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**Wrenched Necropolitical Nexus in Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Afterlives***



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**Abstract**

This embryonic analysis intends to examine the “wrenched necropolitical nexus”, a violent disruption of social and political relations, as portrayed in Abdulrazak Gurnah’s *Afterlives*. By utilizing contemporary political theory and philosophical paradigms of Achille Mbembe’s *Necropolitics*, for scrutinizing power, violence, and social control, incorporating Michel Foucault’s conception of bio power to the tactical governance of life and death. A qualitative methodology, textual analysis, mingling investigative and explanatory approaches employs to analytically assess the “wrenched necropolitical nexus”, where the power to dictate death converts paramount. Through the theoretical framework of Mbembe, the study is gauged how state power manifests over the deliberate control and production of death, rendering certain populations ‘the living dead.’ The exploration accentuates appraisal of the nocturnal regimes of power and agency and the bio-to-necro nexus, affectation intuitions into biopolitics, surveillance, and resistance wherein power pulls apart existing structures within the text, prioritizing death over life for targeted groups. The research is bridging the gap by contributing to the indulgent of necropolitics in literature, while addressing a critical gap in scholarship on the juncture of necropolitics, power dynamics, and postcolonial narratives particularly in contexts of colonialism, war, and displacement. The analysis aims to expose in what way power drives to shape individual and collective experiences, essentially in framework striking by colonial violence and conflict.

**Keywords:** Agency, Biopolitics, Dynamics, Necropolitical, Nexus, Nocturnal, Power, Surveillance, Regimes, Resistance and Wrenched.

**Introduction**

This research is designed to highlight the concept of ‘Wrenched Necropolitical Nexus’, the violent disruption of normal social and political relations in the perspective of necropolitical power structures, colonialism, war, and displacement in the novel, Gurnah’s *Afterlives* (2020). The 21<sup>st</sup> century has forced critical inquiry into the mechanisms that govern life and death on a global scale and perceived a disquieting acceleration of violence, displacement, and the systematic devaluation of human life. This backdrop is situated within a powerful framework for understanding how sovereign power manifests through the control and manipulation of death, as offered by Achille Mbembe’s concept of necropolitics. As Mbembe argues, *Necropolitics* (2019), goes beyond the Foucauldian concept of biopolitics, the management of life to dynamically govern who lives and who dies, frequently operating beside lines of race, class, and colonial legacy, particularly in contemporary postcolonial literature.

By focusing on the nocturnal regimes of power and agency that shape the lives of the characters, the analysis posits that *Afterlives* serves as persuasive appraisals of necropolitical power structures. Particularly in the ways they expose the devastating consequences of colonialism, war, and displacement. The perilous survival of individuals crushed surrounded by the machinery of state violence and global power dynamics, depict vividly in both novels, where the significance of life is arbitrarily

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indomitable and the potential of a secure future is constantly demoralized.

It highlights the way power, in its necropolitical manifestation, actively dismantles existing structures and replaces them with systems that facilitate the systematic disenfranchisement, marginalization, and even extermination of certain groups. Through the poignant narratives of individuals caught in the crosshairs of these forces, Gurnah exposes the mechanisms by which necropower operates, leaving an indelible mark on the landscape of human rights and forcing a critical reassessment of the structures that perpetuate such violence.

This study delves into the harrowing intersection of necropolitics and complex power dynamics as depicted in Gurnah's *Afterlives*. Despite a burgeoning field of scholarship dedicated to necropolitics, a significant lacuna persists concerning the specific ways in which necropolitical regimes of power and agency shape the lives and deaths of individuals and communities, particularly within the context of postcolonial literature. This absence is particularly pronounced when considering the intricate power dynamics that underpin and perpetuate necropolitical control.

Necropolitics, originally coined by Achille Mbembe, necropolitics extends the concept of biopolitics the state's control over life to encompass the state's power over death. Patrick Dwyer PhD Candidate, Socio-Legal Studies Department, York University, praises Mbembe's work in "Canadian Review of Law and Society":

Mbembe's work on necropolitics demonstrates how contemporary societies have exited democracy, renewing the camp and other colonial practices to create death worlds and a society of separation. *Necropolitics* makes an important contribution through outlining the conditions of hatred and separation that constitute contemporary death worlds. (Dwyer 224)

It refers to the power to dictate who lives and who dies, and how that death is instrumentalized for political and economic gain. It's not simply about the occurrence of death, but the deliberate production of death, the shaping of death worlds, and the manipulation of death as a tool of control. It goes beyond biopolitics (the management of life) to actively orchestrate death and dying.

The term, "Wrenched Necropolitical Nexus" for the purposes of this study, refers to the violent disruption and manipulation of normal social and political relations through the exercise of necropolitical power. It signifies the breaking apart of established norms, societal structures, and ethical considerations when the power to control death becomes a central tool of governance, oppression, or domination. The perplexing and distressing effects of necropolitics on individuals and communities are emphasized.

In this perspective, Oxford Languages defines 'wrenched' as, "forcibly or violently twisted or distorted" (Oxford Languages). It offers that the necropolitical nexus in Gurnah's *Afterlives* is characterized by a violent or forcible disruption of normal social and political relations. Term Necropolitics defines by Sustainability Directory (2025) as:

Understanding Necropolitics begins with grasping a core concept the power to dictate who lives and who dies. This power extends beyond the simple act of killing; it involves the ability to subject certain populations to living conditions that expose them to death, slow death, or systemic violence. [...] the biopolitical management of life to the necropolitical management of death. (Sustainability Directory)

The Cambridge English Corpus refers a nexus to a connection or tie between two or more things. Thus, in this perspective, the title "Wrenched Necropolitical Nexus"

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refers the violent disruption of normal social and political relations in the context of the complex web of relationships between necropolitical power structures, colonialism, war, and displacement in Gurnah's *Afterlives*.

Michel Foucault defines 'Biopolitics' by referring to the basic biological features of the human species became the object of political strategies, general strategies of control. Michael R. Laurence is a political scientist whose main research interests are in the field of critical political theories, defines Foucauldian Biopolitics: in "Biopolitics and State Regulation of Human Life - Political Science" - Oxford Bibliographies (2016) as follows:

This perspective, popularized by Michel Foucault, focuses on how power operates to govern life through various techniques and strategies. It explores how power shapes individuals' bodies, behaviors, and identities, rather than simply repressing them. (Laurence, par. 1)

A specific system or network of power relations that operates within a given context, is referred by Regime of Power. A regime of power, in the context of necropolitics, incorporates the several mechanisms, institutions, and practices that empower the state or other actors to employ control over life and death. It contains legitimate contexts, security forces, surveillance technologies, and social norms that contribute to the systematic depreciation of certain lives.

The major thematic concerns of *Afterlives* (2020) digs into the multifaceted consequences of German colonialism in East Africa during the early 20th century. The novel meticulously showcases by what means the colonizers weaponize violence, exploitation, and forced labor to establish and maintain their dominance and exposes the mechanics of colonial necropolitics. Africans are abridged to measly apparatuses in the colonial project, their identities and humanity stripped away as they are forced to serve as soldiers, carriers, and laborers.

Gurnah's careful attention to detail assembly the historical realities of the novel tangible and expressively resonant. His aptitude to conjure the sensory capabilities of his characters submerge the reader in the world of colonial East Africa. Gurnah uses intense imagery to portray the landscapes of East Africa and the cruel realities of colonial life. Symbolism, particularly in the use of landscapes, is also present to epitomize the inner states of characters.

Whereas partaking roots in earlier philosophical considerations about power and sovereignty, the concept of necropolitics, truly solidified as a distinctive theoretical framework with the publication of Achille Mbembe's *Necropolitics* in 2003 (originally published in French as *Necropolitique*). A critical engagement with Michel Foucault's concept of biopower, the genesis of the theory can be traced, which examines how modern states exert control over the biological life of populations.

Mbembe's theorization was profoundly influenced by the historical and contemporary experiences of colonialism and post-colonial violence in Africa. He observed that in many African contexts, sovereignty was not about ensuring the welfare of the population, but rather about exercising the right to kill, to let die, and to expose populations to conditions of precarity and vulnerability that rendered them susceptible to death.

The legacies of slavery, colonial exploitation, and post-independence conflicts provided fertile ground for the development of necropolitical practices, where the state and other powerful actors actively managed death as a means of control and domination. These realities forced a re-evaluation of traditional notions of sovereignty

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and power, leading Mbembe to develop his theory of necropolitics.

