Republic of Iraq
Ministry of Higher Education
and Scientific Research
University Of Anbar
College of Arts
Department of English

Legacies of Warfare and Resistance: A Postcolonial Study of Kevin Powers's Selected Novels

A THESIS SUBMITTED

To the Council of the College of Arts University of Anbar, in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in English Literature

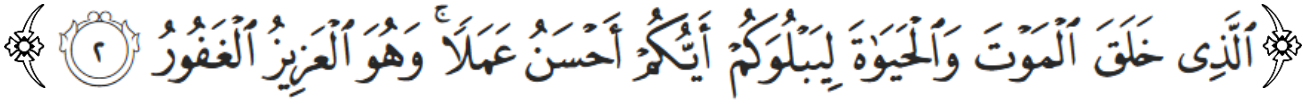
By

Sarah Shakir Gharib Naif Al-Aliyawi

Supervised by

Asst. Prof.Yasir Mutlib Abdullah

1447 A.H. **2025 A.D.**



تبارك (2)

“He is the One˹ Who created death and life in order to test which of you is best in deeds. And He is the Almighty, All-Forgiving.”

By Mustafa Khattab, The Clear Quran

Supervisor Certification

I certify that this thesis entitled "**Legacies of Warfare and Resistance: A Postcolonial Study of Kevin Powers's Selected Novels"** by **Sarah Shakir Gharib** was prepared under my supervision at the College of Arts, University of Anbar, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in English Literature.

Signature:

Supervisor: **Asst. Prof.Yasir Mutlib Abdullah**

Date: / / 2025

Department head recommendation.

Based on the available recommendations, I nominate this thesis for discussion.

Signature:

Name: **Asst. Prof. Majeed A. Jadoua (Ph.D.)**

Head of Department of English

College of Arts University of Anbar

Date: / / 2025

Approval of the scientific component

I certify that this thesis prepared by **Sarah Shakir Gharib** entitled "**Legacies of Warfare and Resistance: A Postcolonial Study of Kevin Powers's Selected Novels"** has been revised from the scientific point of view and all the scientific errors in it were corrected by the researcher. Thus, the thesis became suitable for discussion.

Signature:

Name: **Asst. Prof. Dr.**

Date: / / 2025

Approval of the scientific component

I certify that this thesis prepared by **Sarah Shakir Gharib** entitled **"Legacies of Warfare and Resistance: A Postcolonial Study of Kevin Powers's Selected Novels"** has been revised from the scientific point of view and all the scientific errors in it were corrected by the researcher. Thus, the thesis became suitable for discussion.

Signature:

Name: **Asst. Prof. Dr.**

Date: / /2025

Decision of the discussion committee

We certify that we have read this thesis, **"Legacies of Warfare and Resistance: A Postcolonial Study of Kevin Powers's Selected Novels",** and as Examining Committee, examined the student in its content, and that in our opinion, it is adequate as a thesis for the Degree of Master of Arts in English Literature.

Signature:

Name: **Asst. Prof. Dr.**

chairman

Date: / /2025

Signature:

Name:**Asst. Prof. Dr.**

Member

Date: / /2025

Signature:

Name: **Asst. Prof. Dr.**

Member&supervisor

Date: / /2025

Signature:

Name: **Asst. Prof.**

Member

Date: / /2025

Approved by the Council of the College of Arts

Signature:

Name: **Prof. Dr. Arif Abed Sayel Abtan**

Dean of the College of

Arts Date: / / 2025

Dedications

To my cherished parents, whose love, support, and encouragement guided me through this journey.

To my esteemed brother, Ahmed, and my beloved sisters, Samar, Istabraq, and Hajar.

To my dear friends, Manahil Hameed, Haneen Kareem, Liqa'a Lateef, and Bayan Abdulwahed.

To my M.A. colleagues, especially Ahmed Sabah, Ahmed Khashea, and Dyaa Waheed.

This work is a testament to the love, support, and inspiration I have been blessed with from each of you.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I express profound gratitude and recognition to Almighty Allah for giving me the strength and endurance to endure this arduous knowledge-seeking journey.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to my thesis supervisor, Asst. Prof. Yasir Mutlib Abdullah, for his invaluable guidance, patience, and unwavering support throughout this journey. I also appreciate the outstanding faculty of the English Department at the College of Arts for their expertise and dedication, which have greatly enriched my academic experience.

