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THE NECROPOLITICS IN *THROUGH THE ARC OF THE RAINFOREST* BY KAREN TEI YAMASHITA¹

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Abstract: Towards the close of 2019, humanity grappled with the swift dissemination of the novel COVID-19, instigating a global quarantine. Unfortunately, several nations, citing economic considerations, deferred decisive action, prioritizing capital over lives—a phenomenon labeled as ‘necropolitics.’ This very concept, eerily anticipated in artistic expressions such as Karen Tei Yamashita’s 1990 novel, *The Arc of the Rainforest*, serves as the focal point of this article. Employing Ecocritical theory, this analysis aims to unravel the nuances of necropolitics embedded in Yamashita’s narrative, presenting a unique perspective on its resonance amidst the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Keywords: Necropolitics. Ecocritic. *Through the Arc of the Rainforest*. Karen Tei Yamashita. Amazon Forest.

¹ Title in Portuguese: “A necropolítica em *Through the Arc of the Rainforest* de Karen Tei Yamashita”.

Resumo: No final de 2019, a humanidade enfrentou a rápida disseminação do novo COVID-19, instigando uma quarentena global. Infelizmente, várias nações, invocando considerações econômicas, adiaram uma ação decisiva, dando prioridade ao capital em detrimento das vidas — um fenômeno designado por “necropolítica”. Este mesmo conceito, assustadoramente antecipado em expressões artísticas como o romance de 1990 de Karen Tei Yamashita, *The Arc of the Rain forest*, que serve de ponto focal deste artigo. Empregando a teoria ecocrítica, a análise visa desvendar as nuances da necropolítica incorporadas na narrativa de Yamashita, apresentando uma perspectiva única sobre a sua ressonância no meio dos desafios colocados pela pandemia da COVID-19.

Palavras-chave: Necropolítica. Ecocrítica. *Through the Arc of the Rainforest*. Karen Tei Yamashita. Floresta Amazônica.

INTRODUCTION

The novel *The Arc of the Rainforest*, penned by Karen Tei Yamashita in the nineties, is not merely a literary creation but a profound reflection rooted in the author’s studies and personal experiences. Yamashita, a professor specializing in “Critical Races and Ethnic Studies” at the University of California, brings a unique perspective shaped by her profound interest in Latin American and Latino studies, as well as Japanese migration to Brazil. Having spent years in the Latin American country, Yamashita has delved into the intricate tapestry of themes surrounding Japanese immigration, a subject she intimately understands both professionally and personally.

It’s worth noting that the largest Japanese population outside of Japan resides in Brazil, a consequence of political reforms in both

nations at the turn of the 19th to the 20th century. Brazil, grappling with the aftermath of the Lei Áurea that criminalized slavery, faced a labor shortage. Simultaneously, Japan was dealing with overpopulation. In 1908, a bilateral agreement led to the arrival of the first wave of Japanese immigrants, intending to establish themselves financially and eventually return home. However, due to Japan's involvement in World War II, the intended return transformed into a steady increase in the Japanese population on Brazilian soil.

Yamashita, despite being born and raised in the United States, deliberately chooses Brazil as the primary setting for her work. In a departure from the expected narrative focus on her unique experience as a Japanese American, she crafts a transnational adventure centered around her protagonist, a young Japanese boy named Kazumaza. His journey, accompanied by a magical ball that hovers in front of his forehead, unfolds against the backdrop of Brazil's multiculturalism — an apt setting given its historical role as a melting pot for immigrants from around the world.

The choice of the Brazilian territory as the space for the narrative seems to be justified not only by the fact of Japanese immigration and the writer's evident relationship with this theme, both professionally and personally, but also by the multicultural framework of the Brazilian population, which historically received immigrants from all over the world and currently its inhabitants have in their phenotype evidence of this encounter.

