Revista Letras Raras

ISSN: 2317-2347 – v. 15, n. 1 – e7826 (2026)
Todo o conteúdo da RLR está licenciado sob Creative Commons Atribuição 4.0 Internacional

Death management in the light of necropolitics: disposable bodies in “Negrinha”, by Lobato and “Você vai voltar pra mim”, by Kucinski /

Gestão da morte à luz da necropolítica: corpos descartáveis em “Negrinha”, de Lobato e “Você vai voltar pra mim”, de Kucinski

Aldenora Márcia Chaves Pinheiro Carvalho[']
PhD in Language and Teaching from the Federal University of Campina Grande (PPGLE/UFCG/FAPEMA). Master’s degree in Culture and Society from the Federal University of Maranhão (UFMA). Specialist in Literary Criticism from the State University of Maranhão (UEMA). Bachelor’s degree in Portuguese–Spanish Language and Literature from the Federal University of Maranhão (UFMA). Adjunct Professor with exclusive full-time dedication at the Academic Unit of Letters of the Federal University of Maranhão (UFMA).
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1472-9228

Emanuelle de Lemos Silva[''']
Bachelor’s degree in English Language and Literature (2017–2024). Currently a Master’s degree candidate in the Graduate Program in Letters, in the research line Theoretical and Critical Studies, with emphasis in the field of Literature, developing ongoing research. Member, since 2020, of the research group Ficça, conducting investigations focused on Gothic Literature, Detective Fiction, Horror and Terror Literature, and Science Fiction, with interest in the intersections between aesthetics, literary criticism, and studies of the imaginary. Teacher in the state public school system of Maranhão, linked to the State Department of Education (SEDUC).
https://orcid.org/0009-0004-7968-312X

Igor Azevedo Bezerra[''']
Master’s degree candidate in Letters at PGLetras – Graduate Program in Letters/UFMA; Postgraduate degree in Brazilian Literature from Faculdade de Educação São Luís (FESL); Bachelor’s degree in Letters from Faculdade Pitágoras do Maranhão; Basic Education teacher in the public school system of the State of Maranhão (SEDUC/MA); Researcher in the field of Letters, with emphasis on Comparative Literature, Black Literature, Decolonial and Postcolonial Literature; Member of Grifo – Literary Studies.
https://orcid.org/0009-0005-3537-9131

['] aldenora.marcia@ufma.br

[''] emanuelle.lemos@discente.ufma.br

['''] azevedo.igor@discente.ufma.br

Revista Letras Raras

ISSN: 2317-2347 – v. 15, n. 1 – e7826 (2026)
Todo o conteúdo da RLR está licenciado sob Creative Commons Atribuição 4.0 Internacional

Received: Oct., 28th of 2026. **Approved:** Nov. 2nd of 2026.

How to quote this article:
CARVALHO, Aldenora; SILVIA Emanuelle; BEZERRA, Igor. Death management in the light of necropolitics: disposable bodies in “Negrinha”, by Lobato and “Você vai voltar pra mim”, by Kucinski. *Revista Letras Raras.* Campina Grande, v. 15, n. 1, e7826, nov. 2026. DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.24612960.

ABSTRACT
This study analyzes necropolitics, as formulated by Achille Mbembe, in articulation with the production of identity and difference in Brazilian Literature, through the short stories Negrinha (2009), by Monteiro Lobato, and Você vai voltar pra mim (2014), by Bernardo Kucinski. The study is based on the understanding that, according to Mbembe (2016/2018), state sovereignty is manifested through the power to decide who must live or die, operating upon bodies historically produced as disposable. In dialogue with Tomaz Tadeu da Silva (2000), such bodies are inscribed within regimes of difference that dehumanize them and render them subject to physical and/or symbolic elimination. From this perspective, the article aims to analyze how both short stories reveal modalities of necropolitics in Brazil by examining three analytical categories: (i) necropolitics as a practice of power through the discursive production of identity and difference; (ii) the constitution of disposable bodies and the reasons that legitimize their elimination; and (iii) the mechanisms and purposes of death management. Methodologically, in addition to a bibliographic review on necropolitics, this is a qualitative discussion grounded in textual-interpretative analysis, addressing the theme of disposable bodies in light of Mbembe’s studies (2014/2016), articulated with Silva (2000) framework on the production of identity and difference, in dialogue with authors such as Foucault (1979/1988/2008), Hesíodo (2001), Agamben (2004), Fanon (2008), Butler (2015), Gonzalez (2020) and Jorge (2024). The results indicate that, although situated in different historical periods, the narratives converge in denouncing necropolitical regimes in Brazil and the persistence of authoritarian and racialized practices in the management of life and death.
KEYWORDS: Necropolitics; Identity and difference; Disposable bodies; Ideological mechanisms; Death management.

RESUMO
Este trabalho analisa a necropolítica, formulada por Achille Mbembe, articulada à produção da identidade e da diferença na Literatura Brasileira, através dos contos Negrinha (2009), de Monteiro Lobato, e Você vai voltar pra mim (2014), de Bernardo Kucinski. Assim, este estudo parte da compreensão de que, conforme Mbembe (2016/2018), a soberania estatal manifesta-se pela capacidade de decidir quem deve viver ou morrer, operando sobre corpos historicamente descartáveis. Em diálogo com Tomaz Tadeu da Silva (2000), tais corpos são inscritos em regimes de diferença que os desumanizam e os tornam passíveis de eliminação física e/ou simbólica. Nessa acepção, este artigo objetiva analisar como os dois contos evidenciam modalidades da necropolítica no Brasil, investigando-se três categorias: i) a necropolítica como prática de poder pela produção discursiva da identidade e da diferença; ii) a constituição de corpos descartáveis e as razões passíveis de suas eliminações; e iii) os mecanismos e finalidades da gestão da morte. Metodologicamente, além da revisão bibliográfica acerca da necropolítica, esta é uma discussão de natureza qualitativa e de análise textual-interpretativa, que discute a temática dos corpos descartáveis à luz dos estudos de Mbembe (2014/2016) alinhados à produção da identidade e da diferença proposto por Silva (2000), em diálogos com autores como Foucault (1979/1988/2008), Hesíodo (2001), Agamben (2004), Fanon (2008), Butler (2015), Gonzalez (2020) e Jorge (2024). Os resultados consideram que, embora situadas em períodos distintos, as narrativas convergem na denúncia de regimes necropolíticos no Brasil e questões autoritárias e raciais na gestão da vida e da morte.
PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Necropolítica; Identidade e diferença; Corpos descartáveis; Mecanismos ideológicos; Gestão da morte.

ISSN: 2317-2347 – v. 15, n. 1 – e7826 (2026)
Todo o conteúdo da RLR está licenciado sob Creative Commons Atribuição 4.0 Internacional

1 Introduction

Understanding the dynamics of power involves examining the ways in which the State manages the life and death of certain populations. In this context, the concept of necropolitics, formulated by Achille Mbembe (2016), constitutes a key framework for analyzing authoritarian regimes and historical structures that articulate institutional violence, biopolitical control, and the physical or symbolic elimination of subjects deemed undesirable.

According to Mbembe (2016, p. 123), sovereign power manifests itself when the State holds the prerogative to decide "who may live and who must die," thus configuring what the author calls the "politics of death," that is, a system that organizes bodies and territories according to racial, economic, and, therefore, ideological hierarchies. Within this political regime, the ideal of sovereignty is not limited to the exercise of power, but also operates through the production of difference by means of identity, whereby the excluded subject is rendered precarious and violence becomes the norm, thus converging with the theoretical framework proposed by Tomaz Tadeu da Silva (2000).

Drawing on this theoretical approach, we seek to analyze how the short stories *Negrinha* (2009), by Monteiro Lobato, and *Você vai voltar pra mim* (2014), by Bernardo Kucinski, reveal distinct modalities of necropolitics in the Brazilian context, functioning as historical testimonies of denunciation and even resistance to the contexts in which they are situated. In each of these works, the politics of death is represented through specific mechanisms for producing vulnerability and controlling existence: in *Negrinha*, it is related to the violence and dehumanization of Black bodies in the post-abolition period, in which the protagonist's life is subjected to domination as well as to the normalization of violence; in *Você vai voltar pra mim*, in turn, it manifests itself within the context of the military dictatorship through State violence and the suppression of subjects considered threats to the prevailing political order. Thus, although both narratives depict situations of violence, their connection to necropolitics is not based solely on the presence of death or oppression, but rather on the ways in which certain structures of

ISSN: 2317-2347 – v. 15, n. 1 – e7826 (2026)
Todo o conteúdo da RLR está licenciado sob Creative Commons Atribuição 4.0 Internacional

power legitimize and manage the exposure of particular subjects to violence and to the condition of lives that may be disregarded.

