

Corpos-Fronteira e o Conto Maria: Um Diálogo Entre Mbembe e Conceição Evaristo

Border-Bodies and the Short Story Maria: A Dialog Between Mbembe and Conceição Evaristo

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ABSTRACT:

The aim of this essay is to read Conceição Evaristo's short story *Maria from the point of view of the philosopher Achille Mbembe*, mainly based on his notes in his works *Politics of Enmity and Brutalism*. In addition, we seek to reflect on the *image-question Maria*, the relations of enmity, the body-border and the extermination of the other. In the society of enmity, the other is marked mainly by racial issues, thus giving rise to the construction of borders. We start by thinking that Maria becomes the border-body, the brutalized body, the body that is seen as the enemy, and within this logic, must be eliminated. According to the Cameroonian philosopher, the society of enmity is driven by the pulse of separation and annihilation, and in this way it constructs the ethical-political scenario that he calls brutalism.

KEYWORDS:

Brutalism, Borderization, Border-bodies, Maria, Conceição Evaristo.

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The aim of this essay is to read Conceição Evaristo's short story *Maria from the point of view of the philosopher Achille Mbembe*, mainly based on his notes in his works *Politics of Enmity and Brutalism*. In addition, we try to reflect on the image question of *Maria*, the relations of enmity, the body border and the extermination of the other. In the society of enmity, the other is marked mainly by racial issues, which gives rise to the construction of borders. We begin by thinking that *Mary* becomes the border body, the brutalized body, the body that is seen as the enemy and, within this logic, must be eliminated. According to the Cameroonian philosopher, the society of enmity is driven by the pulse of separation and annihilation, and in this way constructs the ethical-political scenario that he calls brutalism.

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Writing is a way of bleeding. I would add: and a lot of bleeding ...¹

Those who bear this mark on their skin have the strange habit of having faith in life...²

They were all armed with laser knives that cut through life...³

When we come across the plot of the short story *Maria*, which is part of Conceição Evaristo's book *Olhos D'água*, numerous questions cross our minds. The character brings to light the painful and violent experiences of a patriarchal, misogynistic and racist society. The writer produces a cutting literature, that is, it affects us like a *rascante philosophy*⁶ that burns, tears and bleeds the skin. Her writing, as the author points out, is "a way of making things bleed", permeated by writings; they are writings of the experiences of a black female body in the post-colonial conjuncture, a writing that denounces in prose and verse the ills that exist in society, highlighting violence against women and, in general, all the pluralities of truculence that exist in Brazilian society.

It's important to note that Conceição's work is permeated by "*escrevivência*", a term that refers to writing that is the result of living-writing, narratives linked mainly to the stories of black women. In this sense, Evaristo's writing with blood is an outpouring, with eyes full of water, it is written to disturb and not to lull the big house. Her literature is meant to make people uncomfortable and deconstruct stereotypes that have been built up for centuries, yet it tells stories that many people don't want to hear.

In this vein, we can emphasize the author's speech in the seminar *Escrevivência* (2020), where she states that the function of literature and the stories told is to disturb, to throw in the face of the big house what has been done and even to mark the present, which bears the mark of the past, demarcating memory as everyday life. Writings want to provoke a denunciation, and in Conceição's literature this is done in a poetic way. Conceição says it's a punch in the stomach, it's the violence of everyday life that displaces the reader. The atmosphere of Conceição's work portrays violence in the bodies of black women, as the author emphasizes:

Escrevivência, in its initial conception, takes place as an act of writing by black women, as an action that aims to blur, to undo an image of the past, in which the body-voice

¹ Evaristo (2016, p.109).

² Nascimento, *Maria, Maria* (1999).

³ Evaristo (2016, p. 42).

of enslaved black women had its power of emission also under the control of slaveholders, men, women and even children. And if yesterday not even the voice belonged to enslaved women, today the words, the writing, belong to us too. They belong to us because we have appropriated these graphic signs, the value of writing, without forgetting the power of the orality of our ancestors. Power of voice, of creation, of ingenuity that the big house knew how to enslave to the delight of its children (Evaristo, 2020, p. 30).