## **Literature Gap**

This study seeks to fill the gap, despite the growing body of scholarship on necropolitics. There remains a significant gap in research concerning the intersection of necropolitics, power dynamics, and the complex power dynamics that shape the lives and deaths of individuals and communities in contemporary society in postcolonial literature. The impact of complex power dynamics specifically, on necropolitical nexus power structures in these novels has not been amply scrutinized. Furthermore, the ways in which wrenched necropolitical regimes of power and agency shape the lives of characters in Gurnah's *Afterlives* remain unexplored. This analysis bridges this gap by offering a meticulous exploration, with an emphasis on the nocturnal regimes of power and agency that shape the lives of the characters. Moreover, this exploration pore over the ways in which bio to necro nexus of power edifices underpin or challenge in the novel, with an emphasis on biopolitics, surveillance, and resistance.

## **Research Objectives**

1. To scrutinize the illustration of the nocturnal regimes of power and agency that shape the lives of the characters, with a focus on wrenched necropolitics nexus in Gurnah's *Afterlives*.
2. To explore bio to necro nexus of power structures intersect in the novel by investigating the ways in which the implications of these dynamics for understanding of biopolitics, surveillance, and resistance.

## **Research Questions**

1. How do nocturnal regimes of power and agency shape the lives of the characters to epitomize the wrenched necropolitical nexus in Gurnah's *Afterlives*?
2. What implications do bio to necro nexus of power structures intersect in the novel to explore these dynamics for the understanding of biopolitics, surveillance, and resistance?

## **Research Methodology**

The methodology for this research is qualitative and analytical in nature, grounded in the principles of textual analysis and interdisciplinary exploration. At its core, this study adopts a critical theoretical approach, employing interdisciplinary analysis that draws from postcolonial studies, political philosophy, and critical theory. By synthesizing textual analysis, historical contextualization, and theoretical interpretation, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of necropolitics in contemporary global contexts. A combined analytical and interpretive approach is taken to objectively and subjectively conduct an in-depth textual analysis. Primary data consists of the novel, which will be closely examined for its depictions of the theoretical framework of necropolitics, as developed by Mbembe. A critical lens through Mbembe's concept of necropolitics provides to examine the ways in which power operates to dictate who lives, dies, or is allowed to die.

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## Literature Review

Necropolitics is employed as a lens for understanding power dynamics in contemporary postcolonial literature, specifically exploring the concept of the 'wrenched necropolitical nexus' in understanding global civil liberties issues. The twenty-first century, marked by escalating violence, displacement, and the devaluation of human life, necessitates a critical examination of the mechanisms governing life and death on a global scale. A powerful framework for understanding, Achille Mbembe's concept of necropolitics provides in what way sovereign power manifests over the control and manipulation of death. As Mbembe argues, 'Necropolitics', encompasses beyond biopolitics, dynamically determining who lives and who dies, often along lines of race, class, and colonial legacy. The significance of the 'wrenched necropolitical nexus,' the violent disruption and manipulation of social and political relations sightsee in this exploration through the power to dictate death. This analysis argues that Gurnah's *Afterlives* provides insightful appraisals of necropolitical regimes that perpetuate violence, displacement, and the systematic dehumanization of disregarded populations.

Arjun Appadurai is an Indian-American anthropologist who has been recognized as a major theorist in globalization studies. Commenting on Mbembe's *Necropolitics*, he writes:

"This book establishes Achille Mbembe as the leading humanistic voice in the study of sovereignty, democracy, migration, and war in the contemporary world. Mbembe accomplishes the nearly impossible task of finding a radical path through the darkness of our times and seizes hope from the jaws of what he calls 'the deadlocks of humanism.' It is not a comforting book to read, but it is an impossible book to put down" (Appadurai, par. 4).

Through their narratives, these authors expose the intricate web of power relations connecting colonialism, war, and the politics of life and death, urging us to confront the enduring consequences of these destructive forces.

This chapter embarks on a comparative analysis of how nocturnal settings illuminate the necropolitical regimes functioning within each narrative. The novels, situated within contexts of colonial manipulation and contemporary warfare, respectively, offer compelling portrayals of power structures that govern life and death. The analysis of necropolitics, a term coined by Mbembe, serves as the theoretical underpinning for scrutinizing these wrenched power dynamics. The exploration investigates in what way darkness and the nocturnal become spaces where these regimes of control are both enacted and resisted.

The complicated tapestry of power that shapes human survival is often woven with the 'dark warp' of necropolitics, the power over life and death, which governs the contours of individual and collective experiences. This study also explores the 'bio-to-necro' nexus, signifying the intertwined and mutually reinforcing systems of biopolitics, surveillance, and the potential for resistance, as portrayed in *Afterlives*. By examining the novel, the research explores how necropolitical power structures are manifested, how they intersect with biopolitical control, and how they engender, or suppress, acts of resistance in the face of surveillance.

The purpose is to comprehend not only the destructive magnitudes of this nexus but also the ways in which it illuminates the complex dynamics of power, control, and agency in postcolonial and contemporary contexts, paying close attention to the role of the nocturnal regime in shaping these dynamics. The nocturnal regime of power

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and agency in *Afterlives Birds* reveals a wrenched necropolitical nexus, where power dynamics disrupt life, death, and agency.

Mbembe's concept of necropolitics has emerged as a crucial context for understanding the complex power dynamics of the 21st century, characterized by escalating violence, displacement, and the devaluation of human life on a global scale. *Necropolitics*, as Mbembe argues in his seminal work, transcends Foucault's notion of biopolitics by focusing on how sovereign power manifests through the control and manipulation of death, often along lines of race, class, and colonial legacies. Kendall L. Gilliam is an organizational analyst and adjunct professor at Huston-Tillotson University, in "International Social Science Review" highlights as:

"Necropolitics would be a relevant supplementary text for graduate courses in theory political sociology and international relations.... The book provides the reader with fundamental perspectives on race that align with common critiques of democracy and Foucault's concept of biopower while drawing on Fanon's work". (Gilliam, par. 3)

The research digs into the reception of Mbembes theory and his contributions to critical thought, highlighting its significance in understanding global human rights issues and its representation in contemporary literature.

Foucault argues that while sovereign power was historically defined by the right to take life or let live, it has transformed into biopower, which focuses on fostering life or disallowing it to the point of death. Under biopower, death becomes reconstructed as a necessity to defend life, enabling the justification of massacres and violence in the name of preserving the species, effectively concealing the deadly tendencies of power under the guise of life preservation.

*Necropolitics*, drawing on the work of Giorgio Agamben is one of the leading figures in Italian philosophy and radical political theory, and Mbembe, elucidates the concept of 'states of exception' where traditional legal and ethical norms are suspended, allowing for the disposability of certain lives. In the age of bio-/necropower, these states of exception can be extended indefinitely. Agamben stated in *Homo Sacer* in (1998) as:

"If it is the sovereign who, insofar as he decides on the state of exception, has the power to decide which life may be killed without the commission of homicide, in the age of biopolitics this power becomes emancipated from the state of exception and transformed into the power to decide the point at which life ceases to be politically relevant" (Agamben 83).

Mbembe's concept of necropolitics, as outlined in *Necropolitics* provides a crucial theoretical charter for understanding the dynamics at play in both novels. Mbembe argues that "sovereignty is fundamentally about the power to decide who matters and who does not, who lives and who die." (Mbembe 7). This power is often exercised through the creation of 'death-worlds,' spaces where death becomes normalized and even a tool of governance. *Afterlives* and *Red Birds* both depict such spaces, albeit in different historical and geographical contexts.

In *Afterlives*, Gurnah explores the legacy of German colonialism in East Africa. The novel portrays the brutal realities of colonial violence and exploitation, where the lives of Africans are systematically devalued. The German Schutztruppe's forced conscription of young men like Hamza into military service exemplifies necropolitical control. As Novian Whitsitt argues: "Gurnah masterfully depicts the ways in which colonial power operates through the control and manipulation of bodies, turning them into instruments of war and subjugation" (Whitsitt, 2007).

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This analysis embarks within Gurnah's *Afterlives*, on a probe of necropolitics and power dynamics aiming to bridge a gap in prevailing scholarship by focusing on the stylistic techniques used to portray these themes. These stylistic choices are vital to comprehending for grasping the full impact of their necropolitical narratives. While various critical discourse on the novel, often touches upon the authors' distinct approaches to narrative structure, the use of language and character development.