The magical realism present in this work also contributes to the construction of the diaspora of the subject as argued by

Kazuhiko Yamaguchi in her article, “Magical Realism, Two Hyper-Consumerisms, and the Diaspora Subject in Karen Tei Yamashita’s *Through the Arc of the Rain Forest*”. For her, it is through this literary genre that the author is able to share her perspective of reality. In the words of the researcher:

Yamashita associates magical realism with hypertext, commenting that hypertext takes hold of the ever changing condition of the world to make us aware of various realities [co-occurring] at one time (‘Virtual Reality’ 183). For Yamashita, magical realism is not just a literary technique, but our contemporary sensibility. In other words, Yamashita suggests that our manner of perceiving the world is magical realism, and hence that literary magical realism is a mimetic narrative technique which represents how we perceive the world. (YAMAGUCHI, 2006, p. 22)

Following this line of thought, this paper intends to argue how the author uses the artifices of literature, including magical realism to express the tragic consequences of necropolitics, conceptualized as “the ultimate expression of sovereignty resides, to a large degree, in the power and the capacity to dictate who may live and who must die” (MBEMBE, 2003, p. 11).

In the subsequent sections, we delve into the concept of necropolitics and its resonance within Yamashita’s narrative. Given the author’s emphasis on environmental themes, this exploration is complemented by the lens of Ecocriticism, providing valuable insights into the environmental problematizations Yamashita raises in her work (GLOTEFELTY, 1996, p. 11).

ECOCRITICISM: GLOBALISM VS LOCALISM

Although the flowering of environmentalism didn't gain momentum until 1970 with the establishment of Earth Day, it was already gaining attention in the 1960s, being added to the social and political agenda that at the time mirrored the counter-cultural movements. According to Simal,

[...] in the 1960s and in the early 1970s, we have examples of what can be considered proto ecocriticism or ecocriticism *avant-la-lettre*: Leo Marx's *The Machine in the Garden* (1964), Raymond Williams's *The country and the City* (1973), and Joseph Meeker's *The Comedy of Survival* (1974). And yet it was not until the 1990s that ecocriticism became a field within literary theory and criticism, with the creation of academic associations such as ASLE (*Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment*) in 1992, and its associated journal, ISLE (*Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and the Environment*), which was first launched in 1993. (SIMAL, 2010, n.p.)

The establishment of Ecocriticism studies allowed not only the legitimization of research in the literary field regarding the theme, but also served as a stimulus for the production of works related to the theme, as is recognized in the novel chosen as the object of study. In addition, Ecocriticism stimulates discussion of concepts such as "human," "nature," and "civilization" and enables reflection of these terms outside the traditional character. Highlighting how the bifurcation between humanity and environment allowed the strengthening of the perspective that the former was not part of the latter. And, as a corollary, the dominant European and North American anthropocentrism legitimizes the human being to perceive

the environment that surrounds him and those who inhabit it as instruments for his own survival, comfort, and pleasure.

The ratification of human interference in its environment, in catastrophic proportions, led to the categorization of the contemporary geological period as “Anthropocene,” since the term elucidates the extent of the impact of industry together with the economic system in the world, as Monastersky (2015) points out.

This type of anthropocentric view can be easily identified in Yamashita’s novel through characters such as J.B. Tweep, whose own body configuration serves as a mirror of a type of culture that essentially prioritizes productivity, justifying his three arms. But he is not the only one to have physical attributes that differentiate him from others, Michelle Mabelle, a French ornithologist, J.B. ‘s romantic partner is a woman with three breasts, a characteristic that not by chance serves as a key point in the couple’s attraction. As stated in the novel,

J.B Tweep was in love. It was true he had known other women, but never a French ornithologist with three breasts. Here, then, was that indescribable meeting of hearts and minds where two overqualified human beings find their romantic match. It was a dream come true. All those years, excelling from one job to the next, the satisfaction, of a job overdone, which invariably soured into boredom, and the extraordinary chance to work for a company like GGG where the chances to extend the possibilities of overqualification were infinite - all of this no longer seemed to matter. Michelle. Michelle. Michelle. J.B. proclaimed his love in triplicate. (YAMASHITA, 1990, p. 122)

In Yamashita's novel, the embodiment of distinct physical attributes in characters like J.B. Tweep and Michelle Mabelle serves as a poignant commentary on the societal values intertwined with anthropocentrism. J.B. Tweep, with his three arms, becomes a symbolic representation of a culture fixated on productivity and efficiency. His physical anomaly, rather than being portrayed as a mere eccentricity, becomes a visual metaphor for a society that places a disproportionate emphasis on human-centric notions of progress and utility.