That's why he says that his writing, the writing-living in the writing-living: "The writing-living is not to put those in the big house to sleep, but to wake them up from their unjust sleep" (2020, p. 30). In this way, her short story Maria produces the *image-question*, *character-question*, according to Manuel Antônio de Castro, in *A arte em questão: as questões da arte*, influenced by a Heideggerian ontological view of the world, who states that the image-question summons us to listen to the big questions. It allows us to learn to see, but not from the outside in, but the other way around. *The image-question is poiesis*, that is, a founding question, because it doesn't represent, it finds. And in it we find a prevailing ambiguity, an inaugural and original source of time and the world, always making new readings and interpretations possible. According to this view, we can say that literary works create *images-personages-questions*. According to Castro, the *image-question is the image-poetic*, calling us to listen to the great questions, where this listening is the fundamental condition of all dialog and all interpretations". In this way, Conceição's literature is permeated by many images, whether in her novels *Ponciá Viêncio*, *Becos da Memória*, or in her books of short stories such as *Olhos D'água* or *Insubmissas lágrimas de mulheres*. Her question-characters provoke and displace many reflections. We highlight the character Maria in order to engage in a dialog with Achille Mbembe's philosophy of the body-frontier, linked to his works *Brutalism and Politics of Enmity*.

Maria is an *issue character*, above all because she reflects the harsh reality of many women, victims of various intersectional forms of violence: gender, race and class. Triple-raped, the character reveals the violence applied to the border-body, as will be seen below: these are bodies that don't have the same rights of circulation. In addition, we will see that Brazil, since its colonial era, has been built in its social, political and historical structures by racism, which consequently demarcates the various forms of violence to which a black body can be subjected. For Conceição Evaristo, writing is a kind of appeasement of pain. By sharing her writing experiences, her literature is thought-provoking, dislocating and makes us bleed:

I like to write, most of the time it hurts, but once the text has been written it's possible to ease the pain a little, I mean a little. Writing can be a kind of revenge, sometimes I think about it. I don't know if it's revenge, perhaps a challenge, a way of hurting the imposed silence, or even a gesture of stubborn hope. I also like to say that writing is

for me the dance-song movement that my body hasn't performed, it's the password by which I access the world (Evaristo, 2005, p. 202).

It pours blood and memory. In the short story *Maria*, the character opens up her pain and her gushing blood produces the synthesized image of a society that is brutal and annihilates bodies. She is a black woman, a single mother of three and a domestic worker. At the end of the working day, she has to return to her job as a housewife, i.e. the double working day, to look after her young children. But an event marks her return. She crosses a *border*, or her body, demarcated as a border, is prevented from crossing, and she encounters hatred and racism in the flesh.

Maria and so many other maria(s), of grace or of *dis-grace*, suffer the brutality of the oppressive system every day, which controls the circulation of black bodies⁴, Maria-sonhadora, just wanted to get home, to give her children their first experience of *eating melon*. The day before, in the house where she worked, there had been a big gathering, a party that left some *leftovers*: "the day before, on Sunday, there had been a party at the boss's house", she was carrying pieces of dreams in her bag to feed the children's souls.

In the scene, Evaristo describes the journey the character went through, marking her return home: "Maria had been standing at the bus stop for more than half an hour. She was tired of waiting. If the distance had been shorter, she would have walked" (2016, p.42). In this context, we can see how difficult it is for the character to get around, her lost hours, in other words, Maria's precarious life. This is how Conceição describes it:

You really had to get used to walking. The buses were getting longer! As well as being tired, the bag was heavy. The day before, on Sunday, there had been a party at the boss's house. She took home the leftovers. The ham bone and the fruit that had decorated the table. She had won the fruit and a tip. Her boss was going to throw the bone away. She was happy, despite her tiredness. The tip had come at a good time. Her two youngest children had the flu. She needed to buy some syrup and a little medicine to clear her nose. I could also buy a can of Toddy. The fruit was great and there was melon. The children had never eaten melon before. Did the children like melon? (Evaristo, 2016, p. 39-40).

⁴ It is important to note that in his work *Critique of Black Reason* (Mbembe, 2022), Mbembe points out that the term black, thought of through a paradigm of modernity, is attributed to the human being whose flesh and spirit are transformed, respectively, into a thing and a commodity. From a contemporary perspective, our philosopher also points out that the potential fusion of capitalism and animism generates the possibility of transforming human beings into animated things, numerical data and codes. In Mbembe's words, "for the first time in human history, the noun black no longer refers solely to the condition attributed to people of African origin during the era of first capitalism" (Mbembe, 2022, p. 19). This condition mentioned by Mbembe becomes generalized, reaching a planetary scale. This movement of generalization of the contemporary condition Mbembe calls the becoming-black of the world (Mbembe, 2022, p. 20).

The excerpt above describes the harsh reality of Maria, a solo mother, who felt an urgency to get home and look after her children. Mondays always start with the feeling of beginning, even with the tiredness, the hours lost waiting for the bus, the sore feet and the heavy bag, Maria's hands were sore because she had been cut in the middle of her hand by a laser knife that cuts through life (Conceição, 2016, p. 40). On the bus, life and its reunions. It is inside the bus that she meets the man who was the father of one of her children:

Maria saw, without looking, that it was the father of her child. He was still the same. Handsome, big, his frightened gaze fixed on nothing and no one. She felt immense sorrow. Why couldn't it be otherwise? Why couldn't they be happy? And the boy, Maria? How's the boy?" whispered the man. Do you know how much I miss you? There's a hole in my chest, I miss you so much!