After reviewing the previously existing literature, this investigation seeks to fill the gap, despite the growing body of scholarship on necropolitics. There remains a significant gap in research concerning the intersection of necropolitics, power dynamics, and the complex power dynamics that shape the lives and deaths of individuals and communities in contemporary society in postcolonial literature. The impact of complex power dynamics specifically, on necropolitical nexus power structures in these novels has not been amply scrutinized. Furthermore, the ways in which wrenched necropolitical regimes of power and agency shape the lives of characters in Gurnah's *Afterlives* remain underexplored.

## Nocturnal Regimes of Power and Agency

The analysis reveals nocturnal settings to highlight the necropolitical regimes operative within each narrative, where power dynamics disrupt life, death, and agency. Anthropological survival is rarely woven with threads of nonthreatening stimulus that shapes the complicated tapestry of power. It is the dark warp of necropolitics, every so often, the power over life and death, which governs the contours of individual and collective experiences. In an era interspersed by displacement and exile, narratives emerge that interrogate the intimations and practicalities of power shapes within contemporary societies.

The novel provides persuasive portrayals of power structures that control life and death, situated surrounded by perspectives of colonial manipulation and contemporary warfare, correspondingly. The analysis explores in what manner darkness and the nocturnal become spaces where these regimes of regulator are equally legislated and resisted. The exploration of necropolitics a term coined by Achille Mbembe roles as the theoretical underpinning for analyzing wrenched power dynamics. As Mbembe posits, "Necropolitics generates 'death-worlds', where life is reduced to mere survival amidst destruction" (Mbembe, 11).

Mbembe, in his seminal work *Necropolitics*, argues that the ultimate expression of sovereignty resides largely in the power and the capacity to dictate who may live and who must die. This power is not simply about the physical act of killing, but encompasses a broader control over the conditions of life, including access to resources, healthcare, and legal protections. Mbembe quotes in *Necropolitics*:

At the dawn of the twenty-first century, the Earth's re-peopling is no longer carried out through slave trafficking and the colonization of remote regions of the globe. Work, in its traditional sense, is no longer perforce the privileged means of value creation. (Mbembe 12).

In colonial contexts, necropolitics operates through the systematic devaluation of the lives of the colonized, positioning them as inherently disposable and justifying the use of violence and exploitation as necessary instruments of governance. The colonial project, therefore, becomes a project of managing death, not simply through direct acts of violence, but through the creation of conditions that render life precarious and vulnerable to premature demise.

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In *Afterlives* the nocturnal regime of power and agency depictions the shaping characters' experiences, complex mechanisms of control, and agency. This regime controls over restrained and explicit forms of power, manipulating characters' lives and deaths. The violent disruption of life, death, and agency, revealing the complex power dynamics at play are highlighted in the wrenched necropolitical nexus. The novel provides profound insights into the human condition under oppressive regimes, shedding light on resilience, vulnerability, and survival, through characters' navigation, resistance, or conformity to these power structures.

While simultaneously addressing broader questions of identity, agency, and survival, this chapter probe profoundly into the textual illustration of nocturnal regimes, clarifying in what manner they manifest in the lives of the characters. The multifaceted fabric of Gurnah's chronicles offers an exploration of the characters navigate their certainties under regimes marked by violence, displacement, and subjugation.

The concept of necropolitics serves as a critical lens through which to analyze the texts, as it foregrounds the relationship between life, death, and governance. In a postcolonial context, the legacy of imperialism and colonial violence continues to reverberate through the lives of individuals and communities. In *Necropolitics*, Mbembe states, "In many regions of the postcolonial world, the turning point was to be the generalizing of belligerent relations, often as the ultimate consequence of the authoritarian course that many political regimes took to deal with intense protests" (Mbembe 34). The characters in both texts *Afterlives* and *Red Birds* personify the tenacious struggle against oppressive regimes that exert control over their existence.

Gurnah's *Afterlives*, though separated by geographical context and narrative style, converge in their potent depictions of "wrenched necropolitical regimes of power and agency." Mbembe quotes:

To facilitate the repression, the regimes sought to depoliticize social protest. [...]. In certain cases, entire regions were placed under a twofold civil and military administration. [...] or by political or military heads with positions of power in official state structures. (Mbembe 34)

The novel meticulously unravels the mechanisms through which colonial and post-colonial powers exert control over life and death, thereby shaping not just the physical landscapes but also the very contours of human existence.

Gurnah in *Afterlives* constructs a meticulous portrait of colonial East Africa under German rule, accurately detailing the brutal realities of forced labor, military conscription, and the systematic dismantling of pre-existing social structures. The askaris, indigenous soldiers conscripted and manipulated by the German colonizers, become potent symbols of a "wrenched necropolitical regime." As Gurnah states in *Afterlives*:

In the meantime, the empire had to make the Africans feel the clenched fist of German power [...] The forced labour regime was extended to build roads and clear roadside gutters and make avenues and [...] newly conquered subjects and impress their rivals. (Gurnah 16)

These individuals, stripped of their agency and forced to participate in the subjugation of their own people, are caught in a precarious position: instruments of violence in the service of a foreign power, yet simultaneously victims of the same oppressive system. The novel's focus on the experiences of characters like Khalifa, Hamza, and Afiya, who are directly affected by the colonial regime, highlights the devastating impact of

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necropower on the lives of ordinary people. The constant threat of death, either through military service or through the arbitrary violence meted out by colonial authorities, creates a climate of fear and uncertainty that profoundly shapes their choices and their futures.

The necropolitical regime in *Afterlives* operates through the systematic dehumanization of the colonized. The German colonizers view the indigenous population as inherently inferior, lacking the agency and intelligence necessary to govern themselves. Gurnah designates in *Afterlives*:

Nevertheless, despite the harsh regime, Hamza found unexpected satisfaction in his own growing strength and skills, [...] When they started going out on manoeuvres he saw the terror of the villagers when the askari arrived and could not suppress a thrill of pleasure at their fright. (Gurnah 61-62)

This dehumanization justifies their exploitation and oppression, enabling them to inflict violence with impunity. The construction of the railway, a symbol of colonial progress and economic development, becomes a metaphor for the exploitation of human labor and the dispossession of land. Gurnah highpoints in *Afterlives*:

Schutztruppe askari did not retreat unless ordered to, [...]. Every error was punished by violence or hard labour, according to its severity. [...] which often did not seem deserving of such humiliation. [...] The flogging was always carried out by an African askari, never a German. (Gurnah 60)

The bodies of African laborers are treated as expendable resources, their lives sacrificed for the advancement of the colonial project.

Hamza stands as one of the most poignant depictions of the novel in what manner necropolitical governance erases individuality and reorients existence around survival. Pressured into the Schutztruppe, Hamza converts mutually a spectator and reluctant contributor in the apparatus of colonial violence. His narrative divulges the moral dilemmas modeled by existence under forcible militaries. Imitating on his disposition, Hamza accomplishes, we were not men to them, and merely substances motivated about to protected their brutal expansions. This practice of abridged human race sum up necropolitical subjugation. Hamza's existence, though, is not exclusively a narrative of victimization. His internal conflict, compounded by the physical scars left by colonial manipulation, yields a nuanced analysis of identity restoration. Gurnah's depiction divulges a rigidity among collusion and flexibility, illuminating in what manner agency be able to materialize within dehumanizing classifications. Central to the narrative, Hamza is traversing necropolitics personification of scratched regime of power, materializes as a miniature of necropolitical victimhood and agency. As Gurnah states in *Afterlives*:

They did not always know where they were, [...] No one needed to order the askari to do violence and brutality on the people. [...] At this stage of the war, most of the soldiers engaged in combat [...], and on the other side the African schutztruppe. (Gurnah, 197)

Hamza's love story with Afiya familiarizes a description of recuperation. In rebuilding his life, he transcends the dehumanization intended under necropolitical rule, asserting a fractured but resilient identity. Agency shaped by compliance and estrangement in Ilyas's story, juxtaposed against Hamza's, reveals in what way survival under necropolitics requires strategic compliance. As Mbembe designates in *Necropolitics*:

Two orders coexist within it— a community of fellow creatures governed, at least in principle, by the law of equality, and a category of nonfellows, or even of those

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without part, that is also established by law. A priori, those without part have no right to have rights. They are governed by the law of inequality. This inequality and the law establishing it, and that is its base, is founded on the prejudice of race (Mbembe 17).

