LANGUAGE AS RESISTANCE: A POSTCOLONIAL APPROACH TO THE USE OF NATION LANGUAGE AS CULTURAL TRANSLATION IN GRACE NICHOLS' POEMS

A LÍNGUA COMO RESISTÊNCIA: UMA PERSPECTIVA PÓS-COLONIAL SOBRE O USO DE LÍNGUA NACIONAL COMO TRADUÇÃO CULTURAL EM POEMAS DE GRACE NICHOLS

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ABSTRACT: The colonial enterprise transformed our world and the way we perceive it and ourselves. Our structures of knowledge were reshaped and a hierarchic division of the world and of peoples was established. The postcolonial studies arise in this context to deal with such effects (ASHCROFT ET AL, 2013, p. 108) and with the many forms of resistance that now take place. One of them is the use of language as resistance. Since the colonial intellectual transformation occurred mainly through language, it only makes sense that the former colonized subjects make use of it as well in their subversive enterprises. This article analyzes the development and use of nation language (BRATHWAITE, 1996) as resistance against the effects of colonialism in the Caribbean author Grace Nichols's book *The Fat Black Woman's Poems* (1984). Although literature and language may not be able to transform reality, they are able to create alternative narratives with more inclusive futures.

KEYWORDS: Grace Nichols; Postcolonialism; Cultural Translation; Nation Language; Caribbean.

RESUMO: O empreendimento colonial transformou nosso mundo e o modo como o percebemos e a nós mesmos. Nossas estruturas de conhecimento foram reformuladas e uma divisão hierárquica do mundo e de povos foi estabelecida. Os estudos pós-coloniais surgem nesse contexto para lidar com tais efeitos (ASHCROFT ET AL, 2013, p. 108) e com as várias formas de resistência que emergem. Uma delas é o uso da língua como resistência. Como a transformação intelectual do colonialismo ocorreu principalmente através da língua, faz sentido que os antigos povos colonizados também se utilizem dela em seus empreendimentos subversivos. Este artigo analisa o desenvolvimento e uso da língua nacional como resistência contra os efeitos do colonialismo no livro *The Fat Black Woman's Poems* (1984) da autora caribenha Grace Nichols. Apesar de a literatura e a língua talvez não serem capazes de transformar a realidade, elas são capazes de criar narrativas alternativas com futuros mais inclusivos.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Grace Nichols; Pós-Colonialismo; Tradução Cultural; Língua Nacional; Caribe.

It is usually thought that the history of humanity is a linear sequence of events, neglecting the deep alterations colonization provoked in both the colonies and the metropolises. The world's economic, social, and cultural formation is based on this process of conquest of and control over lands and bodies of other peoples. Knowledge is "not innocent but profoundly connected with the operations of power" (LOOMBA, 1998, p. 24) and colonialism reshaped the "existing structures of human knowledge. No branch of learning was left untouched by the colonial experience" (LOOMBA, 1998, p. 54). These constructions established a series of supposedly universal truths, which divided the world into binaries, such as nature *versus* culture, body *versus* mind, woman *versus* man, and many others. The binaries, in turn, were attached to institutional and official discourses. They were material in their formation and in their effects.

In this scenario, the postcolonial studies, then, emerged to deal with "the effects of colonization on cultures and societies" (ASHCROFT ET AL., 2013, p. 108), which persist and are entrenched in our social and political systems. These effects are not very different from the questions of colonization itself, "problems of dependency, underdevelopment, and marginalization, typical of the 'high' colonial period, persist into the postcolonial" (HALL, 2019a, p. 99), what is different is that "these relations are resumed in a new configuration" (HALL, 2019a, p. 99); they "are now available for reflection in ways they were not before" (PRATT, 2008, p. 460). Therefore, we may now look towards our productions, our lives, and our forms of organization with a more critical consciousness regarding world colonial history.

The postcolonial tendencies promote resistance and create new representations of the former colonized peoples and of the categories used to discriminate against them. One of the ways such resistance takes place is through the new forms of language that appear in writing and oral forms. Nation Language is an example of such forms of expression and is defined by the critic Kamau Brathwaite as the language which is "influenced very strongly by the African model, the African aspect of our New World/Caribbean heritage. English it may be in terms of some of its features. But in its contours, its rhythm and timbre, its sound explosions, it is not English, even though the words, as you hear them, might be English to a greater or lesser degree" (1996, p. 550), and it is this form of resistance that will be discussed in this article.