I'm alone! I didn't get ready, I didn't want anyone else. Have you had other... other children? The woman lowered her eyes as if asking for forgiveness. É. She had two more children, but she didn't have anyone else! Men too? They would have a different life. Everything would be different with them. Maria, I haven't forgotten you! It's all here in the hollow of my chest... (Evaristo, 2016, p. 40).

Taken by a mixture of emotion and silence, without reaction, she listens with difficulty to the message that the man whispers in her ear: "a hug, a kiss, a cuddle for your son". In view of what is to come, we can infer: Maria was already condemned the moment she was born, because you can't *escape this skin thing*⁵, and as Frantz Fanon says, "*wherever he goes, the black man remains black*" (Fanon, 2008, p.149). Maria will suffer the *fate of being a black woman on her body-skin*. During a robbery, the man, who was the father of her 11-year-old son, had a gun in his hand. She was the only one who didn't suffer the violence of the robbery, but she did suffer several cuts on her skin, her blood not only dripping onto the hands of the passengers, but onto the whole of society: *the border knife cut her life short. It is worth pointing out that* the scene described by Conceição Evaristo is in line with a kind of everyday violence that denotes a brutalist way of life, as conceived by Achille Mbembe in *Brutalism*. As we will see below, in this work the philosopher mentions that brutalism is not limited to the horrors of war, but is embedded in everyday life, and "consists of the production of a sequence of things that, at a given moment, lead to a series of fatal events" (Mbembe, 2021, p. 46). As Maria's body was being cut up, from the back of the bus someone shouted: "that dirty bitch knew the robbers". With no chance of defense, she wanted to say that she didn't know any of the robbers, only that "she knew the father of

⁵ See Jorge Aragão's 1986 album *Coisa de pele*. Philosopher Marcelo José Derzi Moraes takes an interesting approach in his article *Por uma filosofia dessa coisa de pele: uma desconstrução da colonialidade (For a philosophy of this skin thing: a deconstruction of coloniality)*, which is part of the book *Gingar, filosofar, resistir: ensaios para transver o mundo*, 2020.

her first child. She knew the man who had been hers and whom she still loved so much" (Evaristo, 2016, p. 41). According to Gregory Rabassa, in *O negro na ficção brasileira: meio século de história literária*:

In the literature produced in Brazil until 1888, black people appeared in different roles and from different angles. [...] As a person, the black man was described as almost everything that could be fit into the human scale of interpretation: a beast-like figure who was only good for hard labor, a savage who could not be trusted and who would revolt at the first opportunity [...] an exotic figure who arouses desire [...] (Rabassa, 1965, p. 324).

We can see that the characters have had their humanity eliminated, their rights usurped and they are stereotyped as "animals", "savages" and "exotic". This literature has contributed to the perpetuation of violence and to the construction of an undermined image of black people in fiction and in reality. Conceição's writing takes a different look at black literature, highlighting the pluralities of her characters and their humanities. According to Eduardo de Assis Duarte, in Conceição's work there is a *poetic brutalism*⁶, that is, "as a procedure of representation, it is up to *poetic brutalism* to place itself as the antipode of this reduction of the subject to a disposable body, through the touching path of the sublime that humanizes pain, hatred, as well as the sparse and fleeting joy that runs through short stories and novels" (Duarte, 2020, p.85). And this takes shape in Evaristo's work, because:

the brutalism that runs through the writer's stories centers on the victim, not the aggressor. Far from the Tarantino-esque reification incensed by the entertainment industry, **what bleeds through** her texts is the humanity affected by indifference towards the black person vilified as undesirable - a kind of "differentiated" and uncomfortable figure, in real life daily suppressed from the landscape by pure and simple elimination, as the statistics of violence in Brazil point out (Duarte, 2020, p.85).

Faced with the brutalism that Maria's body is exposed to, the height of the violence comes when they scream:

Lincha! Lincha! Lincha!... Some passengers got off and others flew towards Maria. The driver had stopped the bus to defend the passenger: Calm down, everyone! What kind of madness is this? I know this woman by sight. Every day, at about this time, she takes the bus with me. She's coming from work, from the struggle to support her children... **Lincha! Lincha! Lincha!** Maria was bleeding from her mouth, nose and ears. The bag had burst and the fruit was rolling around on the floor (Evaristo, 2016, p. 41-42).