Adopted into German colonial structures, Ilyas becomes a linguistic and cultural intermediary. However, his proximity to colonial power estranges him from his kin, encapsulated in his lament. Germans are ready to execute many people and would do in the coming year as a mission to bring order and civilization to these parts.

Gurnah pinpoints this harsh structure fabricated by German colonial regime through his sagacious raconteur and through the discourses and interfaces of his characters. The people identify “there is no one as stern as a German” (Gurnah 39), and “in the thirty years or so that they have occupied this land, the German have killed so many people that the country is filled with skulls and bones and the earth is soggy with blood” (Gurnah 39-40). Gurnah strains to try to find the influences of askari’s organized brutalization on native people, the war experiences of Ilyas and Hamza as volunteer askari as well as the aftermath of WWI in East-Africa’s lives-afterlives.

In 1963, two years after Independence, which both his parents lived to see, Ilyas was awarded a scholarship by the Federal Republic of Germany to spend a year in Bonn learning advanced broadcasting techniques. He was thirty-eight years old. [...] The GDR was highly active in colonial politics, [...] Ilyas was interviewed and assessed and [...] Now he was travelling as a mature man with his eyes open and curious. (Gurnah 288)

Hence, Gurnah exposes by what means German colonists use violence through their Schutztruppe askari to control their subjects and exert power over them. Gurnah masterfully portrays the solitude ingrained in Ilyas’s identity as he navigates affiliations fraught with betrayal and dislocation.

Captivating and insightful depictions of ‘Nocturnal regimes of power and agency.’ are offered in Gurnah’s *Afterlives*. The novel portrays the devastating control of colonial and post-colonial power on the lives of ordinary people through their meticulous illustration of violence, displacement, and the systematic erasure of individual and collective identities.

Through the lives of his characters, in *Afterlives*, Gurnah meticulously illustrates the intersections of power and agency. Through the character of Ilyas the novel opens, whose journey serves as a microcosm of the broader social upheaval from an idyllic childhood to the harsh realities of colonial subjugation. His experiences of forced deployment and the cruelties of war epitomize the ways in which political powers impose themselves upon individuals, dictating not only the terms of survival, but often trespassing upon their very identities.

Ilyas’s character exposes a profound struggle for self-determination against the repressive forces of colonial violence. After enduring the dehumanizing effects of war, his eventual return home, symbolizes a reclamation of agency. Yet, this repossession is not deprived of its complexities. Gurnah tortuously depicts by what means the distress perpetrated by colonial powers echoes through Ilyas’s relationships, particularly with his family and community.

The experience of women within necropolitical regimes exemplifies, another pivotal character, Asha. As a woman in a patriarchal society, Asha navigates the restrictions obligatory upon her by both gender and colonial power structures. Her resilience in the expression of universal oppression speaks to the dual struggle against the historical legacy of colonialism and the societal constraints that diminish agency.

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Gurnah presents Asha's decisions as acts of defiance, proclaiming her right to exist and flourish in a world marked by violence.

*Afterlives*, although, is not simply a narrative of victimization. Gurnah also sightsees one of the most captivating illustrations of this agency is found in the character of Afiya, Hamza's wife. She ruins a source of strength and support for her family and community in spite of the hardships she faces. She provides a sagacity of stability and normality in a world that has been twisted upside down by colonial violence.

In spite of his ordeal and his inability to fully connect with her, Afiya's love for Hamza is a testimony to her resolute commitment to human connection. She uncomplainingly helps him to find a nous of purpose in his life and nurses him back to health. Afiya declines to permit the violence of the external world to destroy her ability for love and compassion.

A shopkeeper, who provides a safe haven for Hamza and Afiya, the character of Khalifa, exemplifies this role of storyteller. He shares stories of the traditions of his community, past, and travels. These stories support the characters to navigate the challenges of the present by providing a sagacity of stability and connection to the past. A key component of the colonial project is in Khalifa's storytelling that is a form of cultural preservation, resisting the dismissal of local history and identity.

Furthermore, within a necropolitical context, the novel explores the complex and often equivocal nature of agency. This complexity exemplifies the journey of Ilyas. He is a reluctant conscript primarily, forced into the 'Schutztruppe'. Rapidly, becoming a skilled interpreter and a valuable asset to the German officers, however, he learns to adapt to the demands of the colonial system. He becomes complicit in the violence and oppression of his own people, but he also enjoys a certain degree of privilege and power within the colonial hierarchy.

He struggles with the question of whether he is a traitor or a survivor through the moral implications of his actions and grapples. The ethical dilemmas faced by individuals who are forced to navigate a necropolitical regime highlighted by Ilyas's internal conflict. He nonetheless endeavors to find a way to survive and to mitigate the harm caused by the colonial system but his agency is limited and compromised.

The culmination of *Afterlives* is purposefully open-ended, signifying that the bequest of colonialism endures to shape the lives of the characters and their descendants. The enduring power of life and the possibility of renewal even in the face of profound loss symbolizes the ultimate image of Afiya. The characters are still grappling with the long-term consequences of the necropolitical regime but they have endured the war and the abrupt aftermath of colonial rule. This image proposes that the combat in contradiction of necropolitical regimes is a constant progression, demanding persistent exertion and resolute expectation.

Gurnah's *Afterlives*, though situated in distinctly different geographical and historical contexts, both engage with the brutal reality of necropolitics, the politicization of death and the management of life through the control over who lives and who dies. As Mbembe highlights in *Necropolitics* "Geographical distance as such no longer represents an obstacle to mobility. The major migration pathways are diversifying, and increasingly sophisticated measures for bypassing borders are being put in place" (Mbembe 12).

The investigation argues that both novels portray 'wrenched necropolitical regimes of power and agency,' where the colonial project in *Afterlives* actively determine the expendability of certain populations, forcing them into a precarious existence defined

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by violence, dispossession, and the constant threat of death. However, despite the seemingly overwhelming power of these regimes, both novels also highlight the enduring capacity of individuals to exert agency, albeit often circumscribed and fraught with difficulty, in the face of systematic oppression.

*Afterlives*, exposes the European colonizers positioned at the apex, benefiting from privilege and protection, through the colonial administration establishes a blunt hierarchy of life, while indigenous populations are relegated to a state of perpetual vulnerability. In the novel, Gurnah meticulously excavates the lived experiences of individuals caught within the violent machinery of German colonial rule in East Africa. A prime example of necropolitical control is the recruitment of young men like Hamza into the 'Schutztruppe', the German colonial army. Their lives reckoned superfluous in the quest of magnificent extension and these men are rendered mere mechanisms of colonial power.

In *Afterlives*, furthermore, shaping the very fabric of daily life, the colonial administration extends its control yonder the battleground. An environment of perpetual uncertainty and fear for the indigenous population is created through the imposition of forced labor, the confiscation of land, and the arbitrary use of violence. Their freedom of movement, their access to resources, and even their very survival are focus to the impulses of the colonial authorities. Mbembe's concept of necropolitics is exemplified this systemic control over life and death where sovereignty resides, "essentially in the capacity and power to dictate who may live and who must die." (Mbembe 7)

*Afterlives*, in spite of the devastating power of these necropolitical regimes, offer glimpses of resistance and agency, emphasizing the resilience of the human spirit in the face of incredible adversity. Individuals like Afiya, a young woman, in *Afterlives*, who traverses the intricacies of colonial society through intelligence and determination, challenge the imposed restrictions and carve out spaces of sovereignty. The multifaceted complexities of necropolitical regimes and the enduring quest for agency within oppressive frameworks are portrayed through the textual analysis of Gurnah's *Afterlives*. The author highpoint the concept of 'wrenched necropolitical regimes' through rich character expansion and complex chronicles, not just as external forces, but as twistingly knitted systems of power that require perpetual observance and the interaction between power and individual sovereignty.

The German colonial regime, in *Afterlives*, epitomizes this necropolitical power by deploying violence not merely as a tool for defining and maintaining its dominance, but as a means of control. The arbitrary executions, the omnipresent atmosphere of fear, the brutal destruction of insurgences, and the forced recruitment of Askari soldiers, all contribute to a system in which the colonial state wields the ultimate authority over life and death.