Abstract

Warfare and resistance have left indelible marks on societies, shaping collective memories, identities, and power structures. In postcolonial contexts, these memories intertwine with systemic violence and the politics of life and death, offering fertile ground for literary exploration. However, these narratives often overlook the nuanced experiences of subjugated individuals and their acts of resistance within these death worlds. Previous studies on Kevin Powers's *The Yellow Birds* (2012) have primarily focused on themes of trauma and survival, examining the emotional toll of war on soldiers. Conversely, Powers's second novel, *A Shout in the Ruins* (2018), has yet to receive similar critical attention, with limited reviews addressing its exploration of historical violence and systemic dehumanization. Thus, the current study investigates the necropolitical dynamics in Powers's novels by applying Achille Mbembe's theory of *Necropolitics* (2019) as a conceptual framework. The analysis focuses on the mechanisms of control and sovereignty that render human lives expendable, examining how characters like Private Bartle in *The Yellow Birds* and the enslaved communities in *A Shout in the Ruins* navigate these death worlds. By examining the portrayal of dehumanization and disposability in these texts, this study investigates how oppressive power structures shape the lived experiences of subjugated individuals. It further analyzes the various forms of resistance depicted in the novels, demonstrating how those subjected to necropolitical forces assert agency in the face of oppression. The study ultimately argues that Powers's novels construct a dual narrative of warfare and resistance. *The Yellow Birds* scrutinizes the psychological scars of war and the lasting impact of necropolitical violence on both soldiers and Iraqi civilians, while *A Shout in the Ruins* extends this examination to systemic dehumanization across generations. Through these narratives, the novels interrogate the interplay between power, resistance, and the enduring struggle for humanity within spaces defined by necropolitical control.

Table of Contents

CHAPTER ONE

1.1 Background of the Study

The question of war and resistance in literature focuses on representing war, conflict, and resistance in various periods and genres. Human hearts and minds have long been troubled by war. From the record of human history, war appears to be as inevitable as death. According to Aristotle, people go to war to live in peace. He believes that all people aspire to the good since it is the good that brings about happiness and is the object of the soul's desire. There are numerous ways to depict war in literature, arts, and theatre. The goddess of war and wisdom, Athena, towered above Athens from her temple, shield in hand, guarding the wealth that gave the Athenians the means to fight. In this sense, the theatre has taught ancient Athenians. War has been discussed in theatres for years since then, and some viewers have gained knowledge from those debates (Arnopoulos 153).

War as a practice is depicted in the texts from different periods and places, representing the values of those periods of war. The idea of a battle is intrinsic to some of the most significant topics of the medieval period, including knighthood, religion, nation-formation, masculinity/femininity, body and mind, and psychology. The topic of war can be seen in secular and religious literature. Writings dealing with warfare consist of the treatments and prescriptions of military and relevant tools, as well as chronicle and retell actual battles, often relating to the protection or expansion of a country or the creation of a hero or king, threaded with a view towards religious conversion (Saunders et al. 8). In other words, war has been presented from a historical perspective, narratives, and even in simple chronological writing. However, the literary approach deals with the lived space of war where armed conflict is witnessed from the participants' perspective and where it is lived, used, transformed, and felt. This

subjective characteristic adds truth to works while completely omitting objective histories (Brosman 85-6).

Old war narratives and chants were meant to celebrate great military accomplishments as part of the people's identity, to establish moral codes of war, and to incite the spirit of war. It is possible, indeed probable, that the concept of the literary hero invokes a military history, where valor is determined by, practiced in the interest of, and legitimized by the group. Literature of modern wars, especially war novels, has operated on the young to constitute a national impulse and foster hatred. The positive impact such textual models can have on making common political decisions could hardly be measured quantitatively. However, the scholars studying propaganda in the USA, Nazi Germany, France, and many other countries found a clear and direct causal link between writing and militarization. The traditional military values have thus been effectively supported by personal ethos and historical experiences, as narrated or imbibed within us either anecdotally or scientifically in cases like those military academies. In other words, for many sensitive and reflective young men, literary texts appear to have been a major precondition for their passion for war and the military. Before Latin was replaced in many secondary schools by some modern languages and rigorously replaced by them, thousands of students read Caesar's Gallic Wars yearly (Classen et al. 88).