Based on the scenes described, we can analyze Achille Mbembe's reflections in the works *Politics of Enmity and Brutalism*. Paying attention to the violence that Maria's body suffers, we can observe

⁶ A term also used by Alfredo Bosi, an important critic and historian of Brazilian literature

the following: being black has linked her body to criminality, she has become a threat, the enemy to be eliminated and fought⁷. She was no longer seen as a person, she lost her humanity and became another object. In this way, the passengers spread their hatred in the abject body. We can't *escape this skin thing*, the social condition of the black woman, but also of other black and dissident bodies, that is, the colonial project was able to place black people in a place of subalternity, which is inscribed on the skin. In this respect, Conceição's short story can be read as a reflection of a society of enmity, which Mbembe sees as the current state of our politics, that is, as a "relationship of enmity is marked by the anguish of annihilation - a contemporary project of separation" (Mbembe, 2021, p. 77).

The relationship of enmity that we witness in our contemporary world is haunted by the ghosts of separation and extermination. Although we claim that our society is guided by a democratic regime, we often fail to pay attention to the spectral body that constitutes it. Democracy, among other characteristics, appears to be a political regime that monopolizes violence in the form of the rule of law, ensuring the freedom and equality of citizens. However, it is also true to say that since its inception, the democratic body has been surrounded by countless brutalities, often hidden, sometimes concealed, making the idea of a life in a democracy that is peaceful, policed and devoid of violence a mere chimera. This nocturnal body⁸ that inhabits the history of modern democracy turns it into a spectral double body, where the boundaries between legitimate violence and illegal violence fall under the umbrella of undecidability.

Mbembe's observation about the current state of our politics reveals a kind of desire and anguish that is often reflected in movements of hatred and hostility towards the other. It's a manifestation of the desire to close in on oneself, which, on the other hand, tends to violently obliterate any kind of difference. In this scenario, the other is not only reduced to a form of objectification, but also appears as an object shrouded in an aura of danger; it becomes a disturbing object that threatens

⁷ This type of movement is characteristic of the modern project of knowledge and government implemented by the Euro-American worlds. It is the constitution of a codification device that Mbembe explains as follows: "by reducing the body and the living being to a question of appearance, skin and color, granting skin and color the status of a biological fiction, the Euro-American worlds in particular have made black and race two versions of one and the same figure: that of codified madness" (Mbembe, 2022, p. 13).

⁸ In *Politics of Enmity*, Mbembe argues that the history of modern democracy is made up of two bodies, a solar body and a nocturnal body. According to Mbembe, democracy, the plantation and the colonial empire are part of the same historical matrix. The constitution of this body and its double (the nocturnal side) would be essential for a historical understanding of the violence of the contemporary global order. In this sense, the Cameroonian philosopher states the following: "A creation of democracy, the colonial world was not the antithesis of the democratic order. It has always been its double, or rather its nocturnal face. There is no democracy without its double, its colony, no matter what its name or structure. It is not external to democracy. It is not necessarily located outside the walls. Democracy carries the colony in its bosom, just as the colony carries democracy, often in the form of a mask (Mbembe, 2020, p. 53). It is precisely this nocturnal body, the spectre of colonial violence, that always haunts and threatens contemporary democracies

the supposed sovereignty of the self. Nurturing this desire for separation requires the incessant fabrication of this disturbing object, embodied in the figure of the enemy⁹.

The desire for segregation and the fabrication of the idea of the enemy that runs through the relationships of a hostile society requires the establishment of symbolic demarcations that express the separation between "me and the other". In other words, it's a question of fixing borders that serve the function of demarcating not only the existence of a space for the constitution of the self, the equal, the same, but also to form that and keep separate what lies beyond the limits of the border. In many cases, as Mbembe says, a dividing wall is supposed to placate the desire for separation and put an end to the excess presence of the other. At other times, the desire for segregation leads one to go further and call for the elimination of the other, seen as an enemy¹⁰.

The phantasmal figure of the enemy, contrary to what one might suppose, is not beyond the confines of society, situated outside the sphere of relationship with those who recognize themselves as equals, in other words, those bound by the bond of fraternity and who recognize the other as a friend. The enemy, from the outset and most of the time, already appears in a dynamic of direct and contiguous relationship with that which intends to close in on itself, constantly causing the supposed stability of the "inside-outside" dichotomy to oscillate. The spectre of the enemy, who unpredictably returns to haunt the community of "friends", transits the boundaries between inside and outside. In this sense, as Mbembe explains, "unless it is exterminated, the Other is no longer external to us. It is within us, under the double figuration of the other me and the other me, each mortally exposed to the other and to itself" (Mbembe, 2020, p. 83).

