwise, the studies about this theme are still limited in Brazil (BENEDITO, FERNANDES, 2020). Silencing the present subject for many years makes it difficult to elaborate on the trauma. It is necessary to consider that this posture towards a society that lives under the impacts of the racial complex, reveals denial and difficulty of confrontation and elaboration of this collective trauma.

Ramos (2010) highlights the need to recognize that racism in Brazil is a complex phenomenon, in which is necessary to investigate how much the impacts of slavery still affect the personal unconscious of Black and White individuals and the collective unconscious. Thereby, it is essential to promote studies and researches that change from the collective denial to attitudes of recognition, responsibility, and transformation of the racial complex.

It is essential to consider the rich contributions of Jungian thoughts on understanding and intervention applied to creatively transforming the racial complex. In this perspective, we should consider that as well as the work for elaborating and integrating emotional complexes demand an intervention through a symbolical dimension, the cultural complex also demands similar work as a path for collective transformation. Black literature shows itself as an open space for the awareness and transformation of cultural complexes denied for centuries and one of the paths taken is the access and restoration of personal and ancestor's memories through writing.

### **Con-fusing write and life: black memories and *escrevivência*<sup>1</sup>**

If there were a monument to Black memory, it should be built at the bottom of the

sea in honor of those who were lost in the crossing. In the impossibility of raising such a monument, I dedicate myself to building a literary work about the subject (EVARISTO In MEIRELES, 2022, n.p.).

Conceição Evaristo, a Brazilian writer recognized nationally and internationally, is one of the biggest literature references nowadays. She is a novelist, short story writer, and poet. Her work's central theme is the life experience of Black people, especially women, based on profound reflections and criticisms related to Brazilian racial inequality. She characterizes her narrative with the neologism *escrevivência* – a wordplay combining “writing, living, and being”<sup>2</sup>, indicating an inversion in history substantiated by the speech of enslaved Black women who had to tell their stories to the masters. *Escrevivência* presents itself as a broad and subversive proposal that goes beyond the field of literature.

Conceição claims her writing tries “to smudge” this image from the past, from the African women that had to tell bedtime stories for White children. She recalls that Black people were silenced in an oppressive way through the centuries. “*Escrevivência* wants to denounce, breaking the secular silence. In the field of literature, this provocation will be done in the most poetic way possible” (EVARISTO In MEIRELES, 2022, n.p.).

We can identify her work as a mirror capable of presenting multiple images of Afro-descendants' life experiences. The opposite strengths of brutality and delicacy encounter and obtain contours in her words, meticulously woven in well-designed poetic figures. Her writing is capable of mobilizing dense emotions when describing the rawness of an exposed reality.

Her writings enable the reader to meet ancestral memories. She takes off, with her words, our complexes, dialoguing with ghosts of slave ships. It is a secular and deep voice. In her

<sup>1</sup> Translator note: In Brazilian Portuguese, this is a neologism created by Conceição Evaristo; it joins these two words: “*escrever*” (writing) and “*vivência*” (experience); it would be something like “writexperencing” in English.

<sup>2</sup> Translator note: Equivalent to the words “*escrever*”, “*viver*” and “*ser*” in Brazilian Portuguese.

words, we come across the poetic look of the Black woman who crossed the centuries and found her weapons in pencil, paper, and memory. She reaches a very delicate place between fiction and reality, and her memories are crossed by collective memory.

Hillmann (2010) brings attention to the fictional themes we built in our life as a way of achieving meaning and truth for them. According to the author, everyone carries their own plot, writing their history retrospectively and towards the future, as the memory “heals” in the imagination. We can associate this idea with Evaristo’s creation process described in her reports since it is a writing that sprouts in the intermediate space between memory and fiction.

Brewster (2020), based on Jung’s thought, emphasizes that the transformation of an individual or collective complex, only will be possible through the strength of opposition to the movement that hurts our values and integrity. She points out that American Black literature emerged as a strength of opposition to White narratives of a racist society. Through them, it is possible to reactivate the memory of what we are as individuals and ethnicity.