When the geographies of resistance are referred to, it is easily assumed that resistance occurs where domination, power, or oppression exists. Consequently, their resistance is readily defined as always contradicting power or domination. However, some scholars seem to think and postulate that analyzing resistance in terms of power and domination offers a skewed view of the real nature of resistance. That is, not all power/power-over or domination/submission dynamics engender resistance; any more than all cases of 'resistance' are of resistance to something that can be neatly categorized as 'power.' Instead, they want us to consider that they think resistance has its characteristics and

spatialities. In Steve Pile's (1997) "Opposition, Political Identities and Spaces of Resistance," geographies of resistance show:

> That people are positioned differently in unequal and multiple power relationships, that more or less powerful people are active in the constitution of unfolding relationships of authority, meaning, and identity, that these activities are contingent, ambiguous, and awkwardly situated, but that resistance seeks to occupy, deploy and create alternative spatialities from those defined through oppression and exploitation. This perspective makes assumptions about the domination/resistance couplet questionable. (199)

Resistance can be better understood by approaching different perspectives and deconstructing the presumptions that resistance is always against power. Resistance has to be understood not only in the relation of domination and power but also through a multiplicity of experiences, like "desire and anger, capacity and ability, happiness and fear, dreaming and forgetting." This means resistance cannot always be reduced to the binary of the dominant versus the dominator, the exploited versus the exploiter, or the oppressed versus the oppressor.

The significance of this problem is that such inequalities can dramatically shape both the nature and outcome of resistance. There are different forms of resistance to other power relations and different stakeholders. Some forms of resistance come out against the exploitative nature of the capitalist economic system and its financial intermediaries, while others are against the governments or regimes of the day. Other forms of resistance arise to challenge or question existing social and cultural norms or discourses, particularly in response to the global phenomenon referred to as "globalization." Resistance of this kind can be observed on local, national, regional, and even global levels. An example of big-scale resistance is the anti-globalization movement, which is against the

mainstream of the world capitalist economic system. Alternatively, one will center on the internal opposition to Apartheid, which was national. Most, if not all, social movements can be viewed in forms of opposition (Pile's 200).

Not all resistance occurs in physical spaces or geographies but in "other spaces" as well. Some resistance happens in the form of Protest Art or music. Music can be used and has been used as a tool or space to resist certain oppression or domination. Sometimes, resistance occurs in people's minds, ideologies, or "inner spaces." For example, sometimes people have to struggle within or fight against their inner spaces, with their consciousness, and, sometimes, with their fear, before they can resist in the physical spaces. In other cases, people sometimes resist certain ideologies, beliefs, or cultural norms within their minds. These kinds of resistance are less visible but fundamental parts of all forms of resistance. (Pile's 201)

Understanding the resistance movement has been surrounded by controversies regarding some definitions. Therefore, depending on what side of the fence a state government might sit, a resistance movement can either be categorized as a terrorist group or not, depending on whether they are considered lawful or unlawful combatants or if they have a right to resist occupation. A resistance movement is “an organized effort by some fraction of a country's civilian population against the legally constituted authority or an occupying power, with the intent to topple the legal government and create unrest.” In strict military parlance, a resistance movement is just that: it aims to resist (transform) the Policies of a Government or the occupier. It may be achieved through the use of force, or force will not be used, and no other form of aggression will be used. Under this view, a resistance movement is unequivocally related to the transformation of the nature of present power, not to overthrow the same, and the precise military term to describe the toppling of a government is an insurgency. However, one would like to think that many of the

‘resistance’ movements have sought to remove a particular king, especially if such a king has ascended to the throne through illegitimate means (Pile's 201).

Freedom fighter is another term for those who struggle to achieve political freedom for themselves or obtain freedom for others. Though the literal meaning of the words could include "anyone who fights for the cause of freedom," in common use, it may be restricted to those who are actively involved in an armed rebellion rather than those who campaign for freedom by peaceful means, or those who fight violently for the freedom of others outside the context of an uprising. Generally speaking, freedom fighters are people who use physical force to cause a change in the political and or social order. Notable examples include figures in South Africa, the American Revolution, the Irish Republican Army in Ireland and Northern Ireland, the Eritrean People's Liberation Front, the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association in India, and the National Resistance Army in Uganda, which were considered freedom fighters by supporters. However, a person campaigning for freedom through peaceful means may still be classed as a freedom fighter, though in common usage, they are called political activists, as in the case of the Black Consciousness Movement. (Sasha Mandakovic, 2023) In India, "Freedom fighter" is an officially recognized category by the Indian government covering those who took part in the country's independence movement; people in this category (which can also include dependent family members) get pensions and other benefits like special railway counters.