In this way, the enemy, this other who is not me, this other who is not the same as me, emerges as a disturbing difference in proximity and within the self. As a phenomenal body, the spectre of the enemy can reveal itself under different "faces" and signs, depending on the set of fabrications elaborated within a community. Thus, the enemy is often characterized in the form of the vagrant. In the sense we are using here, the vagrant refers to the one who is "outside the law", the one who escapes

⁹ For Mbembe, the idea of the enemy must be taken directly from the political philosophy of the German Carl Schmitt and understood in its concrete sense and existence. Therefore, for the Cameroonian philosopher, the enemy reveals a supreme antagonism - he is "in his body, in his flesh, the one whose physical death can be provoked, because he denies, in an existential way, our being" (Mbembe, 2020, p. 86).

¹⁰ As Mbembe explains, the need for the figure of the enemy, or the drive of the enemy, in contemporary societies is presented from an ontological perspective, so that the enemy is part of the constitution of the subject. Furthermore, being deprived of the enemy means being prevented from enjoying a relationship of hatred towards the other. According to Mbembe, the deprivation of the enemy is equivalent to "being frustrated in your compulsion to be frightened, in your ability to demonize, in the kind of pleasure and satisfaction felt when the supposed enemy is shot down by special forces, or when, captured alive, he is subjected to endless interrogations and taken to be tortured in one or other of the secret places that sully our planet" (Mbembe, 2020, p. 85).

the systems of normalization and can be identified as "abnormal". The vagrant is the one who "has no place" in society, he is *a-topos* because he doesn't fit in with the polis - at the same time as he prowls the city - and therefore becomes the spectre of the wanderer, the enemy of order. The philosopher Marcelo Moraes, in his work *Democracias Espectrais (Spectral Democracies)*, accurately presents the problematic dimension of the vagrant:

The figure of the vagrant, the slut, the bohemian, the scoundrel, the *flâneur*, the prostitute, the beggar, the punk, the harlot, the transvestite, is presented as the enemy of order, for the good people and families, for the good citizen who frequents the brothel, who frequents dark streets in cars. Since they pollute the city, don't follow orders, commit crimes, don't work, don't have a fixed address, lead good people astray and, above all, don't contribute to the capital machine. In Brazil, specifically in Rio de Janeiro, the desire for cleanliness, the desire for order, the desire for a colony, in addition to incriminating these individuals, often involves slaughter, execution, namely the maxim of the good citizen: *a good bandit is a dead bandit*. Not to mention, of course, the woman who doesn't walk the line, the one who, on the margins, wouldn't be worthy of a good woman, of a family, and is therefore a slut: the good family doesn't forgive her, she deserves to be raped. Rape and murder are acts granted by a spectral law that governs the moral state of so-called democratic society. In this sense, the vagrants, deprived of the free use of the city, are victims of a necro-powerful state that, bypassing the law, enforces the logic of execution, a necropolitical regime or system, according to Mbembe, in which these lives are worth less (Moraes, 2020, p. 133-134).

As an undesirable entity that transits democratic regimes across the planet, the enemy, the other as enemy or vagrant, needs to be identified, mobilized and, as a last resort (or often as the first choice), eliminated. As a consequence of this stance, cleavages must be stipulated¹¹ that guarantee the division between the "equals" and the "unequals"¹².

¹¹ One of the most significant ways of producing these divides is undoubtedly the process of identity production through discourse. As Stuart Hall points out, in order to understand the formation of identities, it is essential to analyze the sites of their formation and the institutions involved, the discursive practices that make up their construction, as well as the strategic options adopted for this purpose. Furthermore, as Hall emphasizes, identities "emerge within the play of specific modalities of power and are thus more the product of the marking of difference and exclusion than the sign of an identical, naturally constituted unity, of an 'identity' in its traditional meaning - that is, an all-inclusive sameness, a seamless, one-piece identity without internal differentiation" (Hall, 2014, 109-110).