Although the postcolonial is a body of thought, used above to qualify such type of resistance, we must keep in

mind that the term "postcolonial" is also used as a way to characterize the times we are living in, marked by, for example, the inverted movement that has been happening for quite a few decades now. Instead of a movement from the metropolis to the colony, now the former colonized peoples are going to the metropolises. This "counter-movement" occurs mainly because these subjects are looking for new and better opportunities than those in their home countries – which were exploited and some even destroyed by the processes of colonization. These people are now migrating towards the big cities and centers of the world, becoming resistance inside these former metropolises. In the specific case of England and the Caribbean, many writers and thinkers have created new narratives and literary movements that are occupying not only physical spaces inside these metropolises, but also in the intellectual field. The constant presence and the resistance of these subjects have instituted a negotiation of the frontiers of the divisions. Likewise, the classification of people through essential and fixed categories has also been negotiated. As Homi Bhabha claims, "it is to the city that the migrants, the minorities, the diasporic come to change the history of the nation" (1994, p. 243). One of the ways they do so is through the different uses of the English language.

In this article I propose to analyze the Caribbean author Grace Nichols's book *The Fat Black Woman's Poems* (1984) through a postcolonial optic in order to analyze the different uses of the English language by former colonized subjects developed in literature and how they can become a confrontation of the colonial rule. Grace Nichols was born in Guyana in 1950 and moved to Great Britain in 1977, living there until nowadays. She is one of the most important Caribbean voices of contemporaneity with more than 20 published books, all of which attempt to defy the restricting stereotypes imposed on black women. *The Fat Black Woman's Poems*, published in 1984, presents a Caribbean fat black woman living in London and challenging, through her daily activities, any type of exclusion and oppression. Her presence in London is portrayed as disturbing and this is what she does better: she disturbs the current stereotypes and creates new images and representations of herself.

Although the fat black woman's presence causes such a disturbing aspect, there has been a "black presence" in Britain since the sixteenth century, as Stuart Hall emphasizes (2019a, p. 105). However, the strong migration from the Caribbean to London began in the post-Second World War period, with the arrival of the ship *Empire Windrush* in 1948, "bringing returning Caribbean volunteer

servicemen and the first civilian Caribbean migrant leaving the depressed economies of the regions in search for a better life" (HALL, 2019a, p. 105). This flow was not only from the Caribbean, but also included Asian, African and other peoples from the so-called Third World. The colonized peoples found their way "back" through the pathways that England opened during colonization. The political statement that attempted to define this movement, "we are here because you were there" (ALMEIDA, 2015, p. 12), a famous motto of political activists that emigrated to Europe, grew increasingly until the 1970s, when immigration laws became more rigid in Britain.

The great number of immigrants arriving in Britain led to the closing of international doors as a nationalistic protection. This response also reflected the harsh attitude of British people towards the newly arrived, so well described by Hall: "most British people looked at these 'children of empire' as if they could not imagine where 'they' had come from, why or what possible connection they could have with Britain" (2019a, p. 104). These people found "poor housing and unskilled, poorly paid jobs" (HALL, 2019a, p. 104). Although they constitute a significant part of Britain, and even more of London's population, they "have been subjected to all the effects of social exclusion, racialized disadvantage, and informal and institutionalized racism" (HALL, 2019a, p. 104). The way Britain's national history was told underlies this situation and upholds its maintenance. Bhabha claims that nation is a narration (1994, p. 204). In the case of Great Britain and many other European cases, the narration left out important parts of its constitution. Britain was considered a "unified and homogeneous culture until the postwar immigrants" (HALL, 2019a, p. 104) arrived, which is a very simplistic and colonialist view of history. In fact, Britain was constituted through "a series of conquests, invasions, and settlements" (HALL, 2019a, p. 104). It was dominated by the French and has only existed as a nation-state since the eighteenth century. It came into being, as we know it, when other cultures (Scottish and Welsh) were associated with the English culture, leading to the "slippage between London, England and Britain as corresponding terms" (MCLEOD, 2004, p. 16), which erased any other influences or differences inside it. This narration about the British nation was also used to create a narration about the colonized subjects. A narration of inferiority and superiority was established and made people believe it was the only existent narration in the world.