More specifically, we seek to: i) understand how necropolitics, as proposed by Mbembe (2016), is configured as a practice of power in the production and differentiation of subjects within the contexts presented in the narratives, considering the discursive production of identity and difference discussed by Tomaz Tadeu da Silva (2000); ii) interpret the processes through which female bodies are constituted as subject to violence, punishment, elimination, or abandonment, taking into account the historical and political specificities of the post-abolition period and the Brazilian Civil-Military Dictatorship; and iii) identify the mechanisms and purposes underlying the management of death and suffering mobilized by sovereign power in the short stories, highlighting literature as a *campus* for exposing and denouncing forms of sovereign domination in distinct historical contexts in Brazil.

In this regard, the research problem guiding this study can be formulated as follows: "In what ways do the short stories *Negrinha* (2009), by Monteiro Lobato, and *Você vai voltar pra mim* (2014), by Bernardo Kucinski, represent distinct modalities of necropolitics in the Brazilian context by highlighting how the discursive production of identity and difference contributes to the constitution of disposable female bodies and to the legitimation of mechanisms for managing death and suffering in distinct historical periods?" By formulating this question, we aim to discuss both the convergences between these authoritarian contexts and the historical similarities that shape their practices of violence and resistance in light of necropolitics.

The methodology adopted is based on a qualitative textual-interpretive analysis, grounded in Achille Mbembe's theoretical framework, particularly the concept of necropolitics, and in dialogue with the reflections of Foucault (1979/1988/2008), Hesiod (2001), Agamben (2004), Fanon (2008), Butler (2015), Gonzalez (2020), and Jorge (2024). The investigation proceeds from the articulation between literary form and the historical-social context, considering the aforementioned short stories as aesthetic productions contextualized by regimes of power and violence.

Thus, we observe that the two short stories converge in presenting necropolitics as a persistent structure within the Brazilian contexts depicted and that, despite the specificities of each context, both

ISSN: 2317-2347 – v. 15, n. 1 – e7826 (2026)
Todo o conteúdo da RLR está licenciado sob Creative Commons Atribuição 4.0 Internacional

demonstrate that literary art has the capacity to expose authoritarian governments, while also serving as a means of reconstructing memory and reaffirming ideals of resistance.

2 Necropolitics as a practice of power sustained by the discursive production of identity and difference

In the first chapter of *Out of the Dark Night: Essays on Decolonization* (2014), entitled "*From the Skull of a Dead Man: Trajectories of a Life*," Achille Mbembe, a Cameroonian historian, political scientist, and philosopher, adopts a narrative and autobiographical mode through which he articulates personal memory, as well as philosophical reflection and historical analysis concerning his childhood experiences in southern Cameroon, within a context marked by the constant presence of deaths caused by the colonizer, necropower, funeral rituals, and coexistence with Catholic practices introduced by the dominant power. In this way, the author employs the metaphor of the "skull of a dead relative" to reflect on the African postcolonial condition, thereby developing the concept of necropolitics.

According to Mbembe (2016), necropolitics constitutes a logic of power that transcends national and historical boundaries, as it is characterized as an ultimate expression of sovereignty. According to the theorist, this ideal of authority reaches its most extreme expression when it manifests itself as the capacity to "dictate who is able to live and who must die" (Mbembe, 2016, p. 123), shifting the axis of power from the mere administration of life to the centrality of death as a political technology. Mbembe (2016, p. 123) argues that the act of "…killing or allowing to live constitute the limits of sovereignty, its fundamental attributes," since the exercise of sovereignty consists in controlling mortality through the deployment or manifestation of power.

In order to consolidate the concept of necropolitics, the author engages in dialogue with Foucauldian *biopolitics* and with the notion of the *state of exception* developed by Giorgio Agamben (1995). For Mbembe (2016, p. 124), the state of exception "ceases to be a temporal suspension of the rule of law" and, according to Agamben (1995), becomes permanent by remaining outside the principles of the normal state of law, thus no longer corresponding to a temporary suspension of rights in times of crisis.

Revista Letras Raras

ISSN: 2317-2347 – v. 15, n. 1 – e7826 (2026)
Todo o conteúdo da RLR está licenciado sob Creative Commons Atribuição 4.0 Internacional

For Agamben (2004), the state of exception represents a permanent mechanism of government in which the law applies precisely by suspending itself. Under this regime, the subject is reduced to the condition of *bare life*, that is, a life deprived of rights and exposed to sovereign violence without the possibility of legal protection. Mbembe (2016) draws on this notion to demonstrate that, under necropolitical regimes, large segments of the population are relegated to the condition of bare life, living under the constant threat of physical or social death.

We understand that the state of exception is embedded in systems of government belonging to colonial, postcolonial, and even authoritarian contexts insofar as sovereignty operates through the selective suspension of the law, whereby certain groups are excluded from legal protection and come to live under the constant threat of violence and death. Thus, Mbembe (2016) argues that necropolitics does not replace the biopolitics proposed by Foucault (1988), who argues that:

> O homem ocidental aprende pouco a pouco o que é ser uma espécie viva num mundo vivo, ter um corpo, condições de existência, probabilidade de vida, saúde individual e coletiva, forças que se podem modificar, e um espaço em que se pode reparti-las de modo ótimo. Pela primeira vez na história, sem dúvida, o biológico reflete-se no político; o fato de viver não é mais esse sustentáculo inacessível que só emerge de tempos em tempos, no acaso da morte e de sua fatalidade: cai, em parte, no campo de controle do saber e de intervenção do poder.
> (...)
> Se pudéssemos chamar de 'bio-história' as pressões por meio das quais os movimentos da vida e os processos da história interferem entre si, deveríamos falar de 'biopolítica' para designar o que faz com que a vida e seus mecanismos entrem no domínio dos cálculos explícitos, e faz do poder-saber um agente de transformação da vida humana (FOUCAULT, 1988, p.134).[1]

[1] Western man gradually learns what it means to be a living species in a living world, to have a body, conditions of existence, probabilities of life, individual and collective health, forces that can be modified, and a space in which they can be distributed in an optimal manner. For the first time in history, no doubt, the biological is reflected in the political; the fact of living is no longer that inaccessible foundation that emerges only from time to time, amid the randomness of death and its fatality: it falls, in part, within the field of knowledge's control and power's intervention. (...)
If we could call "bio-history" the pressures through which the movements of life and the processes of history interfere with one another, we should speak of "biopolitics" to designate what brings life and its mechanisms into the realm of explicit calculations and makes power-knowledge an agent of transformation of human life. (Foucault, 1988, p. 134, our translation).

ISSN: 2317-2347 – v. 15, n. 1 – e7826 (2026)
Todo o conteúdo da RLR está licenciado sob Creative Commons Atribuição 4.0 Internacional

By privileging reason as a means of administering life, Foucauldian biopolitics demonstrates how modern power comes to manage bodies and populations through mechanisms of control directed at those who do not partake in this form of sovereign power. According to Mbembe (2016), these ideals of control fit within a kind of production of general norms through the ultimate expression of the sovereignty of a people composed of beings categorized as "free and equal." However, although the concept of biopower formulated by Foucault (1988) contributes to understanding forms of control and the administration of life, it does not encompass contexts in which the exercise of power is also structured through the systematic exposure of certain subjects to death within contexts of violence and social exclusion. It is from this perspective that Mbembe (2016) broadens the discussion by conceptualizing necropower through the sovereign capacity to determine who may live and who must die. In this sense, Mbembe (2016) states that:

> Minha preocupação é com aquelas formas de soberania cujo projeto central não é a luta pela autonomia, mas "a instrumentalização generalizada da existência humana e a destruição material de corpos humanos e populações". Tais formas da soberania estão longe de ser um pedaço de insanidade prodigiosa ou uma expressão de alguma ruptura entre os impulsos e interesses do corpo e da mente. De fato, tais como os campos da morte, são elas que constituem o *nomos* do espaço político em que ainda vivemos. (Mbembe, 2016, p. 125).[2]

In the excerpt above, we see that necropolitics, by engaging with the ideal of biopolitics insofar as the latter minimizes or negates the existence of the Other, radicalizes biopower by highlighting regimes in which sovereignty exposes certain bodies to death, whether through direct violence, torture, imprisonment, or abandonment. In other words, necropolitics is a regime of power that decides who must be sacrificed or kept in a state of slow death, rather than who deserves to live better, within the same time and context. Such inequality is formulated through the production of a sovereign identity

[2] My concern is with those forms of sovereignty whose central project is not the struggle for autonomy, but rather "the generalized instrumentalization of human existence and the material destruction of human bodies and populations." Such forms of sovereignty are far from being a piece of prodigious insanity or an expression of some rupture between the impulses and interests of the body and the mind. Indeed, like the death camps, they constitute the *nomos* of the political space in which we still live. (Mbembe, 2016, p. 125, our translation).