¹² Regarding the construction of the Other as "unequal" through discursive practices, there is an interesting study by psychoanalyst Maria Rita Kehl that points out how certain discourses that circulate in society are aimed at eliminating the enemy. Let's briefly look at some of the observations made by the psychologist: "There is always the Other, the radically strange element, in relation to whom, at the limit, some violations of rights are tolerated without this bothering the so-called 'good' citizen. The black person. The pauper. The beggar, the alcoholic, the kid. The drug dealer. *Twelve alleged drug dealers were killed by the police in Morro dos Macacos on Thursday afternoon...* Oh well. As long as they were alleged drug dealers, that's fine; do guys like that "deserve" to be included in the universality of rights? It's worth noting that in the survey "Perceptions of human rights in Brazil", although 32% of respondents agree with the phrase "a good bandit is a dead bandit" - a figure that rises to 43% when added to the responses of those who agree "more or less" with this statement - we find an almost absolute majority (81%) in total *disagreement with the assertion that "given the high dangerousness of police activity, it's good that the police shoot first and ask questions later"*. Given the apparent incongruity between the two rates, we can assume that among those who disagree with the police shooting at random, at least 39% would agree if the police shot knowing that their victim was a bandit. It's just not worth shooting first to avoid the risk of killing a good citizen" (Kehl, 2010, p. 36).

Among the most common ways of separating individuals and delimiting space is the border - the dividing line that separates distinct sovereign entities, regulates the distribution of geographical space and determines the ability of individuals to circulate from one place to another. But that's not all. The border is also used to demarcate conflict zones, create spaces of confinement and segregate certain classes of people. As a true device that expresses the imbalance of power relations, the border identifies, classifies, controls and disciplines the space and the individuals who have to cross each demarcation line. However, beyond these usual functions, the border has become, according to Mbembe, an ontological device. For Mbembe, the border is the name of the organized violence that sustains contemporary capitalism and the order of our world in general.

Our experience of the world today leads us to the realization that the phenomenon of globalization is nothing more than a set of fanciful speeches, which are only sustained by incessant repetition. The great freedoms promised by globalization - the free movement of capital, goods, merchandise and people - may have materialized for a tiny fraction of humanity. This is because, for the majority of people who inhabit this planet, the idea of "free movement" is still a distant dream. Thus, instead of reducing, the globalized world builds more and more borders (physical, geographical, legal or symbolic) so that for most of humanity globalization imposes itself as a veritable factory of perversities (Santos, 2013, p. 19).¹³

The desire for enmity that flows in our time stubbornly demands the realization of "endogamy", with the consequent expulsion and death of the other. So, in order to satisfy this voracious appetite for the same, borders expand and walls are constantly erected. Borders function as a guarantee to keep "related" individuals safe. The "walls" prevent people from having a clear view of what is on the other side, providing an illusory sense of complete security. In this sense, "all danger is always left beyond the city walls". This whole atmosphere of hostility leads liberal democracies to streamline their political relations under the prism of a Security State, which can be interpreted as a way of crystallizing certain power relations that intensify levels of violence, with the aim of guaranteeing peace and security for the members of a society. However, for this security state to work,

¹³ Geographer Milton Santos, analyzing the process of globalization since the end of the last century, mentions that the world can be seen from three perspectives: the world as we are made to see it, the world as it is and the world as it can be. For the purposes of this text, it is enough to mention that for the first two visions, globalization would be understood as both a fable and a perversity. According to Milton Santos, the realization of today's world requires an incessant process of fabrication and one of these great fabrications would be the idea of deterritorialized humanity, characterized by the disappearance of borders and the existence of universal citizenship. However, the geographer recalls the following: "In fact, borders have changed their meaning, but they have never been so alive, insofar as the very exercise of globalized activities does not do without government action capable of making them effective within a territory. A de-territorialized humanity is just a myth. On the other hand, the exercise of citizenship, even if the notion of international morality advances, is still a fact that depends on the presence and action of national states" (Santos, 2013, p. 42).

it is necessary to structure and constantly maintain the idea of the enemy, which in turn feeds the feeling of fear and vulnerability. It is for this reason that Mbembe says that "the state of insecurity is what makes the security state work, insofar as it is basically a structure responsible for investing, organizing and diverting the constitutive drives of contemporary human life" (Mbembe, 2020, p. 93).

The "psychological" state of insecurity is fostered by the fabrication of caricatures, clichés and stereotypes, all of which tend to create tangible outlines for identifying the enemy. The translucence of this phantom that is the enemy needs to be embodied in a body of flesh and blood so that, finally, this becoming-body of the enemy becomes the object of the drive for hatred, segregation and various forms of violence. Indeed, hatred of the other provokes this feeling of annihilation, as the philosopher states: "Hatred of the enemy, the need to neutralize him - vectors that express the spirit of contemporary politics" (Mbembe, 2021, p. 88). In addition, the philosopher calls this process alterocide, in which the other is not similar to oneself, but an intrinsically threatening object, from which one must protect oneself, get rid of or destroy. Nevertheless, the desire to annihilate the other: "the powers of this world continually convert certain spaces into impassable places for certain categories of people" (Mbembe, 2021, p. 78).