In the British context, a belief of a "completely pure" British lineage, created through such a narration of superiority, is one of the main arguments for the idea of

the so-called pure races or pure cultures in opposition to immigrants and their families. Such perception insists on defending the existence of alleged high cultures against the influence of others, such as the Caribbean. This occurs mainly when such Caribbean influence is inside Great Britain itself. This kind of thought fails to consider that these other influences installed in the London city "do not (yet) have the power, frontally, to confront and repel the former [British culture] head-on. But they do have the capacity, everywhere, to subvert and 'translate', to negotiate and indigenize the global cultural onslaught on weaker cultures" (HALL, 2019b, p. 222).

This dichotomic thought and alleged superiority of one culture can be seen in the poem "The Fat Black Woman Goes Shopping" (NICHOLS, 1984, p. 8-9) along with the fat black woman's resistance to it while she is "shopping in London winter", searching for "accommodating clothes". The fat black woman, being an immigrant, is faced with discrimination against her culture, her body, herself.

> Shopping in London winter
> is a real drag for the fat black woman
> going from store to store
> in search of accommodating clothes
> and de weather so cold
>
> Look at the frozen thin mannequins
> fixing her with grin
> and de pretty face salesgals
> exchanging slimming glances
> thinking she don't notice
>
> Lord is aggravating
>
> Nothing soft and bright and billowing
> to flow like breezy sunlight
> when she walking
>
> The fat black woman curses in Swahili/Yoruba
> and nation language under her breathing
> all this journeying and journeying
>
> The fat black woman could only conclude
> that when it come to fashion
> the choice is lean
> Nothing much beyond size 14 (NICHOLS, 1984, p. 8-9)

The search for clothes may appear to be a distant theme from the negotiations inside the city. Sandra Almeida argues, however, that the city is a reflection or projection of the bodies that inhabit this space (2015, p. 142). Therefore, the way the bodies behave and express themselves

is part of the city's construction. The "slimming glances" the salesgirls exchange represent the paradox of hospitality Almeida talks about. Hospitality and hostility, similar even in their etymology, constitute a paradox of the reception immigrant people have in a country. The law of hospitality determines that the immigrants must comply with the laws of the new country. On the other hand, the inhabitants of this new country must also respect and accept the difference through an ethics of hospitality (ALMEIDA, 2015, p. 150). The hidden judging gaze of the salesgirls reflects this need to accept the other and the failure to deal with the uncommon. However, this paradox of the double-sided law of hospitality should not paralyze political action, but foster it (ALMEIDA, 2015, p. 152). As much as this poem seems to portray an immobilization of political action, the way the fat black woman deals with this paradox leads to a visualization of another narrative within this city. These different subjects who occupy the city constitute a negotiation and the unsettling of essentialized notions of citizenship.

Although this search for clothes is marked by the fat black woman's discomfort, represented by the expression "a real drag" and the cold weather, and the fact that she is discriminated against by the "salesgals", the fat black woman does not portray this episode as an example of what she has to endure in London. The focus here is on how she overcomes such inhospitality and how she occupies this space. She denies the British culture alleged superiority by attributing to this culture's model of fashion and beauty – represented by the thin "salesgals" and the clothes she finds in the store – the notion of "lean". In the last stanza, "lean" has a double meaning: thin, slim, but also poor, lacking variety. Therefore, she establishes this cultural representation of beauty as negative. By doing so through her culture's parameters and through the use of her culture's employment of the English language, she stands as resistance to British intellectual colonization. With a direct mention to "nation language", its use in the poem, and African idioms, the fat black woman uses language as a weapon not only to defend herself, but to be resistance.

The reason why language can be such an instrument is that the intellectual colonization of the Caribbean – and of all the other parts of the world – was performed textually, through "maps, treaties, settler's journals, letters, travel writing, novels, poems, etc." (BERTACCO, 2014, p. 24), and now it is the time for postcolonial literature to arise as "vehicles of anticolonial struggle" (BERTACCO, 2014, p. 24). In the process of colonization, the English language and the culture it represents were imposed on

the colonized peoples, and tried to erase other cultures and forms of expression. The colonized peoples had to learn a new language, use it widely, and were forced to neglect their own forms of expression as a way to assert domination. Nonetheless, they created forms of resistance inside this very language, creating possible ways to use English language as a vehicle of anticolonial struggle, to mention Bertacco's expression, as a way to question the alleged superiority of English language and culture, and the history of colonization along with its repercussions.