The novel opens with the brutal kidnapping of Ilyas, a young man stolen from his family and forced to serve as an Askari. One of the most striking examples of this necropolitical regime in action is the forced recruitment of young African into the German army. This act of recruitment is not simply a matter of conscripting soldiers; it is a destruction of individual sovereignty and a symbolic declaration of colonial power over African bodies.

Gurnah's portrayal of agency is another crucial aspect of his meticulous exploration of the Askari experience. He complicates this naive interpretation by illuminating the complex inspirations and experiences of these soldiers, though the Askari are often

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depicted as collaborators of the colonial regime. A pivotal moment of symbolizing his dismissal of the necropolitical regime and his affirmation of his own agency epitomizes Hamza's ultimate desertion from the German army. He exposes the overwhelming consequences of a system predicated on the systematic deterioration and destruction of African lives through probing the colonial state's aptitude to dictate who lives and who dies, by what means they live and how they die, and economic subjugation,

*Afterlives* offers, eventually, a complicated and particular interpretation of the wrenched necropolitical regimes of power and agency that shaped the lives of individuals in colonial East Africa. This enduring legacy of colonialism at the end of the novel, while offering a glimmer of hope, serves as a reminder of the need to continue challenging the necropolitical regimes of power that continue to shape our world today.

The protagonist, Ilyas faces the consequences of colonial violence and displacement, in *Afterlives*, demarcated by Gurnah. The horrors of colonization clarifies the darker side of necropolitical regime that governs life in the shadow of colonial power to a life marred by his journey from a tranquil childhood. The colonial rule, exposes in the novel, not only exerts control over the physical bodies of its subjects but also disrupts the very fabric of their existence. The analysis of Ilyas's relationships, particularly with his family, the emotional and psychological toll of living under such a regime is emphasized, where agency is systematically stripped away, relegating the individual to a mere survivor of historical forces beyond their control.

The narratives' juxtaposition of Gurnah exposes a shared thematic anchorage in the realities of necropolitics, manifesting through the characters' fragmented lives. The author highpoint the negotiation of identity and agency in the face of devastating systemic violence. They illustrate the necropolitical regimes shape, in doing so, not only their social and psychological landscapes but also the physical existence of individuals. Power is wielded not solely over the quiet erosion of personal agency, leaving characters to grapple with their place in a world where the continuum of life and death is manipulated by external forces but also through overt violence.

In the novel, exploration of the darker side of necropolitics and agency, further enriches Gurnah's masterful use of metaphor. The emergence as recurring symbolic motifs, the sea, the desert, and the house, each signifying different aspects of the characters' experiences and the comprehensive sociopolitical context.

A persistent presence in the narrative, the sea, embodies both the dangers of the unknown and the allure of escape. It epitomizes the opportunity of emancipation from colonial subjugation, on the other hand similarly the peril of drowning in the face of irresistible power. The sea, for Ilyas, is a symbol of both depression and hope. To join the Schutztruppe, his journey across the ocean is a desperate attempt to escape his circumstances, but it eventually leads him to a life of violence and moral negotiation. The sea furthermore serves as a reminder of the triviality of individual lives in the face of historical forces and the massiveness of the world.

In contrast, the desert is a metaphor for the emotive aridity that can result from distress and loss. Hamza's involvements in the Schutztruppe leave him feeling emotionally numb and disconnected, as if he has been stuck in a desert of his own making. The desert embodies also the desolation and emptiness of colonial rule. It exemplifies the spiritual and cultural wasteland shaped by the annoyance of foreign values and the suppression of indigenous traditions. Though the desert also, holds the

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potential for renewal and transformation. Furthermore, in *Afterlives* the characters find ways to cultivate hope even in the most desolate of circumstances.

The educated and worldly shopkeeper, the character of Khalifa, embodies this precision relationship with language and power. Khalifa understands the workings of the colonial system and fluent in German. He uses the system to his advantage, navigating the colonial bureaucracy and protecting his own interests and his knowledge of the language. On the other hand, he also preserves ties to his community and identifies the significance of maintaining his own cultural identity.

The ambiguities of agency within a colonial context underscored by Khalifa's complex relationship with language. He speaks German in public but continues to, teaching his children about their cultural heritage. He is using his knowledge and skills to navigate the treacherous landscape of necropolitical power, both a participant in and a resister of the colonial system.

The novel analysis whether oppressed characters can reclaim autonomy, grapple with the concept of human agency within necropolitical spaces. Within colonial necropolitical structures, Gurnah's *Afterlives* explores the possibilities and limitations of agency. Resilience amid systemic violence is epitomized by the character of Afiya. Even within oppressive environments Gurnah emphasizes the human capacity for resistance. Highpoints the gradual retrieval of agency over community and personal introspection, meanwhile, Hamza's journey of curing and reconciliation, after stable the horrors of forced servitude in the German colonial army.

Equally novel evaluation the contradictory nature of sovereignty in necropolitical regimes. The colonial regime's sovereignty, in *Afterlives*, is similarly paradoxical as it relies on exploitation of indigenous people to sustain its power and the subjugation. The novel highpoints by what means colonial power internalizes its paradoxes, nurturing reliance among the colonized whereas simultaneously stripping them of humanity, through the experiences of figures like Ilyas and Hamza. The psychological toll of colonial necropolitics is meticulous portrayal of these characters interrogated by Gurnah's.

The concept of wrenched bodies serves as a powerful metaphor in both novels, encapsulating in what manner colonial violence disrupts the bodies and identities of individuals. The characters grapple with the dissonance between their memories and their current existences, often embodying the psychic remnants of their pasts.

While necropolitics dominates the lives of these literary characters, Gurnah and Hanif skillfully illustrate their attempts to assert agency. Afiya, in *Afterlives*, moves beyond the historical and psychological scars left by colonial rule to claim a semblance of independence. Once Humza told Afiya in what manner they all askari felt at the very end of the fighting, "we were all exhausted and half-mad from the bloodletting and cruelty we had been steeped in for years" (Gurnah 177). But it was his luck which saved him in war and brought him into Afiya's life as "the world always moves on despite the chaos and waste in its midst (Gurnah 189). Through his relationship with Afiya and Khalifa, Gurnah endeavors to convey the hardships an ordinary person counters in order to earn, and spend a stable life in spite of brutal colonial regime, captures an exact self-awareness fostered under systemic oppression.

In literature, necropolitics allows for an investigative lens into how characters are politicized to the point of dehumanization. In charting wrenched necropolitical regimes of power and agency within Gurnah's *Afterlives*, this chapter has interrogated the distinction modes in which necropolitical systems of power operate. This analysis

situated necropolitical regimes not only as instruments of domination but as persistent narratives within global socio-political frameworks.

Gurnah's *Afterlives* exposes the nocturnal regime of power and agency, wherever power dynamics are distorted and control over life and death is exercised through restrained and obvious apparatuses, reveals a wrenched necropolitical nexus. The elaborate interactions between power and violence is characterized this nexus emphasizing the control of colonialism and war on human existence.

The novel provides insightful comprehensions into the human condition under oppressive regimes, through the expose of complex power structures and characters' navigation of these dynamics, shedding light on themes of nocturnal regime of power and agency, in which power operates to shape individual and collective experiences.

### **Bio to Necro Nexus of Biopolitics, Surveillance, and Resistance**

This study the 'bio' to 'necro' nexus, a term signifying the intertwined and mutually reinforcing systems of biopolitics, surveillance, and the potential for resistance, as portrayed in Gurnah's *Afterlives*. By examining the novel, the research explores in what manner necropolitical power structures are manifested, in what way they intersect with biopolitical control, and by what means they engender, or suppress, acts of resistance in the face of pervasive surveillance. The purpose is to apprehend not only the destructive magnitudes of this nexus, but correspondingly the conducts in which it irradiates the complex dynamics of power, control, and agency in postcolonial and contemporary frameworks.

The study patrols in the context of resistance, the concepts of necropolitics and bare life, arguing for a reconceptualization of agency. It scrutinizes in what way these frameworks elucidate daily acts of resistance in several socio-political contexts. The humanoid at the border from the 'bio' to the 'necro' probes the conversion from biopolitics to necropolitics, predominantly in the perspective of colonial and postcolonial violence. It highpoints the consequences of these power dynamics on human proficiencies at rims. This research scrutinizes the practices in everyday life interaction of biopolitical and necropolitical, proposing a method for understanding social realities and academic production through these lenses.