The Freedom Fight in South Africa usually describes the long and bitter struggle against apartheid, a social, political, and economic system of oppression by the National Party government from 1948 to the early nineties. This movement included people of all genders, dissimilar groups, and approaches, including peaceful protests, boycotts, and the use of force. Leaders like Nelson Mandela, Oliver Tambo, and Steve Biko came up with leadership in public and private organizations to campaign for equal rights. It worsened after the

Sharpeville Massacre in 1960 and after the Soweto Massacre in 1976, when students were killed, thus getting the support they needed from across the globe. In the end, continuous internal defiance with enormous pressure from the international community led to bargaining that brought down apartheid, resulting in South Africa's first integrated elections in 1994 with Mandela as the first black president. The Freedom Fight changed South Africa's social fabric and helped worldwide freedom movements (Baines 331).

People described as freedom fighters are often also called assassins, rebels, insurgents, or terrorists. This leads to the aphorism "one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter" (Ganor 288). Political conflict and resistance movements are closely associated with the philosophy that "one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter." Tags attributed to or used when referring to persons or groups may be based on context, reasons, objective, approach, historical background, or portrayal in the media. Freedom-fighting individuals work towards a political, social, or economic change, and terrorists use force and intimidation to accomplish goals. Historical perspectives are another thing, but media representation can alter public opinion… People's perception of cases of rebellion and forceful actions is important while debating with others as it makes everyone question their opinions and stories.

For Americans, American culture has forgotten World War I, one of the bloodiest wars in human history. It is now viewed as little more than a far-off preface to World War II and has turned into a ghostly conflict fought in a fog of memory. The relative oblivion of World War I in American culture focuses on the processes that inform the cultures of memory, historical hermeneutics, and especially the mechanisms of mnemonic scripting of history. As with most 'great' conflicts, the war, characterized by near-unparalleled devastation, technological advancement, and societal transformation, has been overshadowed by the following war. It brings considerable doubts about the great conflict's age and the marks it left on the entire course of human history. In an era where the

memory of the First World War has diminished in the everyday textual and discursive American culture, there is a need to reevaluate an active contribution to history and claim back power to reveal suppressed, marginalized, and erased through relevant and meaningful histories (MacKenzie 51).

In modern media, literature, art, and discourse, war and resistance are powerful means of understanding conflict and power struggles. Conflict allows for storytelling of hardships and pain, promoting stories of people who are often unheard or represented. Resistance, on the other hand, symbolizes hope and rebellion against oppressors. Novelists like Ernest Hemingway, who experienced trench warfare, often share themes with war poets. Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*, set in 1922, features an ambulance driver who becomes tired of war and echoes Hemingway's perspective. Frederick Henry, who considered war a normal aspect of life, did not care about war or treat it as a problem. The tragic death of his children and Catherine at the end of the novel further highlights the destructive nature of war (Malik 171).

In contemporary times, in the post 9/11 period, American foreign policy has transitioned from balance of power realism and check on its use of force to raw power politics where the U.S. tries to remake the world in its image. This has led to international law violations, devaluing multilateral processes, and trying to capture the unity of the United Nations. However, it is indifferent to the interests of its allies. The Iraq 2003 War, or the Second Gulf War, was a protracted conflict in Iraq from March 2003 to December 2011. It started with an expedition by the United States-supported coalition, which culminated in the displacement of Saddam Hussein’s Ba’athist regime. They continued to fester since insurgency cropped up against the coalition forces as well as the newly formed Iraqi government. US military forces were officially withdrawn in 2011, but the US rejoined in 2014 as Combined Joint Task Force – Operation Inherent Resolve (Yordán 127). The invasion was part of the war on terror initiated by the USA after the tragedy of September 11, 2001. The collapse of Saddam’s system

led to civil strife as Sharia-dominated Iraq started fighting Sunnis, causing a civil war. To this end, the US sent 170,000 more soldiers in 2007 during the troop surge to stabilize some regions of the country. In May 2008, President Bush accepted a deal to bring out all foreign combat brigades by July 2010, which was implemented by President Obama in December 2011 (Bojang 2).