This true society of enmity, driven by the pulse of separation and annihilation of the Other, makes up the contemporary ethical-political scenario that the Cameroonian philosopher called *brutalism*. In general terms, since our intention is not to analyze the concept in depth, we can say that brutalism is a political way of disposing of matter, the body and even the immaterial, whose project is to transform humanity into matter and a reserve of energy available for extraction (Mbembe, 2022, p. 19). In short, it is a description of a horizon in which power relations concentrate their rationality on the mutation of the human into an object, assuming as a strategy the fracturing, fissuring, depletion and exhaustion of living bodies.

In this brutalist scenario, borders still occupy a prominent place. As we said earlier, the border is used not only to delimit spaces, but primarily to restrict the movement of bodies. In the context of Brutalism, this cleavage mechanism falls particularly heavily on bodies that are unwanted by society.

Unwanted bodies are those equated with human waste, forming a kind of virulent body that can cause "disease" and affect the good health of the social body - what Mbembe calls the "border body". These bodies constitute a surplus mass from which no function can be seen and from which no energy can be extracted; for this reason, these "too many" people need to be eliminated at all costs. According to Mbembe, "today's 'too many' people are those who have neither the appropriate skills to promote their employability nor the assets, securities or property necessary to guarantee their

solvency" (2022, p. 154- 155). In this brutalist context, frontier bodies take on the appearance of the enemy, causing political forces to turn to combat those who, even though they want to sell the only commodity they have, which is their own labor power, can no longer find buyers" (2022, p. 162).

From reading Conceição's short story, we can say that Corpo-Maria is a border- body, because it will be marked by the experience of the cut, the desire for annihilation and the hate drive of the bus passengers, the character's body will be seen as the enemy to be fought, in effect, Maria experiences the delimitations that operate on her body as a black woman. According to Mbembe, the border-body:

This new type of human body is not only the skin of the body and the abject body of epidermal racism, but also that of segregation. It is also the folded prison-body of the border-body, the one whose mere appearance in the phenomenal field arouses suspicion, hostility and aggression from the outset. The geo-racial and geo-carceral imaginary that was perfected not so long ago by apartheid-era South Africa continues to become universal (Mbembe, 2019, n.d.).

In this process of dismantling the other, Maria becomes a woman-object, she loses her basic rights as a human being, from this point of view, she becomes a threatening body-object, and is thus subjected to violence, which is what we see at the end of the story, Maria being beaten by the cruelty of the passengers, who "wanted to eliminate the danger". The issue is broad and multi-layered, in line with Mbembe, and it is in this way that the right is established as to who can circulate and who cannot, in other words, which bodies are subject to obstacles and various borders.

Also according to the Cameroonian philosopher, in his work *Brutalism*, the process of frontierization at ground zero is constituted by "the non-relationship and denial of the very idea of a common humanity, of a planet, the only one we have, which we share together and to which our common condition as passers-by binds us" (Mbembe, 2021, p. 76). Thus, "it targets not singular bodies, but human masses considered vile and superfluous. It is a struggle waged against abject bodies" (2021, p. 78). Brutalism "is part of a 'surplus humanity' - they are 'too many' bodies - they must be eliminated, controlled or even immobilized" (2021, p.158).

When dealing with border-bodies, Mbembe mentions how people are managed, being treated like a pile of meat, showing how, since the 16th century, there has been a desire to control, especially to control the movement of bodies. As the Cameroonian philosopher points out: "as virulent - migrants, beggars, vagabonds, deviants from the imperative of community and sedentariness".

In this context, Mbembe states that the process by which powers convert certain places into impassable places - a device for controlling bodies considered to be "virulent" (2021, p.78). In short, "frontiering" bodies is a process that consists of barring and, in a way, directing unwanted flows,

demarcating human masses that are in places they shouldn't be, and should therefore be banned. In view of this, we can bring up memories of specific cases of violence that demonstrate this process described by the philosopher, such as the frequent police approaches to certain bodies, immobilizing them, throwing them to the ground, in order to make these bodies static, and this is not only a reality in Brazil.

The question therefore arises, what can we understand by frontierization? For Mbembe, it is the ability to decide who can move, that is, to establish conditions for occupation, highlighting the center of political struggles for sovereignty, nationalism, citizenship, security and freedom. To put it more clearly, Mbembe emphasizes that the colonial expansion of the West demarcates this maneuver of control. Especially with the advent of capitalism, the philosopher says in his text "*The idea of a world without borders*":

the *raison d'être* of the border relates to key questions such as: who owns the land? Who has the right to claim parts of it and the various beings that inhabit it? Who determines its distribution or division? By framing the question of the border in this way, I am trying to show that the power of the border lies in its ability to regulate the multiple distributions of populations - human and non-human - over the body of the earth, and thus affect the life forces of all kinds of beings (Mbembe, 2019, n.d.).