Mbembe, in his pivotal work *Necropolitics*, contends that the sovereign power is ultimately defined by its capacity to dictate who lives and who dies. This power, far from being limited to states of emergency or war, permeates everyday life, shaping the conditions under which certain populations thrive while others are systematically rendered vulnerable and disposable. Biopolitics, as theorized by Michel Foucault, complements this necropolitical understanding by emphasizing the state's increasing concern with managing the population as a biological entity. The role of Michel Foucault's concept of 'biopower' plays in Mbembe's analysis in *Necropolitics* is very significant. Mbembe states in *Necropolitics*,

Biopower, in Foucault's work, appears to function by dividing people into those who must live and those who must die. As it proceeds on the basis of a split between the living and the dead, such power defines itself in relation to the biological field—of which it takes control and in which it invests itself. (Mbembe 71)

Biopower appears to function by dividing people into those who must live and those who must die. Foucault's concept of biopower is used as a foundation to explore how modern states control populations through the regulation of life and death, highlighting the distinctions between those deemed worthy of life and those

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considered disposable. This involves the regulation of birth rates, health, hygiene, and other factors that impact the overall well-being and productivity of the populace. When these biopolitical mechanisms are intertwined with necropolitical imperatives, the result is a system that actively invests in the lives of some while simultaneously facilitating the death or premature demise of others.

Surveillance, the important strand in this nexus, acts as the enabling technology, providing the means to monitor, categorize, and control populations, identifying those deemed valuable and those deemed expendable. As Mbembe highlights in *Necropolitics*, “The use of new technologies has made it possible to gain access to individuals’ private lives. Insidious techniques of mass surveillance, secret and sometimes improper, target people’s thoughts, opinions, movements, and privacy.” (Mbembe 51)

Gurnah’s *Afterlives* provides a rich historical landscape for exploring this necropolitical nexus in the context of German colonialism in East Africa. The novel traces the lives of several characters whose destinies are irrevocably shaped by the brutal realities of colonial occupation. By describing historical landscape Gurnah highpoints:

It was early 1907 when Khalifa and Asha married. The Maji Maji uprising was in the final throes of its brutalities, [. . .]. As the widespread extent of the resistance to German rule sank in, so the response of the colonial administration became more relentless and brutal. [. . .] African bodies were left hanging on roadside gibbets in a landscape that was scorched and terrorized. (Gurnah 9)

In *Afterlives*, the intersection of biopolitics and necropolitics is poignantly illustrated through the historical context of German colonialism in East Africa. The novel meticulously portrays the lives of individuals whose trajectories are indelibly marked by the oppressive realities of colonial rule. The narrative opens in early 1907, coinciding with the waning yet devastating phase of the Maji Maji uprising, a period characterized by immense suffering and loss of life for the African population. Gurnah depicts the escalating brutality of the German colonial administration as the widespread resistance to their rule became increasingly apparent.

This manifested in a scorched-earth policy, involving the destruction of villages, the trampling of agricultural lands, and the systematic plundering of food supplies, all designed to subjugate and control the indigenous population. The landscape itself became a site of terror, marked by the gruesome display of African bodies left hanging on roadside gibbets, serving as a stark reminder of the colonial power’s dominion over life and death.

This environment vividly demonstrates the necropolitical dimensions of colonial power, where the colonizers asserted control through the blatant disregard and active destruction of African lives, thereby shaping the biopolitical landscape by determining who could live and who was deliberately made to die.

The German administration, seeking to establish its dominance, exercises necropower through arbitrary violence, forced conscription into the ‘Schutztruppe’ (colonial army), and the systematic exploitation of the local population. Gurnah highlights:

Everyone knew about the askari army, the schutztruppe, and their ferocity against the people. Everyone knew about their stone-hearted German officers. He had chosen to be one of their soldiers, [...] what he had done surged so powerfully at times that he grew short of breath. (Gurnah 52-53)

The conscription of young men like Hamza exemplifies the biopolitical dimension of

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this power dynamic. Their bodies are deemed valuable only insofar as they can serve the colonial project, even if it means subjecting them to the constant threat of death on the battlefield. The colonial authorities, in their endeavor to build a functioning administration, also engage in biopolitical management, attempting to control the local population through forced labor, taxation, and the imposition of Western values. However, this biopolitical project is inherently intertwined with necropower. The enforcement of these policies often involves the use of violence and intimidation, demonstrating the colonial regime's willingness to sacrifice the lives of individuals who resist or are deemed unproductive. Mbembe states in *Necropolitics*:

In Africa in particular, terror itself donned several forms. [ . . . ] In certain cases, entire regions were placed under a twofold civil and military administration. [ . . . ] In others, the official military structures served to conceal outlawed activities, the increase in trafficking going hand in hand with political repression properly speaking. (Mbembe 35-36)

The act of forced conscription itself is a potent example of this intertwined dynamic; the "care" of the colony's "resource," its population, is immediately negated by the very real possibility, and often likelihood, of death in service to a foreign power. The surveillance aspect is subtly present, though predating sophisticated digital technologies. The colonial administration relies on informants, local collaborators, and visible displays of military power to maintain control and monitor the population. The very presence of the 'Schutztruppe' serves as a constant reminder of the omnipresent power of the colonizer, enforcing a regime of fear and submission.

In *Afterlives*, the concept of resistance is portrayed through a spectrum of actions, ranging from subtle non-compliance among the local populace to outright rebellion by individuals unwilling to submit to colonial authority. The British colonial administration, in assuming its mandate responsibilities, prioritized education and public health initiatives, signaling a shift in colonial governance, even if unintentional. Gurnah highlights:

The British colonial administration took the mandate responsibility [ . . . ] The British administrators had [ . . . ] colonial administration without resistance from the colonised. Education and public health became their priorities. [ . . . ] They distributed information leaflets and conducted tours by medical teams to instruct people on malaria prevention and good childcare. (Gurnah 237-238)

This involved disseminating crucial health information, training local medical assistants, and establishing dispensaries in remote areas to extend healthcare access. Through information leaflets and mobile medical teams, the administration sought to educate the population on preventative measures against diseases like malaria and promote effective childcare practices. Characters like Afiya and Hamza actively absorbed this new knowledge, integrating it into their lives to safeguard themselves and their offspring, exemplifying a proactive approach to health and well-being within the colonial context. Gurnah highlights in *Afterlives*: "Afiya and Hamza listened to this new information and did what they could to protect themselves and their child." (Gurnah 238)

This focus on bio-centric governance inadvertently undermined the very foundations of necropolitics inherent in colonial rule, as improvements in health and education empowered the colonized, fostering a sense of agency and self-determination that challenged the power dynamics of the empire. The efforts to improve the lives of the colonized, although conducted within the framework of colonial authority, sowed the

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seeds of eventual independence by investing in the well-being and future of the very people they sought to govern.

Hamza's internal struggle with his role as a soldier in the Schutztruppe is a testament to the enduring power of individual conscience in the face of oppressive forces. Similarly, the characters who offer shelter to those fleeing the colonial authorities demonstrate the resilience of communal solidarity as a form of resistance. As Mbembe designates Colonial warfare in *Necropolitics*:

In the colonies, the sovereign might kill at any time or in any manner. Colonial warfare is not subject to legal and institutional rules. It is not a legally codified activity. Instead, colonial terror constantly intertwines with colonially generated fantasies of wilderness, and death and fictions, workings to create an effect of the real. Peace is not necessarily the natural outcome of a colonial war. (Mbembe 78)

By critically engaging with theoretical groundwork, drawing on key concepts such as Foucault's biopolitics and Mbembe's necropolitics. It then extrapolates these ideas to the realm of literature, where the application of such theories can illuminate the underlying tensions between life, death, and the negotiation of human dignity. In doing so, the narratives of *Afterlives* are put into conversation with analytical models that account for extraction, subtraction, and the spectral nature of power.

The following sections examines both the explicit and implicit dimensions of necropolitical governance as expressed in the novels. It underscores the role of surveillance and the systematic management of lives by state apparatuses, while also highlighting moments of resistance and the reclaiming of individual subjectivity. Through a comparative analysis, the study demonstrates how each work offers a distinct yet interconnected perspective on the material realities of postcolonial societies.

**Necropolitics, Biopolitics, and Governmentality** In order to understand the dynamics present in both *Afterlives* and *Red Birds*, it is essential to ground our analysis in the theoretical constructs of biopolitics and necropolitics.