This is what the Indian author Salman Rushdie discusses when he names himself – and others in similar positions, living in their former metropolises – "translated men". He explains: "the word 'translation' comes, etymologically, from the Latin for 'bearing across'. Having been born across the world, we are translated men (sic)" (RUSHDIE, 1991, p. 17). Discussing common ideas of translation, he adds: "It is normally supposed that something always gets lost in translation; I cling, obstinately, to the notion that something can also be gained" (RUSHDIE, 1991, p. 17). While discussing such idea, Rushdie claims that "to be an Indian writer in this society is to face, every day, problems of definition" (1991, p. 17) and then he goes on to ask the following questions: "What does it mean to be 'Indian' outside India? How can culture be preserved without becoming ossified? How should we discuss the need for change within ourselves and our community without seeming to play in the hands of our racial enemies?" (RUSHDIE, 1991, p. 17-18) and some others. What Rushdie is questioning here is how a translated subject, as he calls, is to live – and not only survive – in a different cultural world than his or her own.

What these immigrant subjects do, then, is to constantly perform a cultural translation. Sarah Maitland calls cultural translation "the interlingual model of translation" (2017, p. 28), or "the purposeful orientation of the hermeneutic dimension of life towards meaningful action and the transformation of the interpreting self" (2017, p. 11). It brings awareness about how it is not only the colonizer actions that have had effects on the colonized cultures, but also the opposite. When the former colonized subjects move to the former metropolises, they bring along their culture and ways of thinking, which begin to affect this society as well. In order to live in such a city, the immigrant subjects translate their ways of thought, their traditions, their forms of expression into the modes and day-by-day of this culture where they are inserted now.

In the text "Postcolonial Cities and the Culture of Translation", Sherry Simon discusses the scenario of Calcutta.

The author asserts that “traffic from one side of the physical and conceptual spaces of Calcutta to the other was not a simple transference of terms, not the re-expression in another language of preexisting ideas and styles”, in fact, she continues, it was a process that saw “the emergence of new forms of expression in Bengali thought. The encounter between White and Black sides of town quickly became a process of inter-traffic and transformation, involving interaction across languages and temporalities, between contemporary English and Bengali cultural forms” (SIMON, 2014, p. 202). The interaction between these cultures led to a new form of cultural expression, one form of thought was translated into the other and vice-versa. This is what cultural translation is: a two-way process of negotiation of meanings, practices, and forms of expression.

Simona Bertacco, discussing cultural translation of postcolonial texts, claims that “a single language approach to post-colonialism is unfaithful to one of the basic constituencies of the postcolonial world – its multilingualism” (2014, p. 26). “If the postcolonial is to survive as a viable critical discourse”, as Bertacco claims, “it will have to become literally a discourse *of* and *on* translation” (2014, p. 26, author’s emphasis). In a world where “bi- and multi-lingualism have become the norm for huge numbers of people, postcolonial studies should speak more than one language at once, pushing its field of inquiry toward the borders between languages and different disciplines” (BERTACCO, 2014, p. 26-27). The fat black woman lives in this very bi-lingualism – her nation language and the English of Londoners. In “The Fat Black Woman Goes Shopping” discussed above, the space the fat black woman occupies in that city is associated with the language used to express her dismay for the salesgirls: “The fat black woman curses in Swahili/Yoruba / and nation language under her breathing / all this journeying and journeying” (NICHOLS, 1984, p. 8). Despite what one may assume, the language here “is not an accessory to the work of the city, but an integral part. Contact, transfer, circulation among languages define the sensibility of daily life and the public presence of communities” (BERTACCO, 2014, p. 195). Thus, the insertion of such a register in a scene that insists on erasing the fat black woman’s presence in London shows how language can be a tool of resistance. It occupies the city with the Caribbean presence and creates productive spaces of confrontation. In times when coloniality still rules and the main theories and ideas still derive from Eurocentric history and value systems, the cultural presence of this “inner translation” or “self-representation”, as Bill Ashcroft terms it (2014, p. 43), is a response to this homogenizing threat.

Although the process of colonial erasure of other cultures has happened widely, some traces of the "original" cultures have survived, such as the influence on language. However, the remaining traces of them were placed in the intimate, private circles of interaction. The "proper" English, on the other hand, is the one taught in schools and used in work environments. Thus, it is the official language that occupies the public space of culture. Because of this context, the Creole, Nation Language or Patois was constructed as a marginalized variety in opposition to Standard English.