The thinker highlights important questions about borders: is it possible to think of a world without borders? Based on the philosopher's thinking, "could we engender the utopia of a world without borders?". "Who owns the land?", "Who has the right to claim parts of it and the various beings that inhabit it?", "Who determines its distribution or division?", "Which bodies can circulate?". "What lives have perished in this system?". Would a world without borders be possible: where all bodies could move freely? By framing the concept of the border, we can see the capacity for regularization, for multiple forms of distribution of populations (human and non-human) that affect all beings. What's more, control doesn't just happen to bodies, but also acts on movement. It is interesting to note that Maria (or even a body-Maria) must be immobilized, because she is a body that represents the impossibility of free movement in all the spaces of the city. As a flesh that carries within it the specter of the enemy, Maria is a body to be controlled or even eliminated. However, we can go further and say that Maria is also an indefensible body, in the sense described by philosopher Elsa Dorlin. The idea behind the philosophy is that certain bodies in our society are incapable of defending themselves. If these bodies try to protect themselves, they end up turning the defensive gesture against themselves in the form of violence. In the words of Elsa Dorlin,

There is no greater risk to life than this kind of situation, when the power to act becomes an autoimmune reflex. It's no longer just a question of directly hindering the action of minorities, as in sovereign repression, or simply letting them die, without defense, as happens in the context of biopower. It is a question of leading certain subjects to annihilate themselves as

subjects, of encouraging their power to act in order to better stimulate them, to train them to their own loss. Producing beings who, the more they defend themselves, the more they wear themselves out (Dorlin, 2020, p. 18).

In Conceição's short story, Maria tries to defend herself against the accusation of robbery made by the other passengers on the bus. The character tries to explain, but can't say why she wasn't robbed. Only one of the passengers tries to argue in Maria's favor, but the effort is futile. All defenses in Maria's favor are doomed to failure, because she is a body that doesn't have the right to defend itself. The mere suspicion already imposes the mobilization of this body, either through the use of police force or, as in Maria's case, the use of violence by other individuals who are supposedly legitimized to take that body down. The character has a body condemned to immobility, and in the plot of the story, she is prevented from moving around, from getting home to look after her children and give them fruit, because her body is beaten to the point of annihilation.

The border is a "cut", what demarcates a line, divides space (the cut of the knife) and is no longer focused on spaces, but on bodies. Are borders insurmountable? According to Mbembe: "there are no longer any insurmountable borders, yet the constant monitoring that signals who may or may not cross them means that "many of our contemporaries find in borders the limits of globalization" (2021, p. 75). Finally, it's time to say it again:

What is it if not the conscious multiplication of spaces of loss and mourning, where the lives of so many people considered undesirable come to be torn apart? What is it if not a way of waging war against enemies whose livelihoods and conditions of survival have previously been devastated [...]? (Mbembe, 2021, p. 76-77).

In a space of loss and mourning, which lives are more mournful? Mbembe's philosophy could be a guiding thread for a possible reading of Conceição's short story. In this sense, in Mbembe's view, utopia is necessary if we are to continue passing through the world, and so "the idea of a world without borders can be a powerful, albeit problematic, resource for the social, the political and even the aesthetic imagination" (2019, n.d.). In view of this, following in Conceição's *footsteps*, "*we agreed not to die*", no matter how much misfortune leaks out of every pore on earth, we need to hope for a possible world, *utopia? It's what helps us, passers-by and arrivals, to walk through the world*, because we need to think of a world without borders, where all bodies can live and circulate freely. It is on Conceição's paths that we learn to look at *writing*, which, before any domain, is an interrogation. Therefore, it is a quest to insert new stories into the world. Writing is not about abstracting from the world, but about existence, about the life-

world (2020, p. 35). Maria is a border-body, her body is cut, the "border-knife" delimits her free movement in cuts. The border becomes a mark on the flesh, a cut in the skin, a kind of scripture that reduces certain bodies to objectification. Since the border-body marks a kind of racialization of bodies, indicating which bodies can and cannot circulate, because "racial violence is largely codified in the language of the border and security" (2019, n.d.). In line with Mbembe, Vitorio and Neto (2020) state that: "necropower has as its function the destruction of unruly bodies that represent some kind of biological danger to the population. It is a specific formation of terror, as it aims to exterminate a significant number of people" (2020, p. 63). In view of the above, without exhausting the discussion, it is in this system of framing that *black bodies* are exposed and destroyed in the precariousness of life. However, it is necessary to be on the move, not to have barriers that prevent bodies from circulating.

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