Thereby, we can consider that writing plays an essential role in the individual and collective context by giving visibility to experiences of suffering and losses experienced in the diaspora process and its tragic consequences over the centuries. Through symbolical dimension, literature can contribute significantly in the process of elaboration of collective mourning.

### ***Becos da Memória – individuation and escrevivência***

“[...] nothing narrated in *Becos da Memória* is true; nothing narrated in *Becos da Memória* is a lie” (EVARISTO, 2018, p. 9). *Becos da memória* is a landmark in the origins of Conceição Evaristo’s process of *escrevivência*. She claims that this work emerged when she listened to her mother’s voice, narrating a fragment of a distant memory. At that moment, she

went back in time, becoming face to face with her girl-self, and in this way, it was possible to resume her real and imaginary experiences with her family and the favela community where she spent her childhood and early adolescence in Belo Horizonte. Writing the book emerged as a possibility to cover the emptiness of transfigured memories.

In *Becos da Memória*, through Maria-Nova, a thirteen-year-old girl, we follow stories and experiences of the favela residents in a period close to a *desfavelamento*<sup>3</sup>. In the novel, we see the narratives of three generations of the family clan – mommy Joana, her mother; Maria Velha and uncle Totó; and the community as Maria-Nova extended family. Their lives are marked by pain, suffering, and violations of different orders but also by resistance, solidarity, and affection. It is through the ambiguous and questioning eye of adolescence, wandering between disillusion and hope, that the work goes very deep. The characters are Black women and men, descendants of enslaved people. It is possible to see Maria-Nova’s psyche development through her interaction with the other characters.

According to Bachelard (1998), the house represents our place in the world, our first refuge and for this reason many writers take it as an image of protection and stability. In an imagery perspective “we always tend to imagine more than it is because with this archetypal image, we are precisely at the point of union between imagination and memory: ‘inhabited space transcends geometric space’” (BACHELARD, 1998, p. 62).

Through Maria-Nova’s narrative, we access an archetypal image of an expanded house. The house of her memories, her first universe, and the first reference to protection and belonging – the favela. In this territory, shacks are not isolated; they are huddled and connected through many alleys, likewise her memory. In

<sup>3</sup> Translator note: Action of leaving the favela because of its eradication process.



the novel's introduction, an adult Maria-Nova highlights that the book is a tribute to every figure that huddled inside her, just like the shacks of the favela.

The story unfolds a psychic trauma experienced by a girl who has her concrete and subjective living space brutally destroyed. Thus, we see a retraumatization from Afro-descendants diaspora. Pain and suffering are inevitable when facing expulsion of their continent, losing their dreams, and their memories of collectivity. Within about one year, the shacks are destroyed, and the residents gradually begone. A new diaspora is forced upon them; the favela residents are expelled from their community.

Storytelling is the main thread of the novel. Maria-Velha and uncle Totó, a couple of old people, and Bondade, the hiker, are bearers and transmitters of the histories from their community and ancestry. These elders reproduce the millennial African culture of storytelling; they are bearers of peoples' memory and transmitters of teachings. They have the role of "griots", the guardians of the collective memories, whose function is to share ancestral experiences with the new generation through oral narrative. These individuals are traditionally important references to the preservation and transmission of knowledge inside the culture of many African countries (HAMPATÊ BÂ, 2010).

Bosi (1994) highlights that the narrative only makes sense if it has resonance for those who listen. Therefore, we infer the narrator is nourished by the active presence of the listener. The young listeners, because of listening, dive into their roots through histories/memories narrated by ancestors. In this movement, older people get a fundamental worth to the family and community. As proposed by Benjamin (1987), different from information – important in the immediate moment for its novelty value – the narrative, as a handmade form of communication, preserves its germinative forces over time. It is through the knowledge shared and transmitted between generations that the narrator builds the narrative

through personal experience or incorporating histories related by others.

In this perspective, Maria-Nova at the peak of her adolescence introjects the teaching transmitted by the elders. Facing her experiences, she carried a strange feeling in her chest. She felt in that moment of her life that she must tell hers and the others stories, even without knowing how. Following Maria-Nova's internal sayings, it is possible to identify the starting point of Conceição Evaristo's literature work. Intuitively, Maria-Nova recognizes "the calling" of her restless soul and takes on to herself, as destiny, to be the voice of her people. At this moment, creation and creator get confused; fiction and reality intertwine. Conceição denominates as *escrevivência* this phenomenon of intertwining, in which individual and collective experiences – subjectivity and collectivity – meet through literature.