Furthermore, Kevin Powers's novels offer a compelling exploration of war and resistance, highlighting the profound psychological and physical consequences of conflict. His works, for instance *The Yellow Birds* and *A Shout in the Ruins*, depict war not only as a battlefield experience but as an enduring state of trauma and moral ambiguity. Through his poetic and fragmented narrative style, Powers illustrates how war dehumanizes individuals, strips them of their sense of self, and leaves lasting scars on both soldiers and civilians. His portrayal challenges traditional heroic narratives, instead emphasizing the chaos, loss, and existential disorientation that war engenders (Nester 2013).

Resistance in Powers's novels takes multiple forms, ranging from direct acts of defiance to more internalized struggles against the psychological aftermath of war. In The Yellow Birds, resistance is depicted through the protagonist's attempts to process his memories and guilt, showcasing how soldiers fight not only their enemies but also their own conscience (Hawkins 96). A Shout in the Ruins expands this theme by depicting resistance in historical contexts, particularly during the American Civil War, where oppression and violence necessitate various forms of rebellion and endurance. By juxtaposing different time periods, Powers demonstrates that war and resistance are recurring forces that transcend specific historical moments.

Furthermore, Powers's depiction of war emphasizes the erasure of individuality, as characters struggle to maintain their humanity in extreme circumstances. His narratives illustrate how war imposes a collective experience of suffering, yet each individual experiences and resists its impact differently. Through his lyrical prose, he captures the internal conflicts of soldiers, civilians,

and those caught in between, revealing the complexities of survival in wartime. The fragmentation of his storytelling mirrors the fractured reality of those who endure war, reinforcing the idea that resistance is not always a single, decisive act but an ongoing negotiation of identity and memory (Hawkins 97).

Kevin Powers's work contributes to contemporary war literature by offering a nuanced and deeply personal perspective on war and resistance. His novels challenge romanticized portrayals of combat by exposing the physical and psychological devastation it leaves behind. Through his exploration of trauma, guilt, and endurance, Powers underscores the complexities of resistance, demonstrating that it can manifest in various ways, from external rebellion to the internal struggle for meaning and redemption. His depiction of war as a destructive yet deeply human experience provides a valuable framework for analyzing broader themes of conflict and survival in literature (Hawkins 99).

Kevin Powers's *The Yellow Birds* and *A Shout in the Ruins* have been widely analyzed in literary criticism, particularly in relation to war trauma, memory, and postmodern representations of conflict. Scholars have examined how Powers's work engages with the long tradition of war literature while reflecting the unique experiences of contemporary soldiers. Ty Hawkins, for example, situates *The Yellow Birds* within the context of postmodern American war narratives, arguing that the novel highlights the radical isolation of U.S. veterans and the psychological fragmentation caused by war (Hawkins 97). Similarly, Thomas Nester's review discusses Powers's ability to capture the emotional and philosophical weight of war, emphasizing how his poetic prose distinguishes *The Yellow Birds* from traditional war novels (Nester 39). These discussions contribute to a broader scholarly engagement with Powers's work, positioning it within both historical and contemporary frameworks of war literature. By building on these previous analyses, this study seeks to further explore Powers's depiction of resistance, examining how his narratives complicate conventional portrayals of agency, trauma, and survival in wartime fiction.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Warfare and acts of resistance have left deep and permanent marks on societies, memories, identities, and power structures. When people live in postcolonial places, these memories often mix with systemic violence and the politics of life and death. They provide authors with opportunities to explore themes of human resilience, morality, and socio-political dynamics of conflict. In literature, authors across eras and cultures have addressed these themes, presenting a range of perspectives on the impact of war, acts of rebellion, and the struggle for freedom or survival.

Several scholarly works have examined Kevin Powers's first novel, *The Yellow Birds* (2012), from different perspectives such as trauma, survival psychology and examining the emotional toll of war on soldiers. Karen De Loof, In her thesis (2016), argues how *The Yellow Birds* provides a complete picture of the troops' experiences in the Iraq War from the perspective of trauma studies. *The Yellow Birds* places a greater emphasis on the consequences of trauma as the reader accompanies Private Bartle on his road to recovery. In the (2020) article by M Ikbal Alosman, he looks at the survival psychology that shapes soldiers' actions even after the end of the war. He concludes that even for those who physically endure these threats, there is no assurance of psychological survival. On the other hand, Powers's second novel, *A Shout In The Ruins*, has not been studied yet. There are only a certain number of reviews written on it.