Similarly, Michelle Mabelle, the French ornithologist and romantic partner of J.B., introduces another layer to this narrative exploration. Her three breasts, far from being a random quirk, act as a deliberate device to challenge societal norms and expectations. In the context of the novel, this distinctive physical trait becomes a focal point in the attraction between J.B. and Michelle, prompting readers to confront their own preconceived notions about beauty and desirability. Yamashita, through these character choices, subtly critiques the commodification of the human body and challenges the conventional standards dictated by anthropocentric perspectives.

By incorporating characters with unconventional physical attributes, Yamashita encourages readers to question established norms and reconsider the boundaries between the human and the environment. This narrative strategy aligns with the objectives of Ecocriticism, which seeks to unravel the intricate relationships between humanity and the natural world, challenging the hierarchical structures that have perpetuated environmental exploitation.

Furthermore, the use of these characters within the narrative underscores the interconnectedness of ecological and social issues. The three arms of J.B. and the three breasts of Michelle serve as tangible manifestations of societal values that contribute to environmental degradation. Through these characters, Yamashita prompts readers to reflect on the broader implications of anthropocentrism, urging a reevaluation of how human actions impact both the social and ecological spheres.

Yamashita employs a narrative tone laden with irony and mockery in this passage, inviting readers to perceive the characters not merely as individuals whose actions merit justification but as subjects for critical evaluation. J.B.'s self-perception as a superior species of human being is presented with a touch of satire, prompting readers to question societal norms and reflect on the implications of such notions.

This ironic perspective is crucial in understanding contemporary environmental conditions, as the ecological disasters of modern times stem from centuries-old reinforcement of anthropocentrism in various societies. Yamashita strategically constructs characters with fantastical traits, utilizing magical realism, to draw attention to aspects often overlooked in daily life: human idiosyncrasies and their profound influence on social relations.

Beyond J.B. and Michelle, the novel explores characters from affluent nations who possess singular characteristics. However, the critique extends beyond the protagonists to encompass individuals the protagonist encounters during his Brazilian adventure. Characters like Gilberto, the miraculous pilgrim, and Mané Batista,

the healer wielding feathers, exhibit unreal characteristics. Notably, these characters from Brazil do not perceive their peculiarities as a basis for superiority, perhaps influenced by their origin. This subtle commentary critiques the culture of the Global North, which has historically exploited and controlled the Global South. The relationships portrayed in the novel become a microcosm of this dialectic, emphasizing the intricate dynamics influenced by centuries of exploitation and control. And for Rachel Lee, it is through this meeting that Yamashita,

[...] emphasizes globalization as a multisided cultural intermingling that is not relayed through the merging of two 'opposites'— for example, Asia and the United States — but through the compilation of heterogeneous national, racial, and cultural components all in one site, the Matacão. (LEE, 1999, p. 239)

The use of magical realism in Yamashita's novel becomes a powerful tool for expressing both critique and a denouncement of the global environmental crisis through a localized lens. The fictional place, Matacão, situated in the heart of the Amazon jungle, emerges as a crucial element in the narrative. This locale holds a raw material with the potential to revolutionize society, as elucidated in the novel:

The Matacão, scientists asserted, had been formed for the most part within the last century, paralleling the development of the more common forms of plastic, polyurethane and styrofoam. Enormous landfills of nonbiodegradable material buried under virtually every populated part of the Earth had undergone tremendous pressure, pushed over farther into the lower layers of the Earth's

mantle. The liquid deposits of the molten mass had been squeezed through underground veins to virgin areas of the Earth. The Amazon Forest, being one of the last virgin areas on Earth, got plenty. (YAMASHITA, 1990, p. 202)

In the novel, Matacão's significance lies not only in its mystical properties but also in the potential it holds to reshape societal norms. This fictional locale mirrors the very real threats faced by the Amazon rainforest, a region grappling with deforestation, resource exploitation, and the broader consequences of global environmental degradation.

Yamashita skillfully uses magical realism to amplify the environmental critique embedded in the narrative. The fantastical elements surrounding Matacão create a vivid and memorable backdrop, allowing readers to connect with the ecological message on a deeper level. This technique invites readers to reflect on the urgency of preserving local environments, particularly those as ecologically vital as the Amazon, while simultaneously acknowledging the broader global implications.