Revista Letras Raras

ISSN: 2317-2347 – v. 15, n. 1 – e7826 (2026)
Todo o conteúdo da RLR está licenciado sob Creative Commons Atribuição 4.0 Internacional

grounded in ideals of difference, which converges with the theoretical framework proposed by Tomaz Tadeu da Silva (2000).

In *The Social Production of Identity and Difference* (2000), Tomaz Tadeu argues that the production of identity (and difference) is inextricably articulated with relations of power, since identity is constituted as a historically situated social relation. Its configuration occurs through linguistic, discursive, and symbolic processes permeated by disputes, in which certain groups have a greater capacity to define, name, and impose meanings (Silva, 2000). Thus, the author considers both identity and difference to be cultural and social constructions, and both are interdependent, since the ideal of identity must exist for difference to be established.

> A identidade é simplesmente aquilo que se é: "sou brasileiro", "sou negro", "sou heterossexual", "sou jovem", "sou homem". A identidade assim concebida parece ser uma positividade ("aquilo que sou"), uma característica independente, um "fato" autônomo. Nessa perspectiva, a identidade só tem como referência a si própria: ela é autocontida e auto-suficiente.
> Na mesma linha de raciocínio, também a diferença é concebida como uma entidade independente. Apenas, neste caso, em oposição à identidade, a diferença é aquilo que o outro é: "ela é italiana", "ela é branca", "ela é homossexual", "ela é velha", "ela é mulher". Da mesma forma que a identidade, a diferença é, nesta perspectiva, concebida como auto referenciada, como algo que remete a si própria. A diferença, tal como a identidade, simplesmente existe. É fácil compreender, entretanto, que identidade e diferença estão em uma relação de estreita dependência (SILVA, 2000, p. 74).[3]

It is through this coexistence between the production of identity and difference that, according to Silva (2000), a broad chain of “negations” can be created; that is, while an individual or a given group defines itself through the ideals of identity, the same group affirms what it is not and, automatically,

[3] Identity is simply what one is: “I am Brazilian,” “I am Black,” “I am heterosexual,” “I am young,” “I am a man.” Identity conceived in this way appears to be a positivity (“what I am”), an independent characteristic, an autonomous “fact.” From this perspective, identity refers only to itself: it is self-contained and self-sufficient.
Following the same line of reasoning, difference is also conceived as an independent entity. In this case, however, in opposition to identity, difference is what the other is: “she is Italian,” “she is white,” “she is homosexual,” “she is old,” “she is a woman.” Just like identity, difference is, from this perspective, conceived as self-referential, as something that refers to itself. Difference, like identity, simply exists. It is easy to understand, however, that identity and difference are closely interdependent. (Silva, 2000, p. 74, our translation).

Revista Letras Raras

ISSN: 2317-2347 – v. 15, n. 1 – e7826 (2026)
Todo o conteúdo da RLR está licenciado sob Creative Commons Atribuição 4.0 Internacional

seeks to repress what is different through similarity (identity), which positions a majority in relation to what is judged to be different.

> …as afirmações sobre diferença só fazem sentido se compreendidas em sua relação com as afirmações sobre a identidade. (...) As afirmações sobre diferença também dependem de uma cadeia, em geral oculta, de declarações negativas sobre (outras) identidades. Assim como a identidade depende da diferença, a diferença depende da identidade. Identidade e diferença são, pois, inseparáveis (SILVA, 2000, p. 75).[4]

Silva (2000), by considering identity and difference as inherently interconnected concepts, argues that the construction of these categories goes beyond the symbolic and ideological sphere, since it is also related to social inequalities and the positions of power occupied by subjects within society. In this sense, this discussion is in dialogue with Foucault's (1979) thought, which understands power as something exercised through social relations and practices, permeating different spaces and influencing the organization of society. Thus, the production of identity and difference is not limited to establishing characteristics that distinguish individuals and groups, but also involves the definition of standards that determine who belongs or does not belong to a particular social group. Therefore, as some identities are socially valued and recognized, others are placed in positions of inferiority and exclusion, demonstrating how these constructions contribute to the maintenance of social hierarchies.

> A afirmação da identidade e a marcação da diferença implicam, sempre, as operações de incluir e de excluir. Como vimos, dizer "o que somos" significa também dizer "o que não somos". A identidade e a diferença se traduzem, assim, em declarações sobre quem pertence e sobre quem não pertence, sobre quem está incluído e quem está excluído. Afirmar a identidade significa demarcar fronteiras, significa fazer distinções entre o que fica dentro e o que fica fora. A identidade está sempre ligada a uma forte separação entre "nós" e "eles". Essa demarcação de fronteiras, essa separação e distinção, supõem e, ao mesmo tempo, afirmam e reafirmam relações de poder. "Nós" e "eles" não são, neste caso,

[4] "…statements about difference only make sense when understood in their relationship to statements about identity. (...) Statements about difference also depend on a generally hidden chain of negative statements about (other) identities. Just as identity depends on difference, difference depends on identity. Identity and difference are therefore inseparable." (Silva, 2000, p. 75, our translation).

ISSN: 2317-2347 – v. 15, n. 1 – e7826 (2026)
Todo o conteúdo da RLR está licenciado sob Creative Commons Atribuição 4.0 Internacional

> simples distinções gramaticais. Os pronomes "nós" e "eles" não são, aqui, simples categorias gramaticais, mas evidentes indicadores de posições-de-sujeito fortemente marcadas por relações de poder (SILVA, 2000, p. 82).[5]

It is through this evidence of power relations, proposed by identity through difference, that a principle emerges that motivates the exclusion of that which one is not. According to Mbembe (2016), this represents the ultimate expression of sovereignty, insofar as it consists of the production of norms formulated by a people composed of free and equal citizens who, when confronted with difference, seek to impose their identity ideal through the ideal of sovereignty and its possible mechanisms of power.

Thus, the theorist states that “these men and women are considered to be complete subjects, capable of self-knowledge, self-consciousness, and self-representation” (Mbembe, 2016, p. 124), which is why they assume the sovereign authority to dictate rules to those who do not fit within the same identity, within a so-called biopolitical context organized around who deserves to live better and around the capacity to exclude and control those who do not share the same ideal. Consequently, a social environment comes to be governed and legislated by sovereignty. Thus, “politics, therefore, is defined doubly: a project of autonomy and the achievement of agreement within a collectivity through communication and recognition” (Mbembe, 2016, p. 124).

However, this collective recognition will be based on what is the same (identity itself) and on what is different, the latter becoming an obstacle to the exercise of sovereignty proposed within certain ideals of biopower. In this way, necropolitics regards the constitution of difference through identity as a driving force of necropower, whereby the political figure of the State (whether through an ideal of

[5] The affirmation of identity and the marking of difference always imply the operations of inclusion and exclusion. As we have seen, saying “what we are” also means saying “what we are not.” Identity and difference are thus translated into statements about who belongs and who does not belong, about who is included and who is excluded. To affirm identity means to draw boundaries, to make distinctions between what remains inside and what remains outside. Identity is always linked to a strong separation between “us” and “them.” This demarcation of boundaries, this separation and distinction, presupposes and, at the same time, asserts and reaffirms relations of power. “We” and “they” are not, in this case, mere grammatical distinctions. The pronouns “we” and “they” are not, here, simply grammatical categories, but evident indicators of subject positions strongly marked by relations of power. (Silva, 2000, p. 82, our translation).

ISSN: 2317-2347 – v. 15, n. 1 – e7826 (2026)
Todo o conteúdo da RLR está licenciado sob Creative Commons Atribuição 4.0 Internacional

government or a public figure) dictates the rules governing the lives and deaths of those who are different and, therefore, regarded as disposable.

> …o biopoder parece funcionar mediante a divisão entre as pessoas que devem viver e as que devem morrer. Operando com base em uma divisão entre os vivos e os mortos, tal poder se define em relação a um campo biológico – do qual toma o controle e no qual se inscreve. Esse controle pressupõe a distribuição da espécie humana em grupos, a subdivisão da população em subgrupos e o estabelecimento de uma cesura biológica entre uns e outros. Isso é o que Foucault rotula com o termo (aparentemente familiar) "racismo" (MBEMBE, 2016, p. 128).[6]

Defining who belongs, who is recognized, and who is excluded entails exercising the power to name, classify, and even establish hierarchies, making differentiation a central mechanism in social organization. Biopolitical extremism amounts to sovereignty, understood by Mbembe (2016) as "the capacity to define who matters and who does not, who is 'disposable' and who is not" (Mbembe, 2016, p. 135), and is directly connected to necropolitics, since the outcome of this biopolitics results in death, whether real or symbolic, when it comes to the control of bodies.