In the Caribbean, nation language was mainly constructed as a form of communication for people who did not share the same language, since communities of West and Central African slaves were forced to work together (LOCKWOOD, 2014, p. 85). The Caribbean critic Kamau Brathwaite wrote an important text defining nation language and giving a new perspective to its use and formation, as was cited in the beginning of this article. After describing nation language, the author questions if English can be a revolutionary language and answers that "it is not English that is the agent. It is not language, but people, who make revolutions" (BRATHWAITE, 1996, p. 551). Rushdie presents a similar idea when he claims that "to conquer English may be to complete the process of making ourselves free" (1991, p. 17). We can conclude from both authors remarks that language, as a form of cultural expression, can be, indeed, one of the routes through which former colonized subjects can effect changes in their and in the colonizer culture as well. It is necessary to recognize the importance language has in our lives, a fact Nichols asserts through her poems, discussing not only nation language itself, but the effects it has on the fat black woman's life in London city.

The poem "Epilogue" (NICHOLS, 1984, p. 85) from Nichols's first book *i is a long memoried woman* (1983), is present in the last section of *The Fat Black Woman's Poems*. As other poems do, it suggests a concern about the use of nation language, however, in this poem, this long memoried woman describes, with very few words, the birth of nation language:

> I have crossed an ocean
> I have lost my tongue
> from the root of the old one
> a new one has sprung (NICHOLS, 1984, p. 85)

The poem describes, then, the forced diaspora of black people throughout the Atlantic and the process of intellectual colonization and cultural assimilation of the

African cultures. The interesting fact is that the birth of this language is described as a plant whose "foremother" died and left the path to the growth of the new one. A new language has sprung from the death of the older one. Likewise, in the Caribbean cultural formation, a new meaning has sprung from the old ones erased in colonial times. Caribbean history is marked by survival and constant changes – necessary and revolutionary –, which led to the establishment of the nation language as a new tool of confrontation.

In "We New World Blacks" (NICHOLS, 1984, p. 34), from the section "In Spite of Ourselves", the description is no longer of the language's formation. The poem is about the conflicts of the speakers, who are divided between the alienation of the colonizer's culture and the suffering entailed in belonging to a culture they try to hide.

> The timbre
> in our voice
> betrays us
> however far
> we've been
> whatever tongue
> we speak
> the old ghost
> asserts itself
> in dusky echoes
> like driftwood
> traces
> and in spite of
> ourselves
> we now the way
> back to
> the river stone
> the little decayed
> spirit
> of the navel string
> hiding in our back garden (NICHOLS, 1984, p. 34)

The timbre personified in the ghost may represent the cultural roots black people cannot eliminate. This presence is stronger than their will. In spite of themselves, they know the way back home. This poem may represent the commonly necessary process that comes before acceptance and understanding that the black, afro-descendant culture is not an inferior, but a discriminated culture. The acceptance of this fact and the struggle against such excluding colonial patterns lead to a new perspective on the use of nation language – a strategic one, as the one in "The Fat Black Woman Goes Shopping" discussed above.

1. Michael Lockwood counts in percentage terms how many poems in Nichols's children's books use the creole (as he refers to it). However, he considers the use of creole in a limited way and does not take into consideration all the forms of expression of creole/nation language.

It is important to note that, unlike Michael Lockwood's mathematics[1] (2014, p. 83), nation language does not refer only to the use of a different grammar, e.g., the verb conjugation. It is much more expressive than this limited understanding of African influence; it is the influence on the way of thinking. Cultural translation transmits exactly this difference of perspectives and manners of thinking. The users of Standard English may usually think of poetry in very canonic forms with interpolated rhymes. Contrarily, nation language, in the fat black woman's case, uses a rhythmic sequence of verses that might not even rhyme, but has musicality. In the use of nation language, it is possible, for example, to borrow the form of old popular hymns or round songs, or to find symbols and specific meanings, rituals of a specific culture. By introducing these aspects in Standard English, the fat black woman produces a cultural translation. This translation operates in a space of dialogue between the two languages, producing a gap in which difference can be negotiated. Based on her own culture and language, the fat black woman can translate her thoughts and ways of seeing the world.