Through Matacão, Yamashita underscores the interconnectedness of local and global environmental challenges. The raw material found in this fictional place, with its transformative potential, becomes emblematic of the delicate balance between human progress and ecological sustainability. Because the material is inside the Amazon forest, besides being a meeting point between individuals of different cultural origins, both nationally and internationally, another dichotomy challenged is the global / local. For Simal, this is an important achievement for Ecocriticism, since it

represents the overcoming of the initial studies focused, according to her, on the local dimension.

Through the Arc of the Rainforest constitutes an apt illustration of the recent developments in environmental studies, which, as mentioned earlier, not only rehearse the movement from the local to the global, but also broadened the concept of what we mean by 'nature' and 'environment'. As a good exponent of the global shift sketched above, Yamashita's novel features an international cast of characters who end up meeting at a globalized national locale: Brazil. (SIMAL, 2010, n.p.)

This trend also assists in illustrating environmental effects on a worldwide scale, for although the disaster may be specifically delimited within a territorial perimeter, its consequences are not limited to that space. As is exemplified in the novel in question. This fact helps to understand one of the theses of this paper, the after-effects of necropolitics do not only affect the targets of these policies, but inevitably, even those responsible for it, even if at a later time.

The author's use of magical realism transcends the boundaries of a singular story, extending its impact to prompt contemplation on the real-world implications of environmental crises. In this way, Yamashita's narrative approach not only critiques anthropocentrism but also functions as a call to action. By using magical realism to frame the environmental crisis within a local context, she compels readers to consider the broader implications of their actions on a global scale. The fantastical elements of *Matacão* serve as a literary device that invites readers to engage with the urgency of environmental conservation and to recognize the significance of local ecosystems in the face of a looming global crisis.

NECROPOLITICS

The term “necropolitics” was coined in 2003 by the black philosopher, political scientist and university professor Achille Mbembe, from Cameroon. In his homonymous essay, the author problematizes the notion of biopower and biopolitics originally thought by Michel Foucault, for him, the notion of governmentality should be focused on its subjective dimension, since for “men are the ones who are governed” (2008a, p. 164). In this sense, the power of government is perceived precisely in humanity.

Foucault’s concept of biopower, as explained by Mbembe, operates within a framework regulated by racism. Foucault goes on to coin the term “State racism,” contending that racism is the conduit through which the function of killing is exercised in a system centralized around biopower (FOUCAULT, 1999). This underscores the idea that racism plays a pivotal role in shaping the mechanisms by which power is wielded, particularly in the context of regulating and controlling life and death within a society.

In a normalizing society, race or racism is the precondition that makes killing acceptable. When you have a normalizing society, you have a power which is, at least superficially, in the first instance, or in the first line a biopower, and racism is the indispensable precondition that allows someone to be killed, that allows others to be killed. Once the State functions in the biopower mode, racism alone can justify the murderous function of the State. (FOUCAULT, 1999, p. 256)

In continuation of this line of thought, philosopher Michel Foucault identifies Nazism as a pivotal source of racism. According

to Foucault, Nazism extends its reach to the very fabric of life it manages, safeguarding, ensuring, and cultivating existence in strictly biological terms. It establishes a chilling parallelism between the sovereign right to kill, encompassing not only external entities but even its own populace: “the field of life it manages... absolutely coextensive with the sovereign right to kill anyone, meaning not only other people but also its own people” (1999, p. 260). This characterization paints Nazism as not just a racist state but, in Foucault’s words, “an absolutely racist State, an absolutely murderous State, and an absolutely suicidal State” (1999, p. 260).