> …a política da raça, em última análise, está relacionada com a política da morte. Com efeito, em termos foucaultianos, racismo é acima de tudo uma tecnologia destinada a permitir o exercício do biopoder, "aquele velho direito soberano de morte". Na economia do biopoder, a função do racismo é regular a distribuição de morte e tornar possível as funções assassinas do Estado. Segundo Foucault, essa é "a condição para a aceitabilidade do fazer morrer" (MBEMBE, 2016, p. 128).[7]

[6] "…biopower seems to function by dividing people into those who must live and those who must die. Operating on the basis of a division between the living and the dead, such power defines itself in relation to a biological field—which it takes control of and within which it inscribes itself. This control presupposes the distribution of the human species into groups, the subdivision of the population into subgroups, and the establishment of a biological caesura between one group and another. This is what Foucault labels with the (apparently familiar) term 'racism.'" (Mbembe, 2016, p. 128, our translation).

[7] "…the politics of race is, ultimately, related to the politics of death. Indeed, in Foucauldian terms, racism is above all a technology intended to enable the exercise of biopower, 'that old sovereign right of death.' Within the economy of biopower, the function of racism is to regulate the distribution of death and to make possible the murderous functions of the State. According to Foucault, this is 'the condition for the acceptability of putting to death.'" (Mbembe, 2016, p. 128, our translation).

ISSN: 2317-2347 – v. 15, n. 1 – e7826 (2026)
Todo o conteúdo da RLR está licenciado sob Creative Commons Atribuição 4.0 Internacional

In this sense, identity and difference do not merely reflect pre-existing power relations but actively participate in their production and maintenance, since every process of differentiation involves the legitimization of inequalities and the naturalization of exclusions. Therefore, if sovereign power universalizes the right to kill or silence, it becomes essential to identify which groups are selected as sacrificial bodies in each context and how this selection contributes to the maintenance of necropower, as we will discuss in the next section.

3 The constitution of disposable bodies and the reasons that render them subject to elimination in *Negrinha* and *Você vai voltar pra mim*

According to Silva (2000), it is through the duality between the operations of inclusion and exclusion, as well as through the act of affirming identity and marking differences, that, within the Brazilian historical and political context, the sovereign figure of the State exercises necropolitics as a form of social control through socially amplified discourses. According to Jorge (2024), this supreme discourse is embodied in the figure of a sovereign, who concentrates within himself the power and legitimacy of political decision-making in the process of identity production, which simultaneously constructs exclusion through difference.

> Ao utilizar da força de todos com o fim da obtenção da paz comum, o soberano concentra em si todo o poder e toda a forma legítima de decisão. Nele, e somente por ele, o povo é congregado e unido, sendo sua pessoa a própria lei viva e encarnada. Sua palavra não receia, é absoluta; seus ordenamentos são o fim em si mesmo, não abrem brecha para o diálogo. Ele é o início, a indagação e a conclusão de qualquer afirmativa, contrariá-lo é ir de encontro à legislação e, congruentemente, contra o Estado (JORGE, 2024, p. 23).[8]

[8] By employing the strength of all for the purpose of achieving common peace, the sovereign concentrates within himself all power and every legitimate form of decision-making. In him, and through him alone, the people are gathered and united, his person being the living and embodied law itself. His word knows no hesitation; it is absolute. His commands are ends in themselves and leave no room for dialogue. He is the beginning, the inquiry, and the conclusion of any assertion; to oppose him is to go against the law and, consequently, against the State. (Jorge, 2024, p. 23, our translation).

ISSN: 2317-2347 – v. 15, n. 1 – e7826 (2026)
Todo o conteúdo da RLR está licenciado sob Creative Commons Atribuição 4.0 Internacional

The creation of this kind of "supreme law," described by Jorge (2024), is characteristic of necropolitical regimes, as it does not tolerate dissent or the plurality of ideas, requiring the formulation of a normative identity that is necessarily sustained by the production of identity through the constitution of difference. In this process, the figure of the sovereign not only establishes rules but also legitimizes a hegemonic model of belonging that defines who may be recognized as a full subject and who will be assigned the condition of the *Other*.

According to Silva (2000), the abnormal does not constitute a deviation external to the norm but is instead a constitutive element of the normal itself, since the dominant identity can only affirm itself through the exclusion of that which is classified as undesirable and even threatening for disrupting the logic of identity through its difference. The theorist thus argues that:

> A definição daquilo que é considerado aceitável, desejável, natural é inteiramente dependente da definição daquilo que é considerado abjeto, rejeitável, antinatural. A identidade hegemônica é permanentemente assombrada pelo seu Outro, sem cuja existência ela não faria sentido. Como sabemos desde o início, a diferença é parte ativa da formação da identidade (SILVA, 2000, p.84).[9]

This logic of differentiation, far from being neutral, operates as a technology of power that transforms certain bodies into preferential targets of violence, making their exclusion and, ultimately, their social elimination socially acceptable. As Jorge (2000) observes, punishment inflicted upon the body considered criminal is not limited to the imposition of physical pain or the shedding of blood; rather, it is constituted, above all, as a political ritual of the affirmation of sovereignty, since

> Ao ser penalizado pelo crime cometido, a punição infligida sobre o corpo criminoso tem como função, não somente causar dor física ou propor o derramamento de sangue; antes disso, o ato de punir está entrelaçado à demonstração do poder

[9] The definition of what is considered acceptable, desirable, and natural is entirely dependent on the definition of what is considered abject, unacceptable, and unnatural. Hegemonic identity is permanently haunted by its Other, without whose existence it would make no sense. As we have known from the outset, difference is an active part of the formation of identity. (Silva, 2000, p. 84, our translation).

ISSN: 2317-2347 – v. 15, n. 1 – e7826 (2026)
Todo o conteúdo da RLR está licenciado sob Creative Commons Atribuição 4.0 Internacional

> soberano diante do seu povo, trazendo luz à verdade do soberano em reestabelecer a ordem e culpabilizar os infratores (JORGE, 2024, p.19).[10]

By punishing the Other, regarded as an offender for failing to follow established rules, power directly imprints its authority upon the punished body by displaying it as material evidence of its capacity to restore order and define the boundaries of what is acceptable. Articulated with necropolitics, this logic demonstrates that the exercise of punishment is not aimed solely at disciplining, but also at hierarchizing lives, turning certain subjects into disposable and even sacrificial examples in order to legitimize the continuation of state violence.

As Mbembe (2016) states, necropower, as a component associated with necropolitics, operates through the construction of categories of subjects who may be exposed to death, abandoned to extreme vulnerability, or politically silenced. This process varies historically, but preserves the same principle of transforming social groups into legitimate targets of state violence.

In the short stories *Negrinha* (2009), by Monteiro Lobato, and *Você vai voltar pra mim* (2014), by Bernardo Kucinski, such logic is brutally enacted upon the female body, as the protagonists are situated within regimes of violence articulated with power, in spaces of domination and control, albeit in distinct historical contexts: in Lobato (2009), during the post-abolition period of slavery in Brazil; in Kucinski (2014), at the height of the Military Dictatorship.

In *Negrinha* (2009), the reader is introduced to the eponymous character, represented as a Black, orphaned girl reduced to the condition of an object that is not only disposable but also subject to discipline, in a representation of the colonial and slaveholding structures that persisted during the post-abolition period. As a body controlled by D. Inácia, “fat, rich, mistress of the world, pampered by priests, with a reserved place in church and a luxury box seat in heaven” (Lobato, 2009, p. 7, our translation), the character is granted the power to control life and death because she represents an identity ideal similar to the ideal of the State proposed during the post-abolition period: white, owner of

[10] When punished for the crime committed, the punishment inflicted upon the criminal body serves not only to cause physical pain or bring about the shedding of blood; rather, the act of punishment is intertwined with the demonstration of sovereign power before its people, bringing to light the sovereign’s determination to restore order and hold offenders accountable (Jorge, 2024, p. 19, our translation).

ISSN: 2317-2347 – v. 15, n. 1 – e7826 (2026)
Todo o conteúdo da RLR está licenciado sob Creative Commons Atribuição 4.0 Internacional

property and enslaved people, Catholic, and morally authorized to exercise violence in favor of the order and civility institutionally proposed by the State.

In this context, the character Negrinha is inscribed within a regime of difference that consequently dehumanizes her, making her body a legitimate territory for punishment and abandonment, since the daily violence to which the girl is subjected is not presented as an exception, but rather as a normalized practice directed toward the group to which she belongs, sustained by the social imaginary proposed by the notion of difference in Silva (2000), which, in the post-abolition context, naturalizes the inferiorization of the Black and child body.