We may understand this pathway crossed by her and well described in *Becos da Memória* as a significant mark of her individuation process. As proposed by Jung (2016, p. 166), "individuation refers to the process of personality development through the integration of the contents of the unconscious, personal and collective, into conscience". It means an enlargement of the conscience in a continuous non-linear way. Although this process is only possible to execute through the experience of meeting the other, whether in the concrete relation of the individual with the community to which it belongs or in the internalization of other(s) in itself, in its subjective and symbolical dimension (BARRETO, 2010).

Maria-Nova expands her conscience of herself as she relates to her surroundings, recognizing and taking root in the experiences of collectivity. In many moments of the novel, she is described with acute senses, in deep introspection.

Thereby, we can infer that her psyche energy moves through contemplative introjections and solitary reflections. On the other hand, her resentment was recurrently manifested

and made her project herself in a different reality. Facing destructions and deaths present at favela “Maria-Nova felt that it was necessary to change her own story, that she has a commitment to life and could not back down” (EVARISTO, 2018, p. 48).

### **Banzo as archetypal expression of mourning**

Uncle Totó’s father, when narrating the ancestor’s stories, commented about a stranger pain that on sunny days tightened the chest,

It was the pain of banzo. Maria-Velha’s grandfather also spoke about the same pain when losing almost all the children sold by his master. Maria-Nova was also given to sadness, she already had banzo in the blood, she kept in her chest a sorrow of a remote life not lived (EVARISTO, 2018, p. 89).

During the plot, the girl, testifying suffering from different orders, is taken by a great sadness, her heart filled with pain; she had inherited the *banzo* feeling.

*Banzo* is a vast term, meaning sadness, nostalgia, mourning, and restlessness of the soul experienced by the enslaved Blacks. According to Lopes (2011), *banzo* is a word from Kikongo and Kimbundu languages, referring to thought, remembrance, sorrow, passion, and grief. It was a deadly nostalgia that struck the enslaved Black in Brazil. In the first dictionary of the Portuguese language (ODA, 2008), the word *banzar* was defined as the action of “astound with pity.” In the past, was referred to as a reaction to the traumatic experience of kidnapping and slavery lived by Black people. By this experience, enslaved men and women would live in a state of restlessness of the soul, resulting from forced exile and the consequences of slavery, such as torture and annihilation of life.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, *banzo* was classified as a psychiatric epidemic arising from a melanchol-

ic illness related to the disappointment caused by the violent departure of Africa, a brutal rupture with family and community bonds, and the uprising by the loss of freedom, and the reactions to the heavy and unfair punishments (ODA, 2008).

*Banzo* crossed centuries and is present in the descendants that still suffer sequels of a slave social system. Living in favelas bring back the experience of slavery in terms of hunger, lack of basic hygiene, physical and symbolic violence, and labor exploitation.

In the middle of the favela, there was a huge hole that grew during the rainy season and in the landslides. It was a depository for the residents’ garbage and a threat for the community. Maria-Nova described it as an imposing crater that challenges the world (EVARISTO, 2018). In the moment of her goodbyes from the favela, after looking deeply into the “big hole”, she felt an empty hole inside her, larger than the one she externally observed. For a minute, contemplating the big hole, she felt as if everything was disintegrating inside her.

Cidinha-Cidoca, another resident of the favela, pretty and coquette, easy on the eyes; she was desired by men and hated by women; at that moment, she was walking in silence, dirty, disheveled, and with an empty look. Taken by bitterness and disillusionment, she went crazy, tired of the suffering of “not living”, she threw herself into the big hole of the favela that swallowed everything, and she died.