However, past studies have overlooked analyzing Kevin Powers's novels *The Yellow Birds* (2012) and *A Shout in the Ruins* (2018) through Achille Mbembe's theory of Necropolitics (2019), particularly in relation to the concept of resistance. The ways in which characters navigate, challenge, or succumb to necropolitical forces remain an unexplored dimension in existing scholarship.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The present study has the following objectives:

1- Examining necropolitical power in Powers's novels through control, dehumanization, and the exploitation of life in war.
2- Reflecting on Kevin Powers's novels' representation of various forms of resistance to the necropolitical forces that govern the lives of those subjected people.

1.4 Research Questions

This study aimed to answer the following questions to achieve the above objectives.

1- How do necropolitical power and dehumanization shape the lives and deaths of individuals in Kevin Powers's novels?
2- What forms of resistance emerge against necropolitical forces in *The Yellow Birds* and *A Shout in the Ruins*?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its examination of Kevin Powers's novels *The Yellow Birds* and *A Shout in the Ruins* through the lens of Achille Mbembe's theory of *Necropolitics* (2019). This analysis deepens the understanding of Powers's portrayal of war, violence, and resistance, particularly within the context of necropolitical systems. By exploring the dehumanization and subjugation of individuals under oppressive structures such as slavery, war, and imperialism, the study reveals how these systems reduce human lives to mere instruments of power. Furthermore, the study is also significance for

emphasizing the various strategies of resistance employed by the characters, highlighting their ongoing struggle for agency and survival in the face of systemic violence and control. This exploration provides critical insights into the complexities of human agency within oppressive environments.

1.6 Conceptual Framework

The ideas of politics and power have profoundly and frequently influenced the social sciences. Throughout the past century, this influence has expanded and played a crucial role in some of the worst battles in human history. This was initially linked to the ideas of enlightenment and progress. However, it also had a major impact on the era that brought about widespread violations of violence and massive destruction, profoundly altering the state of humanity in the twenty-first century (Bekiroğlu 224). This thesis utilizes Achille Mbembe's theory of *Necropolitics*(2019). Necropolitics is a concept coined by Achille Mbembe, a political philosopher from Cameroon. In his book *Necropolitics*(2019), Mbembe defines Necropolitics as “the power and capacity to dictate who can live and who must die” (81).

Necropolitics, hence, centers on the power to decide death. It indicates authority and complete dominance above the established boundaries of governmental power. "necropolitics" is frequently used in law, warfare, and religious studies. Nevertheless, two significant notions were introduced due to additional research on this phrase. Michel Foucault introduces and discusses two concepts: 'biopower' and 'the state of exception'. This theory argues that the enemy is transformed into an ultimate objective. The governing authority is granted the authority to employ its power and exercise control to destroy this specific group to protect itself. The methods employed for this purpose are considered legitimate under exception. During a state of exception, individuals universally submit to all decisions, while the sovereign exercises unrestrained

authority. The philosopher Hannah Arendt explored the concept of the state of exception, which refers to a situation where sovereign individuals use society's ability to wield absolute power, similar to the notions of the Nazis, totalitarians, terrorists, and concentration camps (Mbembe 11–13).

Mbembe re-theorized biopolitics via a necro (death) horizon 40 years after Foucault's biopolitics, which appeared to be a strong conceptual departure from Western thought. To emphasize the idea of necropolitics, it is preferable to have an idea of Foucault's concept of biopolitics. In the last chapter of “The History of Sexuality,” Foucault observes how biopolitics, which is supposed to be the positive power over life, can become a deadly form of power. He states that it is not only a “calculated management of life” but also a “power to expose a whole population to death.” This highlights how human masses are eliminated for the protection and survival of a nation, a people, and a class. Mbembe's Necropolitics extends this analysis by focusing on how states also exert power over death, dictating who lives and dies within society. Mbembe comments on this, saying:

> I have argued that contemporary forms of subjugating life to the power of death (necropolitics) are deeply reconfiguring the relations between resistance, sacrifice, and terror. I have demonstrated that biopower is insufficient to account for contemporary forms of the subjugation of life to the power of death. (109)