> A excelente D. Inácia era mestra na arte de judiar de crianças. Vinha da escravidão, fora senhora de escravos e daquelas ferozes, amigas de ouvir contar o bolo e estalar o bacalhau. Nunca se afizera ao regíme novo — essa indecência de negro igual a branco; e qualquer coisinha, a polícia!! "Qualquer coisinha"; uma mucama assada ao forno, porque se engraçou dela o senhor; uma novena de relho, porque disse: — "Como é ruim, a sinhá!" [...]. O 13 de maio tirou-lhe das mãos o azorrague, mas não lhe tirou da alma a gana. Conservava, pois, Negrinha em casa como remédio para os frenesis. Simples derivativo. — Ai! Como alivia a gente uma boa roda de cocres bem fincados!... (Lobato, 2009, p. 8-9).[11]

It is evident that the short story compellingly demonstrates how the violence exercised by D. Inácia is not an individual or isolated characteristic, but rather the continuation of a social logic forged within the slaveholding regime and maintained during the post-abolition period. Historically, the production of this identity grounded in difference ("I am white, not Black"), as well as the idealization of a sovereign who must be respected and upheld as a supreme law (the maintenance of racism in Brazil, driven by the commerce and exploitation of enslaved people), contributed to the persistence of necropower even under the threat of its extinction, when the signing of the Golden Law on May 13,

[11] The excellent D. Inácia was a master at the art of mistreating children. She came from slavery, had been a slave owner, and one of those fierce ones, fond of hearing the sound of the whipping and the crack of the rawhide whip. She had never grown accustomed to the new regime—this indecency of a Black person being equal to a white person; and at the slightest thing, the police!! "The slightest thing"; a maid roasted in the oven because the master took a liking to her; a novena of whipping because she said: — "How awful the mistress is!" [...]. May 13 took the scourge from her hands, but did not take the craving from her soul. She therefore kept Negrinha at home as a remedy for her fits of rage. Simply a diversion. — Ah! How much relief a good round of well-planted knuckle blows can bring!... (Lobato, 2009, pp. 8–9, our translation).

ISSN: 2317-2347 – v. 15, n. 1 – e7826 (2026)
Todo o conteúdo da RLR está licenciado sob Creative Commons Atribuição 4.0 Internacional

1888, abolished the slaveholding regime in Brazil. However, this was not sufficient to eradicate a necropolitical discourse in the face of the difference established by sovereign identity. According to Albuquerque and Filho (2006),

> …a abolição não trouxe grande prejuízo financeiro para os proprietários. Entretanto, os conflitos que ocuparam a polícia durante e depois do dia 13 de maio denunciavam que, nem de longe, a Lei Áurea encerrava a tensão "racial" que a escravidão produzira. (...) Com a abolição a sociedade não podia mais ser definida pela oposição entre senhores e escravos. Essa mudança social ameaçava a autoridade dos ex-senhores, em sua maioria brancos. Afinal, não era apenas o trabalho dos escravos que os proprietários perdiam, mas também a sua posição de mando parecia correr risco. Como bem disse um jornalista da época, era indiscutível que a palavra *escravo* deveria ser riscada do vocabulário nacional, mas não se admitia que o termo *senhor* também fosse extinto (ALBUQUERQUE; FILHO, 2006, p.203).[12]

Thus, the character, who "had never grown accustomed to the new regime—this indecency of a Black person being equal to a white person" (Lobato, 2009, p. 8, our translation), embodies the normalized identity that, as Silva (2000) argues, imposes itself as an absolute standard of value, regarding difference as the *Other* (the enslaved Black person). By being established as the desirable identity because she is white and categorized as a race in a position of power within the prevailing State regime, D. Inácia occupies a position of power that allows her to hierarchize other forms of existence that deviate from this ideal of identity proposed by State sovereignty, whereby the Black child's body is negatively evaluated, becoming a target of necropolitics.

> Que ideia faria de si essa criança, que nunca ouvira uma palavra de carinho? Pestinha, diabo, coruja, barata descascada, bruxa, pata choca, pinto gorado, mosca morta, sujeira, bisca, trapo, cachorrinha, coisa ruim, lixo — não tinha conta

[12] "…abolition did not cause significant financial losses for the owners. However, the conflicts that occupied the police during and after May 13 revealed that, far from ending the "racial" tension produced by slavery, the Golden Law did not put an end to it. (...) With abolition, society could no longer be defined by the opposition between masters and slaves. This social change threatened the authority of the former masters, most of whom were white. After all, it was not only the labor of enslaved people that the owners were losing, but also their position of command seemed to be at risk. As a journalist of the time aptly stated, it was unquestionable that the word *slave* should be erased from the national vocabulary, but it was not acceptable for the term *master* to be abolished as well. (Albuquerque; Filho, 2006, p. 203, our translation).

ISSN: 2317-2347 – v. 15, n. 1 – e7826 (2026)
Todo o conteúdo da RLR está licenciado sob Creative Commons Atribuição 4.0 Internacional

> o número de apelidos com que a mimoseavam. Tempo houve em que foi — bubônica. A epidemia andava à berra, como novidade, e Negrinha viu-se logo apelidada assim — por sinal, achou linda a palavra. Perceberam-no e suprimiram-na da lista. Estava escrito que não teria um gostinho só na vida, nem esse de personalizar a peste... (LOBATO, 2009, p. 8).[13]

The physical and symbolic violence described in the short story, therefore, operates as a mechanism of power that reaffirms the "division between people who must live and those who must die" (Mbembe, 2016, p. 128, our translation), in which the suffering of the character Negrinha functions as a mechanism for maintaining order and reaffirming the ideal of the sovereign proposed by Jorge (2024), in dialogue with the reaffirmation of identity through difference. Thus, Lobato (2009) reveals that the legal abolition of slavery did not break with the ideals of domination, rather, they were reconfigured through new forms of control, in which the normalization of white identity sustained necropolitical practices for managing the life and death of Black bodies.

In *Você vai voltar pra mim*, Kucinski (2014) makes State control even more explicit through a sovereign discourse grounded in necropolitics, in which the female body is once again transformed into a territory of punishment and becomes subject to the laws of the State. The protagonist of the short story is an unidentified woman, a political prisoner during the Military Dictatorship in Brazil, and is situated within a regime of permanent exception, in which legality exists only as a simulation and violence imposes itself as the central language of power.

From the opening of the short story, the torturer's statement, "Be very careful about what you are going to say, don't forget that you'll come back here afterward; *you'll come back to me*" (Kucinski, 2014, p. 69, our translation), anticipates the necropolitical logic that marks the entire narrative, demonstrating that State sovereignty not only decides over life and death but also claims, by extension,

[13] What idea could this child have of herself, who had never heard a word of affection? Pest, devil, owl, peeled cockroach, witch, waddling duck, rotten chick, dead fly, dirt, slut, rag, little dog, bad thing, trash—there was no end to the number of nicknames with which they showered her. There was a time when she was called "bubonic." The epidemic was raging, as a novelty, and Negrinha was immediately given that nickname—as it happened, she thought the word beautiful. They noticed this and removed it from the list. It was written that she would not have even one little pleasure in life, not even the pleasure of giving a name to the plague... (Lobato, 2009, p. 8, our translation).

Revista Letras Raras

ISSN: 2317-2347 – v. 15, n. 1 – e7826 (2026)
Todo o conteúdo da RLR está licenciado sob Creative Commons Atribuição 4.0 Internacional

absolute possession of the subjugated body. This possession generated mechanisms for the exercise of necropolitical power, according to Oliveira *et al.* (2022):

> O golpe civil-militar que ocorreu no Brasil em 1964 levou a um regime extremamente repressivo, que não permitia qualquer tipo de oposição. Por conta disso, membros de grupos de oposição e de guerrilhas armadas foram torturados fisicamente e psicologicamente. Nesta época, o aparato repressor passou a agir de maneira informal, prendendo, torturando e assassinando pessoas consideradas subversivas e abandonando-as em locais clandestinos (OLIVEIRA *et al.*, 2022, p. 3).[14]

As a political prisoner, the female character is excluded from the ideal of identity proposed by Silva (2000) and therefore becomes subject to control by the sovereign figure of the state. In this context, she emerges as a victim of torture and the constant threat of death, becoming a kind of necropolitical territory in which sovereignty is exercised not only through the right to kill, but also through the continuous production of suffering and the persistence of practices governing life and death.

> Era a primeira audiência do seu processo. Depois que foi marcada, não penduraram mais, deixaram entrar comida, pomadas, roupa. Hoje está de blusa nova, saia também. Todos a querem bem-apresentada. Ia dar tudo certo, garantiram. Só precisava manter o controle. Não dizer nada, apenas negar as acusações do indiciamento. Ficar nisso.
> (...) Se não fosse aquela notícia da sua prisão, já estava morta. Ela mesma pediu, mais de uma vez, me matem, me matem. E o filho da puta dizia eu vou te matar, sim, mas quando eu quiser. Agora não podem. Tem processo (KUCINSKI, 2014, p. 69-70).[15]

[14] The civil-military coup that took place in Brazil in 1964 led to an extremely repressive regime that did not allow any form of opposition. As a result, members of opposition groups and armed guerrilla movements were physically and psychologically tortured. During this period, the repressive apparatus began to operate informally, arresting, torturing, and murdering people considered subversive and abandoning them in clandestine locations. (Oliveira *et al.*, 2022, p. 3, our translation).