Traumatic experience can be seen as a large crack opened in the unconscious. We can approach the big hole image as a darkening personification of the collective trauma from the Black diaspora, retraumatizing via the emotional fragmentation experience of violence and exclusion that the community is daily exposed to. Trauma, associated with the autonomous aspect of the emotional complex, is capable of attracting to itself, in a threatening way, the psychic and creative energy, blocking the flow of life’s spontaneous development. Kalsched highlights

that complexes grow by aggregation, attracting more and more reality, like a black hole in space, grinding pieces of experience (KALSCHED, 2013, p. 122). The big hole, a deep and exposed pit, like hungry cancer, devours the land, an element that symbolizes the support of the concrete life. Considering that the land can also be associated with maternal images of fertility and regeneration, the big hole, like an open wound, is a pressing warning against the threatening and annihilation of life.

Bastide (1943) and Oda (2010) said that in the period of slavery in Brazil, the suicide of many enslaved was related to *banzo*. In many cases, suicide was associated with demonstrations of resistance and pursuing freedom from the brutal condition of imprisonment and annihilation of the humanity condition of individuals. One of the frequent suicide methods by slaves, sickened by *banzo*, was through the ingestion of the soil, a practice brought from Africa. Thereby, paradoxically, Black people symbolically tried, through physical death, to get back to the symbolical life by rescuing the lost freedom.

Kilomba (2019) describes the presence of many reports that connect suicide to the impact of racism and isolation in the narratives of enslaved people in the colonial period and of Black people in contemporary times. The author reflects that in the context of the annihilation of humanity through racism, suicide can emerge as a subversive function inside the dynamics of racial oppression. As a final performance, the subject claims its own subjectivity. In this regard, we can understand the suicide of Cidinha-Cidoca as a claiming act of a tragic outcome, but with legitimate autonomy, facing the despair of its own existence.

Brewster (2020), referring to the nuances of racial complexes, highlights the “archetypal mourning” as part of the cultural trauma due to the effects of slavery. Racial complex carries emotions of deep fear, sadness, and anger, and the trauma can be reactivated through generations as similar experiences of oppression

are revived later. We are strongly affected by our personal and collective past. Generations carry in their ancestral memory the pain of inferiority and invisibility. Mourning lived by ancestors is reactivated in Maria-Nova when she gets in touch with the narrative of the elders and through her personal and community experiences. Slave culture has not been undone yet and it unfolds itself before the adolescent gaze of Maria-Nova, having in front of her, as a challenge for her life, the elaborative work of her personal and collective mourning. She realizes that “Everyone would die one day, including some of the residents of the favela, in the desperation of life they repeated the trajectory of enslaved Blacks in past centuries and would find death as the only way out” (2018, p. 38). She understands that would be necessary to follow her life; she enjoys learning, and this would be her hope and salvation. Along with the restlessness of the *banzo* experience, the seeds from the histories narrated by the “griots” were present. These seeds will be incorporated into Maria-Nova’s psyche and sprout in her memories. Her *escrevivências* will reverberate as resistance expression. In the eyes of the elders of the community, her life represented the hope of transformation existing in the new generation.

### Goodbye and initiation

The last pages of the novel describe Maria-Nova’s farewell to the last favela residents at the end of the noisy devastation of *desfavelamento*.

The last place she went to visit before her leaving was the house of gramma Rita, an old community resident very lovely and caring for all things and people. Many residents were born through her midwife’s hands. Arriving at her house, Maria-Nova crossed the damaged gate and felt as if she was surpassing her own limit of life without dying. Gramma Rita receives her with affection and blesses her journey.

We can consider that the process of Maria-Nova’s goodbye from the favela and the blessings



she received from the eldest symbolically point to a rite of passage for her adult life. After these meetings, Maria-Nova had a big dream:

Gramma Rita walked slowly into the room. Suddenly. Quiet. She never had a silent voice because if she was not talking, she was singing; she never arrived suddenly because it was known from far away that gramma Rita was coming. She arrived on tiptoe. Big, fat, clumsy. She opened her blouse, and through the shiny and transparent black of her skin, a huge heart could be seen. And with every beat of gramma Rita's heart, men were born. All men: black, white, blue, yellow, pink, discolored— from the huge, big heart of gramma Rita, humanity was born (EVARISTO, 2018, p. 141).