From this vantage point, Achille Mbembe constructs his criticism, diverging from Foucault’s perspective. For Mbembe, the origins of racism do not solely lie in Europe; instead, they trace back to the colonies administered by European states, coupled with the apartheid regime. The Cameroonian philosopher, challenging conventional narratives, posits that the roots of racism are deeply embedded in the colonial projects executed by European powers. In this critical reframing, the colonies become crucibles where racist ideologies are not only developed but also actively employed as tools of domination. For the Cameroonian philosopher,

if the relations between life and death, the politics of cruelty, and the symbolics of profanity are blurred in the plantation system, it is notably in the colony and under the apartheid regime that there comes into being a peculiar terror formation I will now turn to. The most original feature of this terror formation is its concatenation of biopower, the state of exception, and the state of siege. Crucial to this concatenation is, once again, race. (MBEMBE, 2003, p. 22)

Mbembe's argument distinguishes between biopower and necropolitics by highlighting the significance of the state of siege and the state of exception. These states, according to him, play a crucial role in normalizing the right to kill within the framework of neoliberalism, akin to their function during colonization and apartheid. The perpetuation of a constant state of terror becomes a mechanism by which power operates outside legal confines, giving rise to what Mbembe (2003) terms a "war without end". This perpetual state of terror, characterized by a warlike atmosphere sans a declared war, is the outcome of the intricate interweaving of the state of exception and the state of siege, ultimately leading to the normalization of death, a phenomenon referred to as necropolitics.

It is noteworthy that within the context of neoliberalism, racism, primarily suffered by black individuals, undergoes a process of universalization. As a consequence, this colonial logic of exploitation transforms into an administrative tool in contemporary societies. Silvio Almeida, a Brazilian philosopher, underscores the universality of racism within neoliberalism. In this framework, racism transcends its historical confines and becomes an administrative mechanism wielded in contemporary societal structures. The implications of this universalization point towards a critical examination of how colonial ideologies persist and manifest in the administrative and power structures of modern societies. In the reading of the Brazilian philosopher Silvio Almeida:

[...] racism gains its own contours in neoliberalism, a stage of capitalism in which as in no other time the fusion between merchandise, desire and death was experienced. [...] Neoliberal governance is necropolitics, a neoliberalism (Mbembe, 2020).

Necropolitics is the form of exercise of sovereignty that is founded on the expansion of the colonial logic, given that the reproduction of the objective and subjective conditions of economic life is established with the constant depreciation of material life, with the imprisonment of desire in the form of merchandise and with the financialization of all areas of life. (ALMEIDA, 2021, p. 9, personal translation)²

In the article “Reflections in times of COVID-19 on necropolitics from the epidemiological bulletins of the Ministry of Health”, the scholars Alan de Jesus and André de Oliveira SenaMelo point to how, especially in Brazil, the pandemic caused by covid impacted the Brazilian population differently depending on their socioeconomic background, as well as their ethnicity. In their words, “[...] when translating the author’s thought to the current Brazilian conjuncture, we can affirm that the federal government, holder of power, exercises this power to guarantee which lives and dictate the deaths of which individuals” (JESUS; MELO, 2020, p. 257, personal translation)³.

By delving into data from various Brazilian communities, the researchers draw attention to a direct correlation between necropolitics and the government’s approach to the coronavirus within the country. The assertion implies that the power dynamics

2 “[...] o racismo ganha contornos próprios no neoliberalismo, etapa do capitalismo em que como em nenhum momento experimentou-se a fusão entre mercadoria, desejo e morte. [...] A governabilidade neoliberal é a necropolítica, um neoliberalismo (MBEMBE, 2020). A necropolítica é a forma de exercício da soberania que se funda na expansão da lógica colonial, tendo em vista que a reprodução das condições objetivas e subjetivas da vida econômica se estabelece com a constante depreciação da vida material, com o aprisionamento do desejo na forma de mercadoria e com a financeirização de todos os âmbitos da vida (ALMEIDA, 2021, p. 9).

3 “[...] quando transladar o pensamento do autor para a conjuntura brasileira atual, podemos afirmar que o Governo federal, detentor de poder, exerce esse poder para garantir quais vidas e ditar as mortes de quais indivíduos” (JESUS; MELO, 2020, p. 257).

at play in Brazil, particularly wielded by the federal government, play a pivotal role in determining not only which lives are prioritized but also in dictating the fates of individuals in terms of life and death. This observation underscores the intertwined relationship between political power and the differential impact of the pandemic, emphasizing how systemic issues such as socioeconomic disparities and ethnicity intersect with public health crises, resulting in varying outcomes for different segments of the population.