[15] It was the first hearing in her case. After it had been scheduled, they stopped hanging her, allowed food, ointments, and clothing to be brought in. Today, she is wearing a new blouse and a new skirt, too. They all want her to look well-presented. Everything would be fine, they assured her. She only needed to remain in control. Say nothing, merely deny the charges listed in the indictment. Stick to that.
(...) If it hadn't been for the news of her arrest, she would already be dead. She herself had asked more than once, "Kill me, kill me." And the son of a bitch would say, "I'm going to kill you, yes, but when I want to." Now they can't. There's a legal proceeding. (Kucinski, 2014, pp. 69–70, our translation).

ISSN: 2317-2347 – v. 15, n. 1 – e7826 (2026)
Todo o conteúdo da RLR está licenciado sob Creative Commons Atribuição 4.0 Internacional

The dynamics of violence presented in Você vai voltar pra mim can be understood, drawing on Fábio Luis Franco (2023) and in dialogue with Mbembe's concept of necropolitics, as a form of "making die" that is not limited to immediate extermination but rather materializes through the prolonged management of suffering, fragmenting death into a succession of small, everyday deaths.

> O fazer morrer, nessa necropolítica, não se esgota na aniquilação imediata da vida, no assassinato brutal, na execução sumária; Mbembe percebeu que é próprio das tecnologias necropolíticas gerir o sofrimento dos corpos, fragmentando a morte em uma miríade de pequenas mortes, um morrer a conta-gotas, com o qual a dominação se intensifica e se perpetua (FRANCO, 2023, não paginado).[16]

In the short story, this logic manifests itself explicitly when the character recognizes that she remains alive not as a matter of right, but at the convenience of the state apparatus: "Now they can't. There's a legal proceeding" (Kucinski, 2014, p. 69, our translation). In other words, the temporary suspension of torture does not represent an interruption of violence, but rather its strategic reorganization, demonstrating that the state manages the duration of pain and determines when and how the body may once again be subjected to torment.

> De novo está só no camburão. Percebe que é o mesmo que a trouxe e se inquieta. Passa a observar o trajeto pela grade de ventilação. Vê, aterrorizada, entrarem pelo mesmo portão através do qual haviam saído para o tribunal.
> O camburão para, a porta se abre.
> O torturador diz, sorrindo:
> — Eu disse que você ia voltar pra mim, não disse? Vem, benzinho, vamos brincar um pouco.
> Ele a agarra pelas canelas e a arrasta para fora.
> Os outros em volta riem. (KUCINSKI, 2014, p. 71)[17].

[16] In necropolitics, "making die" is not exhausted by the immediate annihilation of life, brutal murder, or summary execution. Mbembe recognized that necropolitical technologies are characterized by their management of bodily suffering, fragmenting death into a myriad of small deaths—a slow, drip-by-drip dying through which domination is intensified and perpetuated. (Franco, 2023, n.p, our translation).

[17] Once again, she is alone in the prisoner transport van. She realizes it is the same vehicle that brought her there and becomes uneasy. She begins to observe the route through the ventilation grille. To her horror, she sees them enter through the same gate they had passed through on their way to the courthouse.
The van stops, and the door opens.
The torturer says with a smile:

ISSN: 2317-2347 – v. 15, n. 1 – e7826 (2026)
Todo o conteúdo da RLR está licenciado sob Creative Commons Atribuição 4.0 Internacional

The excerpt "I told you that you would come back to me, didn't I? Come here, sweetheart, let's play a little" exemplifies the process of "slow, drip-by-drip dying" proposed by Franco (2023) and the necropolitics conceptualized by Mbembe (2016). Within this conceptual framework, the anticipation of death becomes a central instrument of domination, since the exercise of power is not limited to determining who may die, but also involves managing the conditions under which, and the length of time for which, a subject remains exposed to the possibility of death under the state's sovereign ideology. Thus, the female body of the political prisoner becomes the target of a form of necropolitics that seeks not only to eliminate life, but also to prolong suffering as a means of absolute control, intensifying subjugation and sovereign power through the continuous precarization of life.

As we reflect on how necropolitics is sustained by the discursive production of identity and difference, and how this logic results in the constitution of disposable bodies, in the following section we will analyze the concrete mechanisms through which death and suffering are managed, as well as the political purposes of this management in Monteiro Lobato's *Negrinha* (2009) and Bernardo Kucinski's *Você vai voltar pra mim* (2014).

4 The mechanisms and purposes of death management in *Negrinha* and *Você vai voltar pra mim*

To proceed, we start from the understanding that, in these contexts, death is not presented as an isolated or exceptional event, but rather as a mechanism of power that operates through both symbolic dehumanization and the normalization of everyday violence, with specific purposes: maintaining the social order, producing fear, and legitimizing the disposal of certain lives.

The maintenance of racialization and the predatory control of black bodies reveal the consolidation of institutional power that segregates, discards, and subordinates black subjects through

— I told you that you would come back to me, didn't I? Come here, sweetheart, let's play a little.
He grabs her by the ankles and drags her outside.
The others standing around laugh. (Kucinski, 2014, p. 71, our translation).

ISSN: 2317-2347 – v. 15, n. 1 – e7826 (2026)
Todo o conteúdo da RLR está licenciado sob Creative Commons Atribuição 4.0 Internacional

systematic mechanisms of domination and social exclusion. In this regard, Mbembe (2009), in developing the concept of necropolitics, argues that racism operates as a fundamental political technology for the distribution of violence and suffering, subjecting these bodies to a lack of full recognition and to extreme forms of control. This logic is further developed by Fanon (2008), who analyzes colonial degradation as a process of ontological annihilation in which the black subject is reduced to the status of an object-body, captured by a gaze that reifies and subordinates them.

Although rooted in postcolonial studies and reflections on the effects of domination, we understand that the concepts of necropolitics and ontological dehumanization also contribute to literary analysis, as they make it possible to understand how power relations are represented in the construction of characters and in the forms of violence to which they are subjected. In this regard, in Lobato's *Negrinha* and Kucinski's *Você vai voltar pra mim*, dehumanization manifests itself through different narrative strategies, particularly in the naming and characterization of the characters and in the representation of violence. In Lobato's short story, although the character has a name, it does not ensure recognition of her individuality, since the diminutive form of her name, associated with her racial condition, reinforces her inferiorization and the position of subservience she occupies. Furthermore, the physical assaults, humiliation, and deprivation of affection reveal how her body is subjected to power relations that disregard her humanity.

In contrast, in Kucinski's short story, the female character is not even given a proper name, being identified through generic references that make it difficult to recognize her individuality. Thus, whereas in Lobato's short story, naming constitutes a marker of racial inferiorization, in Kucinski's text, the absence of a name reinforces the erasure of the character's subjectivity. Furthermore, the representation of violence in both short stories demonstrates that dehumanization is not limited to physical aggression but also manifests itself in the denial of identity and the silencing of the characters' individual experiences. Thus, although the texts employ distinct strategies, both portray characters subjected to mechanisms of domination that restrict their recognition as subjects and contribute to the normalization of violence against their bodies.

From an ontological perspective, this strategy can be understood in light of Torrano (1995), through an analysis of Hesiod's *Theogony*, according to which a name, an epithet, and a place within

ISSN: 2317-2347 – v. 15, n. 1 – e7826 (2026)
Todo o conteúdo da RLR está licenciado sob Creative Commons Atribuição 4.0 Internacional

a lineage are fundamental elements in establishing the existence and determining the nature of a being. Therefore, the absence of these elements implies an existence deprived of the being's full value, suggesting a state of nonexistence. Thus, the erasure of these characters' names and histories reinforces their status as disposable lives.

> ....há na Teogonia três eficientes recursos com que se determinam a natureza e o sentido de cada Deus. Primeiro, o nome é por si mesmo significativo – salvo exceções de nomes cuja antiguidade ou etimologia não-grega tornaram opacos (e neste caso Hesíodo, seguindo uma tendência da Época Arcaica, procura resgatar-lhes a significação por meio de trocadilhos e jogos de palavras). Segundo recurso são os epítetos com que cada personagem pode ser, no estilo épico, amplamente qualificado. E, por fim, cada Deus se define por seu ponto de inserção na sua linhagem genealógica: toda descendência é uma explicação do ser e natureza da Divindade genitora; quanto mais alta e próxima da origem uma Divindade, tanto mais rica e extensa em suas possibilidades de determinação, pois ela contém em si como virtualidade todos os poderes e seres que dela descendem (TORRANO, 1995, p. 41).[18]

In light of this reflection, the suppression of the characters' names, epithets, and histories in *Negrinha* and *Você vai voltar pra mim* operates as a strategy of ontological erasure, displacing these subjects into a zone of non-recognition in which their existence is deprived of symbolic, moral, and political value, rendering them fully available for the exercise of violence and disposability. In this regard, the absence of a narratable past and the erasure of their histories by the sovereign gaze produce characters whose lives are not perceived as ethically significant. For Butler (2015), this process corresponds to the production of "ungrievable" lives, that is, existences that elicit neither public mourning nor social recognition precisely because they have been previously dehumanized and marginalized.