Biopolitics, as delineated by Michel Foucault, concerns the governance of living populations through the regulation and administration of bodies, health, and life itself. Building on this foundation, scholars such as Mbembe have introduced the concept of necropolitics, which emphasizes the mechanisms by which sovereign power determines who may live and who must die.

Biopolitical analyses focus on the extendibility of state power into everyday life, where administrative measures, surveillance, and control shape individual subjectivities. In contexts ranging from migration management to public health, biopolitical technologies operate by classifying, quantifying, and regulating the aspects of life deemed valuable by state authorities. Mbembe highpoints:

The state's progressive loss of the monopoly of violence has ended in a gradual devolution of this monopoly to a multiplicity of bodies operating either outside the state or else within it but in relative autonomy. [...] and even capacities to engage in by-the-book warfare. (Mbembe 35).

The scholarship on migration, for instance, often discusses humanitarian interventions as forms of biopolitical warfare navigating the precarious boundary between life-enhancing provisions and practices that, by their very design, seem to both make live and let die.

In contrast to the regulatory techniques of biopolitics, necropolitics focuses on the darker, more coercive sides of state power specially, the calculated production of

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death and the subjugation of populations to regimes of violence. As articulated by Mbembe, necropolitics emerges when the state divides populations into categories of those deemed worthy of protection and those condemned to death or social death. He quotes in his book *Necropolitics* “Late modern colonial occupation is a concatenation of multiple powers: disciplinary, biopolitical, and necropolitical. The combination of the three grants the colonial power absolute domination over the inhabitants of the occupied territory.” (Mbembe 82)

This perspective is particularly useful in understanding how modern state apparatuses often exercise power through differential treatments that leverage the politics of life and death—a duality that is underpinned by complex racial, economic, and geopolitical dynamics.

Recent theoretical advancements have further complicated the binary of life and death by introducing practices such as extraction and subtraction. Extraction involves the systematic removal of resources physical, data-driven, or human from targeted populations, while subtraction refers to the withdrawal or erasure of legal and material support that underpins life. This analysis espouses a “biopolitics multiple” approach, by merging insights from both biopolitical and necropolitical frameworks. This technique empowers a distinction reading of literature, one that interpretations for the corresponding and often convicting modalities of power that rule the postcolonial subject.

For exploring themes interrelated to biopolitical control and necropolitical subjugation, literary narratives from postcolonial contexts often offer fertile ground. The tension between the state’s desire to regulate life and its synchronized tendency to exercise violence and segregation through necropolitical practices, highlighted these narratives in many illustrations. The novels can capture the lived realities of those who experience these dual regimes of control, through symbolic depictions of surveillance and resistance.

Narrative techniques that imitate an environment permeated by surveillance and state control employ in *Afterlives*. Often becoming subjects through which power is both exercised and contested, these narratives articulate the ways in which characters are rendered visible to oppressive systems. Such literary portrayals resonate where control is attained not through the normalization of intrusive state mechanisms, but also solely by physical coercion, with theoretical discussions of surveillance.

In *Afterlives*, the application of biopolitical frameworks to understand the necropolitical dimensions reveals a complex interplay of power, control, and existence in the aftermath of war. The merchant’s displacement, driven by economic disruption and the encroaching control of the German regime, exemplifies the extraction of human capital, reducing individuals to expendable units within a larger geopolitical strategy. This extraction extends beyond mere economic terms, encompassing the decontextualization of cultural identities and the erosion of traditional livelihoods, as seen in the decline of the caravan merchant.

In *Afterlives*, such dynamics contribute to an atmosphere of persistent constraint and vulnerability, reinforcing the notion that state power operates not merely through overt violence but through the more subtle imposition of existential insecurity.

Often rendering ostracized lives as governmentally disposable, ‘Inclusion vs. Exclusion’ state interventions both integrate and ostracize individuals. Across both texts, the ambivalence of state power is a recurring theme. The power to dictate ‘who may live and who must die’, Mbembe’s concept of necropolitics, moves beyond

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traditional understandings of sovereignty centered on territorial control to incorporate the management of life itself.

In what ways *Afterlives* vividly portrays, the colonizers employ necropolitical power over the arbitrary annoyance of violence and the repudiation of basic human rights to the indigenous population, highlighting the brutal realities of German colonial rule in East Africa. This power is epitomized by the recruitment of young men into the, the colonial army, Schutztruppe. As Hamza, is forcibly recruited the narrative reveals the dehumanizing process by which individuals are reduced to expendable resources for the colonial project, one of the novel's central characters.

They would take them from anywhere highlights the disregard of the colonizers for the individual cost of the African population and they wanted only men, bodies for labour and fighting. Simply surrendered in the quest of magnificent ambitions and devoid of crucial value they are seen merely as instruments. The right to decide who lives and, more importantly, who dies in service of the state's objectives: this act of forced recruitment emphasizes the core of necropolitics. The act of forced conscription of the German administration as Gurnah states:

At that time, the German administration was bringing in new regulations and rules for doing business. [...] He expected him to read the decrees and reports that the administration issued and to complete the customs and tax forms that were required. [...] Sometimes the merchant told him things and sometimes he didn't. (Gurnah 9)

Through the systematic dehumanization and exploitation of the indigenous population, starkly illustrates in *Afterlives*, as the dynamics of necropolitics under German colonial rule in East Africa. Through the forced recruitment of young men like Hamza into the Schutztruppe, most vividly demonstrated the colonizers exert necropower by wielding governor over life and death. This act diminishes individuals to mere 'bodies for fighting and labour,' stripping them of their intrinsic value and agency.

However not directly recruited, is juxtaposed with the experience of Khalifa, who, over his employment with Amur Biashara, is nonetheless subject to the capricious nature of colonial power. As a general assistant, Khalifa's role is navigating the administration's new regulations and decrees, reflects the deceptive reach of colonial bureaucracy into the lives of individuals. So reinforcing and shaping their opportunities and limiting their autonomy, the colonizers' necropolitical control over the colonized population.

Crafting a sense of cultural dispossession and undermining the very identity of the colonized, the systematic destruction of local cultures and languages further reinforces the dominance of colonizers. This cultural destructions a precarious component of necropolitical power, a form of symbolic annihilation, as it deprives those of their history and sense of self, interpretation them more vulnerable to control and exploitation.

In the novels, the intersection of biopolitics and necropolitics divulges a chilling reality: the management of life can often central to its systematic depreciation and disposal. In *Afterlives*, portrays of the fractured societies, the shattered families and the decimated lives, which underpins so much of the world's violence and inequality, serve as a stark reminder of the dangers of unchecked power and the urgent need to challenge the necropolitical logic.

The novel, furthermore, echoes with comprehensive considerations on the responsibility of powerful nations in addressing global crises and the morals of humanitarian interference. *Afterlives* contributes to a more critical and meticulous

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understanding of global politics, by exposing the necropolitical dimensions of these interferences.

Power encompasses beyond mere governance or authority in its most insightful and complicated forms, it shapes the very fabric of human existence. This power often demonstrates as a nexus of biopolitics, surveillance, and necropolitics, dictating the conditions under which certain lives are valued, managed, or rendered disposable, in the landscape of postcolonial and contemporary societies.

As a poignant literary texts, Gurnah's *Afterlives* that illumine this complex interplay, revealing by what means systems of control exerting life and death permeate individual and collective experiences. Sovereignty today is demonstrated in these novels, not merely about control but about an idea central to Mbembe's concept of necropolitics; the ability to decide whose life is worth living and whose death is an acceptable sacrifice.

The techniques and strategies through which modern states regulate populations and bodies described by Michel Foucault's concept of biopower. Biopower emphasizes managing life itself—birth rates, health, hygiene, mortality, and other aspects of biological existence, instead of focusing solely on laws or sovereignty. Thus laying the foundation for understanding modern governance, by what means these mechanisms create distinctions between who is deemed worthy of life and who is rendered disposable, highlighted by Foucault.

Mbembe, erection on this, enunciates necropolitics that encompasses beyond legal authority to the capacity to dictate death, as the exercise of sovereignty over mortality a focal point of power. Necropolitics exposes itself in practices of genocides, state-sponsored violence, and the everyday disposability of marginalized populations that asserted by Mbembe. Which tends to normalize life, unlike biopower, necropolitics obviously encompasses the annoyance of death, often in contexts where populations are targeted as threats or unworthy of constant existence.