By executing an institutional and purposeful strategy to spread the coronavirus, the Bolsonaro government has made Brazil one of the most affected countries by COVID-19 in the world. In the light of Mbembe, the necropolitics of killing or letting live and who exercises this right are imperative points to address the current situation of barbarism that Brazil is going through today. (JESUS; MELO, 2020, p. 257, personal translation)⁴

This statement is endorsed by records that showed that in São Paulo, in its first semester dealing with the virus, among its population, white and brown-skinned people accounted for the largest number of infected people; however, the mortality rate was higher among colored and black people. For the researchers, this demonstrated that,

[...] when the State is not killing black populations directly, through police action - a state agent - it does so by managing the distribution of resources in the fight against the pandemic, in the resources

4 Ao executar estratégia institucional e proposital de propagação do coronavírus, o Governo Bolsonaro fez do Brasil um dos países mais afetados pela COVID-19 no mundo. À luz de Mbembe, a necropolítica de matar ou deixar viver e quem exerce esse direito são pontos imperativos para nos debruçarmos sobre a atual conjuntura de barbárie pela qual o Brasil passa hoje (JESUS; MELO, 2020, p. 257).

reallocated to the SUS⁵, in social assistance, through emergency aid, and all the difficulties and lack of information, thus creating conditions that potentiate necropolitics over certain parts of society. (JESUS; MELO, 2020, p. 257, personal translation)⁶

The discussion surrounding the term necropolitics, as well as its repercussions evident during the pandemic in Brazil, is intricately connected to the analysis of the novel under consideration. In Yamashita's work, particularly in its final segment where the consequences of uncontrolled mineral exploitation take a devastating toll, a concerning indifference prevails even in the face of widespread death. J.B., the figure at the helm of the transnational company GGG, appears unaffected by the environmental devastation, illustrated vividly by the statement: "Not only birds died, but every sort of small animal, livestock, insects and even small children who had run out to greet the planes unknowingly" (YAMASHITA, 1990, p. 202). This narrative thread mirrors the real-world implications discussed by Jesus and Melo, highlighting the callousness and disregard for life that characterizes both fictional and real instances of necropolitical actions.

In fact, even in the face of the chaos and the death of so many, when asked by his partner about the measures to reverse the situation, his position is extremely driven by capitalist desires for profits: "J.B. could not convince Michelle that birds reproduced on

5 SUS stands for Sistema Único de Saúde, the Brazilian Health System that is free for the whole population.

6 [...] quando o Estado não está matando as populações negras de maneira direta, por meio da ação policial - agente estatal - o faz gerindo a distribuição de recursos no combate à pandemia, nos recursos realocados para o SUS, na assistência social, por meio do auxílio emergencial, e todas as dificuldades e falta de informação, criando assim condições que potencializa a necropolítica sobre determinadas partes da sociedade (JESUS; MELO, 2020, p. 257).

a production line were ultimately more valuable to mankind. ‘Just think of the jobs we would create’” (YAMASHITA, 1990, p. 204).

Indeed, in the face of chaos and widespread death, J.B.’s response is emblematic of capitalist motives, prioritizing profit over environmental and human well-being. When questioned about measures to address the situation, his stance reflects a deeply ingrained capitalist ideology: “J.B. could not convince Michelle that birds reproduced on a production line were ultimately more valuable to mankind. ‘Just think of the jobs we would create’” (YAMASHITA, 1990, p. 204).

J.B.’s behavior, although fictional, resonates with a posture identified by both Foucault and Mbembe in their critiques of neoliberalism. According to Mbembe, neoliberalism brings about a profound transformation in the relationship between individuals and the market. The new subject, as described by Mbembe, is a prisoner of desire, deriving pleasure from reconstructing their private life as marketable merchandise. This subject is a neuroeconomic entity, governed by the dual concerns of biological reproduction and the enjoyment of worldly possessions. In this context, the individual seeks to regulate their behavior in accordance with market norms, evolving into a ‘human-thing,’ ‘human-machine,’ ‘human-code,’ and ‘human-in-flux’ (MBEMBE, 2017).