[18] "In the Theogony, there are three effective means by which the nature and significance of each god are determined. First, the name is meaningful in itself, except in cases where the antiquity or non-Greek etymology of certain names has rendered their meanings obscure (in such cases, Hesiod, following a tendency of the Archaic Period, seeks to recover their significance through puns and wordplay). The second means consists of the epithets through which each character can be extensively qualified in the epic style. Finally, each god is defined by their position within their genealogical lineage: every act of descent explains the being and nature of the parent deity; the higher and closer to the origin a deity stands, the richer and broader their possibilities of determination, since that deity contains within itself, as potentialities, all the powers and beings that descend from it." (Torrano, 1995, p. 41, our translation).

ISSN: 2317-2347 – v. 15, n. 1 – e7826 (2026)
Todo o conteúdo da RLR está licenciado sob Creative Commons Atribuição 4.0 Internacional

Thus, the dehumanization enacted through naming becomes explicit when we compare the objectification of the child in *Negrinha* through pejorative terms such as "Little brat, devil, owl, peeled cockroach, witch, clumsy woman, runt chick, dead fly, filth, hussy, rag, little dog, evil thing, trash" (Lobato, 2009, p. 8, our translation), with what occurs in *Você vai voltar pra mim,* where the character is identified through the torturer's gaze using expressions such as "she", "well-presented", "sweetheart". In this way, the dehumanization of these objectified female characters reveals the central role of necropolitics in determining who may or may not be recognized as human.

Furthermore, the normalization of everyday violence constitutes one of the central axes of the management of death, since it is through the repetition and trivialization of violence that power becomes legitimate and implicit. In formulating the concept of the microphysics of power, Foucault (1979) demonstrated that domination is exercised not only through large-scale repressive apparatuses, but also through continuous, ordinary, and capillary practices that shape bodies and subjectivities in everyday life (Foucault, 1979, p. 41). Thus, in this context, violence ceases to be an exception and begins to operate as a legitimate technique of correction and discipline.

In line with the proposed theory, this logic manifests itself brutally in the child's everyday life in *Negrinha*. The physical and psychological violence inflicted by Dona Inácia provokes neither shock nor disapproval, on the contrary, it is described as a routine practice. Likewise, the narrator reports that "Negrinha's body was tattooed with purple marks, scars, and welts. Everyone in the household beat her every day, whether there was a reason or not" (Lobato, 2009, p. 8, our translation), revealing the trivialization of aggression, which requires no specific justification. Ultimately, the normalization of this violence illustrates how the microphysics of power operates: the black child's body is disciplined through repeated pain, fear, and everyday humiliation.

In *Você vai voltar pra mim*, by Bernardo Kucinski, the normalization of violence takes on an institutional character, as kidnapping and torture are presented as practices integrated into the bureaucratic logic of the authoritarian state. The narrative depicts a setting in which pain is administered coldly, as a routine procedure for those deemed subversive who rise up against the authorities. At a certain point, the repressive environment is characterized by the torturer's manipulation, indicating that extreme violence has been incorporated into the daily routines of those in positions of power:

ISSN: 2317-2347 – v. 15, n. 1 – e7826 (2026)
Todo o conteúdo da RLR está licenciado sob Creative Commons Atribuição 4.0 Internacional

> Estava só ela no camburão. Só ela, de tantos companheiros, ainda viva e indo para uma audiência na Justiça Militar. Se não fosse aquela notícia da sua prisão, já estava morta. Ela mesma pediu, mais de uma vez, me matem, me matem. E o filho da puta dizia eu vou te matar, sim, mas quando eu quiser (KUCINSKI, 2014, p. 69-70).[19]

This excerpt from the short story directly engages with Mbembe's (2018) analysis, according to which modern necropolitics is sustained by the creation of a choice of death, in which life is kept under constant threat and violence becomes structural (Mbembe, 2018, pp. 10–13). In the short story, torture is not presented as a deviation, but as a legitimate method of political control. Thus, both in Lobato's domestic setting and in Kucinski's repressive apparatus, everyday violence operates as an essential driving force in the management of death, as it prepares the symbolic and social ground for the disposal of these bodies.

Beyond the mechanisms through which suffering is produced, necropolitics operates with clearly defined political purposes. According to Mbembe (2016; 2018), the management of death is not an occasional deviation in the exercise of power, but a structuring project that organizes social hierarchies, disciplines bodies, and legitimizes the elimination of certain existences.

In the short stories under analysis, this logic manifests itself clearly: systematic violence is not gratuitous, but serves a specific function. Thus, the first purpose of the management of death is to maintain the existing social order. In this regard, Mbembe argues that necropolitics operates by producing zones of exclusion in which certain groups are kept in a state of permanent vulnerability, thereby ensuring the reproduction of racial, economic, and political hierarchies (Mbembe, 2018, pp. 39–45). Consequently, the elimination of these bodies or their continuous exposure to violence ensures the stability of the system that marginalizes them.

In Lobato's short story, the child's death sustains the eugenic and racist social order of post-abolition Brazil. Although legally free, the character Negrinha remains subject to a slaveholding logic that reduces her to a domestic object. Her entire existence highlights the persistence of racial

[19] "She was alone in the prisoner transport van. Alone, of so many comrades, still alive and on her way to a hearing before the Military Court. If it hadn't been for the news of her arrest, she would already be dead. She herself had asked more than once, 'Kill me, kill me.' And the son of a bitch would say, 'I'm going to kill you, yes, but when I want to.'" (Kucinski, 2014, pp. 69–70, our translation).

ISSN: 2317-2347 – v. 15, n. 1 – e7826 (2026)
Todo o conteúdo da RLR está licenciado sob Creative Commons Atribuição 4.0 Internacional

inequalities; her death, by contrast, restores the normality of the household. This indifference is made explicit when the narrator states that, after her death, there was only a “common grave” and that “the earth swallowed up her little body of third-rate flesh indifferently”.Thus, her body is classified, hierarchized, and discarded without generating any moral rupture.

Likewise, in *Você vai voltar para mim*, state repression eliminates the bodies of opponents in order to preserve the authoritarian order of the dictatorship. Thus, kidnapping and torture are intended not merely to punish individuals, but also to silence voices that challenge the regime. Forced disappearance, a recurring element in the narrative, exemplifies what Mbembe defines as the production of “death-worlds,” in which the state exercises absolute sovereignty over the lives and destinies of bodies, thereby seeking to stabilize its power.

In this sense, the second purpose of the management of death is the production of fear as a disciplinary instrument. Mbembe demonstrates that necropolitics is not limited to physical elimination, but is also sustained by the public or symbolic exposure of violence, transforming the violated body into a political message (Mbembe, 2018, pp. 64–71). At this point, the connection with Foucault becomes clear, as violence is used to discipline society and its members, producing obedient and silenced subjects.

In *Negrinha*, as previously mentioned, constant punishment teaches the child to submit to her mistress. From an early age, the girl learns that pain is an integral part of her existence. She “was beaten every day”, without any justification being necessary. Thus, in this context, fear does not merely correct behavior; it shapes the child’s body, teaching her that there is no room for resistance or contestation, only pain. In Kucinski’s short story, torture serves a similar purpose, but with a political function: the state exercises absolute power over the lives of its opponents. Even the title of the short story reinforces this logic of domination, as it asserts the torturer’s continued possession of the victim’s body.

Necropolitics is not limited to killing, it produces lives whose deaths are not recognized as losses. According to Lélia Gonzalez (2020, pp. 38–44), an analysis that brings together race, gender, and class reveals that, in the Brazilian context, it is primarily black, female, and subalternized bodies that occupy this position of disposability. In Lobato’s short story, the child’s death elicits neither

ISSN: 2317-2347 – v. 15, n. 1 – e7826 (2026)
Todo o conteúdo da RLR está licenciado sob Creative Commons Atribuição 4.0 Internacional

mourning nor remembrance. The narrative emphasizes how quickly her body is absorbed by the earth, as if she had never existed. This erasure confirms that Negrinha had always occupied the position of the disposable: her life was tolerated as long as she remained useful, and her death suggests complete indifference.