In "The Fat Black Woman Versus Politics" (NICHOLS, 1984, p. 23), we may see how nation language is present even if not in the way it is presented in "The Fat Black Woman Goes Shopping" with strong marks as "de weather", "she don't", "it come". Here, the cultural translation is present through cultural symbols. The poem is a reflection of how the fat black woman sees the political games and the two last stanzas go as follows:

> But if you were to ask her
> What's your greatest political ambition?
> she'll be sure to answer
>   To feed powercrazy politicians a manifesto of lard
>   To place my X against a bowl of custard (NICHOLS. 1984, p. 23)

The lard, typical in Caribbean cooking, is to be gulped down by politicians – who, in this poem, are the ones taking advantage and exploiting the fat black woman –, and the bowl of custard, so traditionally European, is to be thrown out of this game. In such a way, the fat black woman travesties and parodies the official form of speech – the one of custard bowls, perfect political speeches in "perfect English", which are to be examples of elegance and education. For the fat black woman, this "perfection" is laden with hypocrisy. Through such an inversion, the fat black woman gains power, the Caribbean culture gains power, it is seen and respected. Here, the translation occurs inside culinary. While in "Epilogue" and "We New World Blacks" then nation language and

its development are discussed and questioned, pointing to how this formation is a revolutionary construction of overcoming oppression, here, as in "The Fat Black Woman Goes Shopping", cultural translation actually takes place and becomes resistance.

Using aspects of one's own culture and cultural identity in a language which was imposed and which represents a history of dominance, means to translate oneself – history, culture, and values – into a form of expression which was equally imposed, and which does not reflect one's identity features. Ashcroft claims that "our language is us" (2014, p. 45). Thus, inserting nation language into Standard English, as Nichols does in her poems, is to defy this dualistic and discriminating status. Ashcroft also claims that there is no pure language and that all relations between a sign and referents are already a translation, which means that all languages are unstable, unfixed. If language is a metonymic representation of a culture, then no culture can be fixed, pure or superior to another culture. The presence of two different cultures installs a gap, which is "a refusal to translate the world of the writer completely" (ASHCROFT, 2014, p. 61) and, I add, to alienate it completely too. This gap as a place of negotiation and reconsideration of ideas is exactly the gain that Rushdie claims all translations also have. In Nichols's work, the resistance language installs functions as a disturbing instrument that unsettles the current, discriminating situation the poetic voice describes. Ashcroft even claims that the process of translating "cultural realities in a transformed language [...] has changed the field of English literature forever" (2014, p. 67).

More than a change in the literary field, this form of creative resistance has the force to influence our perceptions of the world surrounding us. Many authors discuss literature and its reflexive possibility that may provoke changes in our lives (ALMEIDA, 2015, p. 25; RUSHDIE, 1991, p. 14). In *Postcolonial London: Rewriting the Metropolis*, John McLeod investigates how the confluence of people and cultures in the "postcolonial London" – a term he extensively reflects upon – may modify the city. This process of modification can be carried out through the diasporic subjects' writings, which offer "alternative and revisionary narratives of subaltern city spaces which do not easily succumb to the demands of authority" (MCLEOD, 2004, p. 4). The author claims that these writings have "enabled new ways of thinking about regional, national, diasporic and transcultural identities" (MCLEOD, 2004, p. 4) by taking "control not only of the spaces in which they have found themselves but also of the agency to make their

own representations about the city and their experiences" (MCLEOD, 2004, p. 21).

McLeod examines Nichols's *The Fat Black Woman's Poems* and how it forces London "to accommodate black women whose subaltern spatial practices evidence important modes of resistance and agency" (2004, p. 95) by producing "tentative yet emancipatory visions of London [...] suggesting resources which resist the problematic construction of migrant women in London" (2004, p. 20). Since the British Empire was built through a narrative, this form of writing re-tells this narrative, and opens central spaces for new protagonists. Postcolonial London, for McLeod, is not a specific place that can be pointed to on a map, it is what emerges "between the material conditions of metropolitan life and the imaginative representations made of it" (2004, p. 7). With the growing prominence of diasporic, black, female writers, the city of London begins to change its scenario. Although literary works are not able to affect racism and discriminations per se, it is possible to identify alternative narratives and descriptions of ways of living that blur these dividing lines and, thus, contribute to the creation of more inclusive futures, as Nichols's poems attempt to do. Although the poems refer mostly to the past history and its current effects, it is by revising such history and retelling it through the marginalized peoples' eyes that a better future can be constructed, through the comprehension of what the process of colonization truly was and what it caused. *The Fat Black Woman's Poems* is a provocation. It provokes us to think about the constructions embedded in language and how they can be challenged. The fat black woman is, we may say, more interested in disturbing fixed patterns than in proposing new ones. This may be why she is such a representation of resistance, because she installs instability in our established certainties.

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Recebido em: 15-07-2021.
Aceito em: 27-04-2022.