These concepts demonstrate in tandem, shaping societal hierarchies and individual identities and by what technique contemporary power structures are betrothed in a persistent negotiation of life and death. They form a necropolitical nexus, while these frameworks interconnect a reciprocally underpinning system where biopolitical techniques of management are weaponized through state violence and surveillance to control who lives and who dies.

Necropolitics becomes strikingly visible through military violence, genocides, and targeted repression in both novels. Mbembe's exploration of state sovereignty exercised over death echo in Gurnah's portrayal of the forced migration and displacement of East Africans under colonial rule. Whether German in East Africa or British, colonial powers exercise necropolitical authority that annihilates communities and expunges histories by rendering certain populations as expendable, dispatching violence.

Surveillance as a technological extension of necropolitical power explored in the novel. Who can move freely, who can resist, and who must be watched or eliminated is deciding, under colonial and postcolonial regimes, surveillance acts as a means of categorizing populations. The control over individual bodies and collective groups, intensified by this underpinning orders of worth constant monitoring.

Imperceptibly is controlled by surveillance, in *Afterlives*, through the internalized discipline of communities haunted by past violence, bureaucratic control and diasporic monitoring. Through nourishing the necropolitical order, such mechanisms

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restrict agency, suppress resistance.

The novel portrays acts of resistance whether silent or overt that challenge and subvert systemic violence, in spite of the omnipresence of necropolitical power. Through the characters' acts of defiance against colonial oppression, in *Afterlives*, portrayed the application of biopolitical resistance to necropolitical forces is subtly yet powerfully. the novel highlights instances of resistance that challenge this systemic violence, exemplified by their brutal destruction of coastal traders and imposition of control over trade routes, In spite of the omnipresent necropolitical power exerted by German colonialists. Hamza, The protagonist, primarily understandings a devastating sense of powerlessness, feeling reduced to a mere ghost under the weight of colonial oppression.

By contesting the colonial legacy through these means, the characters in *Afterlives* exemplify a resilience that subverts the intended necropolitical outcome, demonstrating the enduring power of the human spirit to reclaim agency and assert life in the face of systemic violence. Gurnah illustrate a resilience in this way:

The merchant was in the caravan trade, and Hamza knew later that the Germans wanted this trade to end, [...]. They had had enough of the resistance of coastal traders [...] even as he travelled in the interior and heard of the approach of German power. [...] but he felt how it crushed his spirit and turned him into a ghost. (Gurnah 187)

These acts serve as attempts to reclaim agency and affirm life in spaces marked by death. In Gurnah's *Afterlives*, characters contest the colonial legacy by preserving memories, histories, and cultural identities, acts that embody subtle forms of resistance against erasure.

Within Gurnah's *Afterlives*, this section analytically delineates the dynamic nexus between biopolitics and necropolitics, foregrounding the transformative effects of surveillance as they unfold. The exploration exposes the systems designed to optimize and regulate life are inseparable from regimes that delimit exposure to death. Particularly in contexts marked by colonial violence and protracted conflict, employing a sophisticated interdisciplinary framework.

As these literary texts demonstrate, surveillance, is not a neutral or merely observational tool. Rather, it controls as a mechanism that not only governs life but also orchestrates its dismissal, thus interpreting the restrictions between biopower and necropower fluid and reciprocally underpinning. The findings emphasize the mechanisms of surveillance, implicating both individual subjectivities and collective destinies in a pervasive web of control, simplify the transition from the administration of populations to the management of mortality.

The section, within the biopolitical-necropolitical continuum, regardless of the oppressive architectures of surveillance and control, exposes that acts of resistance ranging from subversive gestures to manifest defiance constitute critical interventions. The narratives of Gurnah provides persuasive sites for perceptive in what manner resistance is both controlled and empowered by the very structures that seek to neutralize it, illuminating the ambivalent bequests of power in postcolonial and conflict-ridden societies.

By centering the analytic lens on this section advances, the interplay between the 'bio' and the 'necro', a sophisticated theoretical schema for interrogating the dialectics of domination, surveillance, and resistance. While necropower relics embryonic, in copious democracies, biopower inclines to control over controlling mechanisms. In

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colonial contexts or as state violence surges, necropower converts more observable and dominant.

## Conclusion

This analysis critically scrutinizes the nocturnal regimes of power and agency in what manner power operates to shape individual and collective experiences, and the bio-to-necro nexus within Gurnah's *Afterlives*. By analyzing these novels through the lens of necropolitics, this research aims to reveal particularly in contexts marked by colonial violence and conflict. It further seeks to comprehend in what manner surveillance and resistance cooperate within the biopolitical-necropolitical continuum, moreover revealing the complex dynamics of control and agency in postcolonial societies.

This research entrenches in a qualitative methodology and committed to meticulous critical elucidation. Through Gurnah's *Afterlives*, to objectively and subjectively analyze the novels, a combination of analytical and interpretive approach is taken to engage deeply to elucidate these postcolonial novels negotiate, resist, and at times reinforce the wrenched necropolitical nexus. That is, the violent disruption and reconfiguration of social and political orders through the tenacious prioritization of death for specific marginalized groups.

The thematic terrain is obvious by an intense interpretation of the nocturnal regime a term deployed at this juncture to designate the shadowy tool through which power asserts itself not only insidious, pervasive strategies of suppression, surveillance, and historical erasure but also through in moments of overt violence. Both novels rendering the structural continuities between colonial domination and contemporary modes of control, revealing necropolitics as both a historical phenomenon and a dynamic process entangling present realities, by foregrounding the lived experiences of those subjected to such regimes.

Consequently a critical reviewing of Gurnah's *Afterlives* portrayals the modalities through which colonial power is implemented over colonized bodies. This power is not simply as a project of incorporation or extraction, but by way of the systematic manufacture of zones of death spaces, where sovereignty and the value of life is contingent and eventually dignified by the capacity to decide who may live and who must die. With the suffering of deprivation, forced recruitment, and fractured kinship draws the psychological and physical costs of inhabiting and navigating the characters, of these perilous terrains replete with what Mbembe calls the "death-world."

Necropolitics is never a static or merely repressive force, that *Afterlives* demonstrate, rather, it is characterized by its protean adaptability. In the co-optation of biopolitical mechanisms, manifests this adaptability, for instance health, economic regulation, and social visibility into instruments of surveillance and ultimate domination.

Surveillance is not just an extension of the colonial gaze, it is a constant practice of intercession and recalibration, psychic potentials for those existing and shaping the lived realities at the margins of the postcolonial order. A powerful lens offers through the portrayal of characters politicized to the idea of dehumanization which to interpretation the effective approaches of necropolitical systems of power. Within global socio-political frameworks, these regimes are not merely tenacious narratives entrenched, but rather tools of control.

Gurnah meticulously portrays in *Afterlives* the German colonial administration analytically exploits and contempt the lives of African soldiers and civilians and showcases the brutal realities of colonial warfare in East Africa. In this research, the

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methodology encompassed, a blend of analytical textual analysis and concentrating theoretical amalgamation—has certified for a granular gratitude of literary approaches and a comprehensive contextualization within postcolonial and political theory. This study has not only illuminated core mechanisms of domination and resistance within the novel but also contributes to a deeper understanding of how literature itself can function as a space for critical intervention by mobilizing the analytical vocabulary of necropolitics. The ardent tracking of surveillance and acts of resistance maintains the assertion that literature is distinctively positioned to challenge and reimagine the limitations imposed by necropolitical regimes.

The framework of necropolitics enables scholars and readers alike to apprehend the subtle, persistent operations of power that manufacture zones of abandonment and death, while also attending to the fragile, yet vital, forms of resistance that persist within them. This study affirms the importance of literature in mediating the relationship between political theory and historical experience, exposing the links between biopolitical management and necropolitical destruction, and foregrounding the ongoing struggle for recognition, dignity, and life in worlds marked by disposability.

Gurnah provides vital comprehensions into the persistent legacies of colonialism, through their poignant portrayals of violence, displacement, and dehumanization, the resilience of the human spirit in the face of overwhelming oppression and the complexities of contemporary warfare. To challenge necropolitical structures and advocate for a more just and equitable world, the narratives serve as a potent reminder of the urgent need.

The imperative of the postcolonial literature which emerges is clear. It must continue to be read not only for its capacity to imagine counter-worlds and to unmask the machinery of domination, but for its representations of suffering where life rather than death can flourish.

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