In this sense, Necropolitics is the "darker side" of biopolitics by which Mbembe made a risky move when he expanded the scope of the sovereignty way of governance. This had hitherto only been applied to political theory and nation-state defense to defend the borders of sovereign nation-states. Mbembe argues that "to be sovereign is to exert one's control over mortality and to define life as the deployment and manifestation of power "(Mbembe 81). He reinterpreted sovereignty as a key component of the sovereign's decision—

which was losing its exclusivity— to make life-or-death decisions rather than as a doctrine of protection. Instead of protecting citizens, contemporary states asserted their authority to control people's lives and deaths. The governments frequently use necropolitical authority through the means of warfare, law enforcement, and surveillance; States indicate their control over life and death through the use of military force, the implementation of targeted murders using drones, and the enforcement of stringent immigration regulations that result in fatalities at borders, results in the use of death to control the economy and politics of human beings, on the one hand. On the other hand, death has become a global phenomenon, and individuals are governed through their direct and indirect exposure to death.

Mbembe's book, *Necropolitics*, significantly impacted discourse in the English-speaking world. Mbembe's critique of racism and its connection to the principles of liberal democracy is insightful. Building upon Foucault's work, he examines the eternal and deadly effects of sovereign authority, which restricts whole communities, which Fanon called "the zone of non-being." Additionally, he presents the idea of a global morality based more on transnational resistance against expanding a death-oriented society rather than relying on sovereign authority (Gržinić 222). Necropolitics reinterpreted the sole right to defend nation-state borders as the authority to determine who may live and who must die. The clearest and most succinct explanation of necropolitics can be found in this brief and straightforward statement about "who should live and who must die" (Mbembe 81).

Moreover, Mbembe argues that sovereignty consists of two essential processes: self-institution and self-limitation, which include establishing one's borders. Exercising sovereignty refers to a society's capacity to independently establish itself through the utilization of institutions driven by specific social and conceptual interpretations "Sovereignty is therefore defined as a twofold process

of self-institution and self-limitation (fixing one's limits for oneself " (Mbembe 83). Thus, he focuses on those individuals in positions of power who prioritize causing material destruction to human communities and bodies rather than advocating for widespread autonomy. These manifestations of sovereignty do not indicate serious mental disease or a disconnect between bodily needs and mental urges. Indeed, these data accurately depict the governing principles of the current political landscape in which we still exist, much like the death colonies.

Mbembe talks about the power's ability to create a group of individuals living on life's edge. They are pushed to the margins of society; they are marginalized to the point that the constant threat of death shapes their daily lives. They live where survival is a daily struggle, and their existence becomes precarious. Death becomes just like a ghost that looms over these individuals continuously. Their lives are devalued, meaning they are seen as unnecessary and worthless in the economic and human sense. Such a thing leads to their treatment as expendable. They are often the victims of violence, neglect, and poverty. As a means to exert control over these populations, power uses death as a tool of control by maintaining them in a state of existential precocity.

Sovereignty consists in the power to manufacture an entire crowd of people who specifically live at the edge of life, or even on its outer edge—people for whom living means continually standing up to death and doing so under conditions in which death itself increasingly tends to become spectral, thanks both to how it is lived and to how it is given. This life is a superfluous one, therefore, whose price is so meager that it has no equivalence, whether market or—even less—human; this is a species of life whose value is extra-economic, the only equivalent of which is the sort of death able to be inflicted upon it (50).

This type of power can engage in acts of violence constantly, either through repeated acts of cruelty at a biological and genetic level or through

sudden, large-scale massacres. It utilizes tactics such as isolation, death, and dissection, as shown in current examples of terrorism and counterterrorism. Mbembe's critique centers on a power hierarchy that normalizes and maintains death and violence, devoid of any symbolic or tragic meaning, and instead uses them as instruments for maintaining control and dominance. In this context, Mbembe comments:

> Necropolitical power proceeds by a sort of inversion between life and death, as if life was merely death's medium. It seeks to abolish the distinction between means and ends. Hence its indifference to objective signs of cruelty. In its eyes, crime constitutes a fundamental part of revelation, and the death of its enemies is, in principle, deprived of all symbolism. Such death has nothing tragic about it. This is why necropolitical power can multiply it infinitely, either by small doses (the cellular and molecular modes) or by spasmodic surges— the strategy of "small massacres" inflicted one day at a time, using an implacable logic of separation, strangulation, and vivisection, as we see in all the contemporary theaters of terror and counterterror (51).