Through the symbolic and poetic wealth existing in Maria-Nova's report, we can infer it is about a "Big" Dream. (JUNG, 2014) These dreams are carried by archetypal images capable of generating deep emotional transformation and resizing life itself. Gramma Rita, who daily represented "the big mother of community" always with a noisy posture, in the dream, walked cautiously into Maria-Nova's bedroom. The big and fat shape of gramma Rita refers to the ancestral strength of the mother archetype. It gains prominence in the dreamlike images of her "coronary womb" as a generating source of life, visibly through her shiny and transparent skin, referring to the spiritual dimension of the image.

In the dream, gramma Rita's soul is revealed, and it is through the beats of her heart that human beings, with all their diversity of colors, are created. The origin of humanity arises from the beat of the lovingness of the maternal soul. In the Mande vocabulary, "Nimba" means the feminine as soul; this meaning is present in the ancient Nimba, a goddess of fertility worshipped in rituals practiced by the African peoples Baga and Nalu. According to Paiva (2021), in the ritu-

als, Nimba is represented by many colors; she is a goddess that conceives, acts, cooperates, shares, and weaves the destiny of our lives.

Considering the archetypal dimension of the dream, we can think that Maria-Nova was visited in her bedroom by the universal feminine soul since the term "gramma" makes a strong affective reference to the ancestral matrix. We can think that symbolically gramma Rita constellates the image of Mama Africa, strongly identified as the origin of humanity, considering the evidences already discovered that *Homo sapiens* emerged on that continent. Considering the connections to our country, we can infer that the African matrix constitutes one of the marks of Brazilian nationality, and these Black references are reconfigured in the images of *a mãe-de-santo* (mother-of-saint, a spiritual lider in Umbanda religion), *as tias* (the caring women of the periphery), *a rainha do congado* (the great Mother in Congado, an Afro-Brazilian cultural and religious manifestation), among others.

The bedroom, an intimate space limited by time and space, can be associated with Maria-Nova egoic conscience, which is penetrated carefully by the archaic and ancestral content of the collective unconscious. It is an overwhelming experience in which she is faced with the curative power of her ancestry, existing in the images of fecundity, solidarity, and creativity, essential elements for her personal trajectory and collective legacy based on her *escrevivência*. Evaristo reported that as she entered adolescence, writing became a place of support for her to clear her doubts and agonies:

Such as reading, since adolescence, was for me a means, a way of withstand the world, because it provided me with a double movement of escape and insertion in the space in which I lived, writing as well, since that time, encompassed these two possibilities: escaping to dream world and facing reality to make change (EVARISTO, 2005, p. 3)

Exploring the work *Becos da Memória* and the reports of Conceição Evaristo, we can consider that her creative process through literary experience, which started in her adolescence, was a determinant for her individual development with big reverberation on the collectivity. Through the exercise of imaginative introversion, it was possible to distance herself from the impacts presented in the concrete reality, and in that introspective movement, it was discovered necessary elements for confrontation and transformation of reality through the exercise of writing.

Jung highlighted the strength of the creative process as an impulse that sprouts from the unconscious. He uses the image of the development of a tree to describe the creative wish that: “[...] lives and grows inside man like a tree in the soil from which it extracts its food. Therefore, we would do well to consider the creative process as a living essence implanted in the soul of man” (JUNG, 2011, p. 75). He named this essence an “autonomous complex” because of transpersonal and archetypal dimension, that characterizes the creative impulse. Thus, the production of the work of art has a collective dimension that manifests in the elaboration of the individual work of the artist. Creative process occurs through the activation of archetypal contents existing in the field of collective unconscious.

Jung considered the fundamental role of art as an educational and curative agent in the field of collectivity:

[...] works continuously to educate the spirit of the age, as it brings to light those forms in which the age most needs. Starting from the dissatisfaction of the present, the artist’s eagerness retreats until he finds in the unconscious that adequate primordial image to compensate more effectively for the lack and one-sidedness of the spirit of the time (2011, p. 83).