Mbembe’s insights illuminate the impact of neoliberalism, particularly influenced by digital technologies, on shaping human behavior. The human psyche becomes entangled with the desire to commodify and sell one’s own life. In light of these reflections, the fragility of contemporary life becomes apparent, easily jeopardized

in exchange for economic favor. This paradoxical prioritization of the economy over life underscores the symbiotic relationship between the two, emphasizing that the economy itself is unsustainable without the foundation of human existence.

The character J.B., for example, at the height of his inner despair, realizing that his efforts not only to save his enterprise but his own reputation and status seemed to have been in vain, decides to end his own life. In a moment of maximum tension,

[...] he laughed hysterically, walked to the gaping edge to the gaping edge of that twenty-three-floor plexiglass corporate structure and threw himself over. The spongy nature of the Matacão below did not save him. Some people later speculated that he might have used his golden parachute, but Jonathan B. Tweep, unlike poor Gilberto, had always known the truth. All the parachutes were made of Matacão plastic. (YAMASHITA, 1990, p. 208)

Ironically, amid the global pandemic, political figures, particularly in Brazil, were observed delivering speeches against social isolation, prioritizing economic considerations even in the face of a highly contagious and deadly disease without a cure or vaccine. Former Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro, a prominent example, consistently emphasized, “The economy cannot stop. We have to produce a lot of things. Our food production can’t stop either” (FEDERAL, 2020).

This stance extended beyond political leaders to encompass influential businessmen who, during the pandemic, were willing to jeopardize lives, including those of their subordinates. In their speeches, they reinforced the notion that life would be rendered

meaningless without a thriving economy, seemingly asserting that the very existence of life depended on economic prosperity rather than the reverse. This behavior, prominently showcased during the tumultuous times of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, however, had roots that predated the crisis. Strikingly, such sentiments and actions appear to have been anticipated within literature, exemplified in the prescient narrative of *Through The Arc of The Rainforest*. The novel foreshadows the sacrificial mindset where economic imperatives take precedence over human well-being, eerily mirroring the real-world events that unfolded during the unprecedented challenges brought by the pandemic.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In conclusion, the discussions led by philosophers such as Mbembe and Foucault on the manifestations of neoliberalism in social spheres provide valuable insights, yet a noticeable void exists regarding the environment within this discourse. This gap is more than a scholarly omission; it represents a critical blind spot in understanding the intricate challenges facing the contemporary world.

The normalization of human death for economic privilege compounds another pressing issue—disregard for environmental conservation. In a world historically shaped by hierarchical views influenced by Christian beliefs, humanity has often perceived itself as the master of the environment. However, contemporary times witness a disturbing trend where nature is considered expendable when it threatens economic interests, despite overwhelming evidence of environmental crises.

Novels like *Through the Arc of The Rainforest* serve as illuminating windows into the intrinsic role of nature. The narrative underscores that without responsible conservation or thoughtful exploitation, the consequences extend far beyond the perspectives of those orchestrating necropolitical orders.

In our interconnected world, where the actions of one country reverberate in the economies of others, and the destruction of one ecosystem ripples through others, a global perspective is imperative. The prevailing political stance, categorizing certain communities as “disposable” while endorsing natural exploitation, demands scrutiny. It is a stark reminder that, in an ecosystem and interconnected world, survival is intertwined — each component reliant on the health and balance of the whole.

Literature emerges as a powerful instrument for navigating these complex issues. The equilibrium it offers stems from its unique ability to reimagine and reorganize the world through its narrative structures. Candido’s (2011) assertion that literature communicates perspectives on reality, even if fictional, resonates, as it organizes not only the reader’s spirit but also the world itself. The bridging function of literary texts fosters a humanizing effect by exposing readers to diverse worldviews.

While the novel discussed in this article may not explicitly dissect the environmental consequences of neoliberalism or the unforeseen fallout of necropolitics, it assumes a post facto role as a catalyst for meaningful discussions, especially when viewed through the lens of Ecocriticism. Through the lens of fictionality and the enchanting allure of magical realism, the narrative breathes

life into everyday issues that, although normalized and often overlooked, emerge with striking prominence within the literary realm, capturing the undivided attention of the individual. Thus, literature, with its inherent capacity to engage and provoke, stands as a beacon guiding us through the complexities of our world and inspiring reflections on the interconnectedness of humanity and the environment.

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