In Kucinski's short story, the female character meets a fate that, although situated in a different historical context, structurally resembles that experienced by Negrinha. The final passage "I told you that you would come back to me, didn't I? Come here, sweetheart, let's play a little. He grabs her by the ankles and drags her outside. The others standing around laugh" (Kucinski, 2014, p. 71, our translation), illustrates the culmination of the necropolitical logic, in which the female body is definitively captured by sovereign power and reduced to an object of domination and violent entertainment. Therefore, the perpetrators' laughter makes explicit the trivialization of cruelty and reveals the collective, institutional, and legitimized nature of the violence, which no longer requires legal or moral justification to be enacted.

Thus, the character's disappearance is not limited to physical elimination but constitutes a political and symbolic erasure, sustained by the silence of a predatory state that manages suffering and discards dissident bodies without disrupting the existing order. Therefore, in both *Negrinha* and *Você vai voltar pra mim*, the management of death reaches its ultimate purpose when it produces disposable, ungrievable bodies whose absence evokes neither mourning, indignation, nor social disruption, but instead reaffirms and stabilizes the racial, social, and political hierarchies that sustain necropower.

Concluding Remarks

The analysis of Monteiro Lobato's *Negrinha* (2009) and Bernardo Kucinski's *Você vai voltar pra mim* (2014) made it possible to demonstrate how necropolitics, as formulated by Achille Mbembe (2018), constitutes a logic of sovereign state power that persists in the Brazilian context across different historical periods and political regimes. By examining the narratives through the proposed analytical

ISSN: 2317-2347 – v. 15, n. 1 – e7826 (2026)
Todo o conteúdo da RLR está licenciado sob Creative Commons Atribuição 4.0 Internacional

axes (the discursive production of identity and difference, the constitution of disposable bodies, and the mechanisms of death management), it was possible to understand how state sovereignty manifests itself through the selective administration of life and death, transforming certain subjects into legitimate targets of violence.

Regarding the first analytical axis, we understand necropolitics as an ideology that operates through and is sustained by the discursive production of identity and difference, as discussed by Tomaz Tadeu da Silva (2000). In both short stories, the assertion of a hegemonic identity (white, property-owning, and morally acceptable in *Negrinha*, nationalist, authoritarian, and anticommunist in *Você vai voltar pra mim*) depends on the radical exclusion of the other. Thus, differentiation is not confined to the symbolic realm but also extends to practices of domination, through which sovereign power asserts its authority to determine who belongs, who is recognized, and who may be subjected to violence or silenced.

Regarding the second analytical axis, we interpret the constitution of disposable bodies as a central element of necropolitics. Thus, Negrinha's black, child, and orphaned body, as well as the unnamed female body of the political prisoner in Kucinski's short story, are inscribed within permanent states of exception, in which violence ceases to be exceptional and begins to operate as the norm. In these distinct historical contexts (the post-abolition period and the Military Dictatorship) these characters occupy similar positions within the necropolitical logic: they are lives deemed to be of lesser value, subject to punishment, abandonment, and elimination, without this producing any rupture in the existing social order.

Regarding the third analytical axis, we identified and discussed the mechanisms and purposes of death management. In Negrinha, necropolitics manifests itself through the normalization of everyday violence, in which the child's suffering is naturalized as an instrument for maintaining the racial and social hierarchy inherited from the slaveholding regime. In *Você vai voltar pra mim*, death management takes the form of a "slow, drip-by-drip dying" (our translation), as discussed by Franco (2023), in which the state not only decides on physical death but also manages the duration, intensity, and anticipation of suffering, transforming torture into a political technology of domination.

ISSN: 2317-2347 – v. 15, n. 1 – e7826 (2026)
Todo o conteúdo da RLR está licenciado sob Creative Commons Atribuição 4.0 Internacional

In light of these reflections, it was possible to answer the research question that guided this study: the two short stories reveal that necropolitics is not restricted to extreme contexts of war or genocide, rather, it is continuously embedded in brazilian social history, operating under both formally democratic regimes and authoritarian periods. The literary narratives analyzed denounce the persistence of colonial, racial, and political structures that sustain the production of disposable lives and reveal how sovereign power is maintained through exclusion, punishment, and the constant threat of death.

By way of conclusion, this study has demonstrated that literature constitutes a privileged space for denunciation and remembrance, capable of revealing the politics of necropower and reflecting on official discourses that naturalize violence. By giving visibility to historically silenced subjects, *Negrinha* and *Você vai voltar pra mim* not only represent the politics of death but also destabilize it, affirming the critical potential of literary narrative as a form of symbolic resistance to the attempts at erasure imposed by necropolitical sovereignty.

CRediT
Acknowledgement: Not applicable.
Financing: Not applicable.
Conflicts of interest: The authors certify that they have no commercial or associative interest that represents a conflict of interest in relation to the manuscript.
Ethical Approval: Not applicable.
Contributor Roles: **PINHEIRO-CARVALHO**, Aldenora Márcia Chaves Conceptualization, Investigation, Project administration, Supervision, Validation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. **SILVA**, Emanuelle de Lemos Conceptualization, Investigation, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. **BEZERRA**, Igor Azevedo Conceptualization, Investigation, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

ISSN: 2317-2347 – v. 15, n. 1 – e7826 (2026)

Todo o conteúdo da RLR está licenciado sob Creative Commons Atribuição 4.0 Internacional

References

ALBUQUERQUE, Wlamyra R. de; FILHO, Walter Fraga. *Uma história do negro no Brasil.* Salvador: Centro de Estudos Afro-Orientais; Brasília: Fundação Cultural Palmares, 2006.

AGAMBEN, Giorgio. *Estado de exceção.* Tradução de Iraci D. Poleti. São Paulo: Boitempo, 2004.

BUTLER, Judith. *Quadros de guerra:* quando a vida é passível de luto? Tradução de Sérgio Lamarão e Arnaldo Marques da Cunha. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2015. p. 35–56; 67–73.

FANON, Frantz. *Pele negra, máscaras brancas***.** Tradução de Renato da Silveira. Salvador: EDUFBA, 2008. p. 41–45; 82–85.

FOUCAULT, Michel. *História da Sexualidade I:* A Vontade de Saber. Rio de Janeiro: Graal, 1988.

FOUCAULT, Michel. *Microfísica do poder.* Organização e tradução de Roberto Machado. Rio de Janeiro: Graal, 1979. p. 7–29; 117–121.

FOUCAULT, Michel. *Segurança, território, população.* Tradução de Eduardo Brandão. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2008. p. 3–26; 95–102.

FRANCO, Fábio Luís. *Governar os mortos:* necropolíticas, desaparecimento e subjetividade. São Paulo: Ubu, 2023. Acesso em: 27 dez. 2025.

GONZALEZ, Lélia. *Por um feminismo afro-latino-americano.* Organização de Flávia Rios e Márcia Lima. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 2020. p. 38–44; 89–96.

HESÍODO. *Teogonia:* a origem dos deuses. Estudo e tradução de Jaa Torrano. 3. ed. São Paulo: Iluminuras, 1995, p.41.

JORGE, João Vitor Alcântara. *Necropolítica, soberania e corpos descartáveis:* dos corpos não ontológicos ao fim do humanismo. 2024. 152 f. Dissertação (Mestrado em Filosofia) - Universidade Federal de Uberlândia, Uberlândia, 2024. DOI http://doi.org/10.14393/ufu.di.2024.91

KUCINSKI, Bernardo. *Você vai voltar para mim.* In: KUCINSKI, Bernardo. *Você vai voltar para mim e outros contos.* São Paulo: Cosac Naify, 2014. p. 69–71.

LOBATO, Monteiro. *Negrinha.* In: LOBATO, Monteiro. *Negrinha e outros contos.* São Paulo: Globo, 2009.

MBEMBE, Achille. *Sair da grande noite*: ensaio sobre a África descolonizada. Tradução de Narrativa Traçada. Revisão de Sílvia Neto. [S.l.]: [s.n.], 2014.

MBEMBE, Achille. *Necropolítica:* biopoder, soberania, estado de exceção, política da morte. Tradução de Renata Santini. São Paulo: N-1 Edições, 2016/2018. p. 10–13; 39–45; 64–71.

OLIVEIRA, Flaviana de Freitas; PAGNI, Pedro Angelo; KLEIN, Ana Maria; BRABO, Tânia Suely Antonelli Marce lino. Os corpos femininos como objeto de abjeção e tortura na ditadura civil-militar brasileira. *Contracampo*, Niterói, v. 41, n. 3, set./dez. 2022.

SILVA, Tomaz Tadeu da. A produção social da identidade e da diferença. In: SILVA, Tomaz Tadeu da (org.). *Identidade e diferença:* a perspectiva dos estudos culturais. Petrópolis: Vozes, 2000. p. 73–90; 96–102.