Discomfort and resentment lived by Conceição Evaristo in the early years of her life,

facing contradictions imposed by racism in its several manifestations, were generative seeds of her freedom process in the personal dimension with a strong impact on the collective psyche. Her literary work, based on what she called *escrevivência*, is an example of how personal memories, including traumatic memories charged by the power of individual and collective complexes, when experienced and re-edited in its symbolical dimension through writing, can initiate psychic transformations in a creative way in the individual and collective field. The written of *Becos da memória* shows the initiation process of Conceição Evaristo in her literary journey through *escrevivência*:

Stories are made up, even the real ones when they are told. Between the event and the narration of the fact, there is a deep space; it is there that invention explodes [...]. At the base, at the foundation of the narrative of *Becos* is an experience, which was mine and of my people. Writing *Becos* was to pursue an *escrevivência* (EVARISTO, 2018, p. 9).

## Conclusion

Considering the symbolical dimension as a structuring element of the human condition, very present in the Jungian studies, it is a primordial reference to understanding the psyche and collective reality. This perspective appears very valuable in dark times like the one we are passing through when shallow, rigid, and literalizing speeches of life gain space and appear as a collective sign of deep emptiness.

The act of narrating and sharing memories is a way of constructing and reconstructing ourselves accounting for continuity and subjectivity reference. Thus, through speaking and writing it is possible to connect with personal and collective stories, strengthening one’s own identity. Memorial narratives blur the line between fiction and reality, conscious and unconscious.

Thereby, these narratives bring us closer to the past in a reconstructive way through resources introduced in the present that we can project into the future.

Brazil can be recognized as a nation that is constituted with a very rich cultural diversity. On the other hand, it is also identified as a country with a large symbolical debt in what it refers to segregation, exploration, and abuse of the Indigenous people and African descendants.

Such denied racism debt is a consequence of a colonizer project that, consciously or unconsciously, causes profound ruptures that has re-

verberated on our individual and collective psyche over the centuries.

Through the perspective that our individuality develops through recognizing our totality, memories also can be considered as raw material of the collective soul. When people have their memories erased, they suffer from uprooting and symbolical annihilation, usually from a serious traumatic fissure. In that regard, the restoration of Black memories through narratives constitutes a field of resistance and cure.

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## Resumo

### *Escritas que curam: complexo racial e narrativa memorialista*

O presente trabalho buscou refletir, por meio da perspectiva junguiana, sobre as contribuições das narrativas memorialistas para a transformação do complexo racial. Destacamos que a memória individual está interligada à memória coletiva e apontamos os impactos traumáticos decorrentes do aniquilamento das memórias dos afrodescendentes em decorrência do colonialismo ao longo da nossa história. Nesse sentido, analisou-se o romance “Becos da

Memória” da escritora Conceição Evaristo, considerando a dimensão simbólica-arquetípica presente na obra e os aspectos do processo de individuação da autora. A sua obra literária, pautada no que ela própria denominou de “escrevivência”, é um exemplo de como as memórias traumáticas, carregadas pela potência dos complexos, quando “reeditadas” por meio da escrita, podem desencadear transformações psíquicas no campo individual e coletivo. ■

Palavras-chave: complexo racial. memória. narrativa. literatura

## Resumen

### *Escritos que curan: complejo racial y narrativa memorialista*

El presente trabajo buscó reflexionar, a través de la perspectiva junguiana, sobre los aportes de las narrativas memorialistas a la transformación del complejo racial. Resaltamos que la memoria individual se entrelaza con la memoria colectiva y señalamos los impactos traumáticos derivados del aniquilamiento de las memorias de los afrodescendientes a causa del colonialismo a lo largo de nuestra historia. En este sentido, se analizó la novela “Becos da Memória” (Callejones de la

Memoria) de la escritora Conceição Evaristo, considerando la dimensión simbólico-arquetípica presente en la obra y los aspectos del proceso de individuación de la autora. Su obra literaria, basada en lo que ella misma llamó “escrevivencia”, es un ejemplo de cómo los recuerdos traumáticos, cargados de la potencia de los complejos, al ser “reeditados” a través de la escritura, pueden desencadenar transformaciones psíquicas en el ámbito individual y colectivo. ■

Palabras clave: Complejo racial. Memoria. Narrativa. Literatura.

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