Mbembe criticizes how modern states of power deal with human life as a means to an end, causing widespread violence and destruction. Those individuals are treated like tools for achieving economic, political, or military objectives: "the generalized instrumentalization of human existence and the material destruction of human bodies and populations"(83). Such dehumanization means that the lives of individuals are valued only in the sense of their utility to the aims of the sovereign power. It also involves controlling populations through surveillance, policing, and other biopolitics regulation. He adds that these destructive practices are not irrational ones, but they are integral to the working of modern political sovereignty. In his view, the sovereignty's

decision-making process for dictating who may live and who must die is based on the systematic instrumentalization of people.

In this context, he examines the harsh techniques of societies that support slavery and racism, emphasizing how they dehumanize and oppress marginalized groups. Therefore, the focus on getting enslaved people out of the country, whether they choose to or are deported in large numbers, is a dead-end political tactic. Its goal is to eliminate people who are considered unsuitable to live in the political community. This will make it easier to label them as nonentities whose existence and presence are unwanted. The phrase "throwing back into the dust" (29) symbolizes reducing enslaved people to a state of subjugation and inferiority, treating them as commodities rather than human beings with rights.

Mbembe suggests that slavery represents an early example of biopolitics control, which is essential to understanding the rise of contemporary forms of terror and violence." slavery could be considered one of the first instances of biopolitical experimentation. In many respects, the very structure of the plantation system and its consequences express the emblematic and paradoxical figure of the state of exception (83). Within the context of slavery, the physical and mental aspects of enslaved individuals were subjected to control and exploitation, which formed the foundation for contemporary methods of political domination over life and mortality.

Mbembe highlights several points about the nature and outcomes of slavery, especially within the plantation system. He indicates that the plantation system is a necropolitical space in which the master's authority equals sovereign power, and the moral chains and legal norms do not apply. He argues that the plantation system functioned as a state of exception, an established region where normal standards of law and society were temporarily violated. Enslaved people were subordinate to the sole control of their masters, who could determine their

fate, whether to live or die. In the context of necropolitics, the core element of a sovereign's power lies in the ability to make crucial decisions about matters of life and death. Enslaved people served as a prime example of this authority since enslavers exerted a level of control similar to that of a ruler, determining the enslaved person's destiny without facing any consequences. He states that:

> In the plantation context, the enslaved person's humanity appears as the perfect figure of a shadow. Indeed, the slave condition results from a triple loss: loss of a "home", loss of rights over one's body, and loss of political status. This triple loss is identical to absolute domination, natal alienation, and social death. As a political-juridical structure, the plantation is a space where the enslaved person belongs to an enslaver. It is not a community if only because a community, by definition, implies the exercise of the power of speech and thought (85).

For Mbembe, slavery has a profound dehumanization and systemic violence. It reduces an enslaved person's humanity to a mere shadow, resulting in a loss of home, bodily autonomy, and political status. enslaved people are also denied political recognition and rights, rendering them politically invisible. Slavery also leads to absolute domination, with complete control enforced through violence and systemic oppression. Enslaved people experience natal alienation, social death, and a lack of community within the plantation. In this respect, slavery is not just an economic or labor system but a comprehensive mechanism of dehumanization, stripping individuals of their humanity and subjecting them to relentless control and alienation.

Furthermore, Mbembe emphasizes that subjected people are viewed as instruments for work. In addition to serving as tools, they are also seen as commodities of financial value. The fact that individuals are workers and property highlights the fundamental economic basis. They are no longer seen as human beings, and their value is based only on their ability to work. They keep

alive but in a state of constant suffering and injury. The brutality experienced by those subjected people was not merely accidental but rather systematic and essential to those in authoirty . This was apparent in the conduct of the overseers and the corporeal retributions imposed on the marginalized people.

As an instrument of labor, the enslaved person has a price. As a property, the enslaved person has value. The enslaved person’s labor is needed and used, so he is therefore kept alive, but in a state of injury, in a phantom-like world of horrors and intense cruelty and profanity. The violent tenor of the enslaved person’s life is manifested through the overseer’s disposition to behave in a cruel and intemperate manner, as well as in the spectacle of pain inflicted on the enslaved person’s body (83).

Mbembe stresses how slavery establishes and maintains unequal power dynamics that go beyond simple exploitation of labor. It profoundly shapes social hierarchies and reduces the value of people subjected to it. He certainly draws upon the concepts of scholars such as Susan BuckMorss to demonstrate the deep dehumanization that is inherent in slavery. By characterizing the existence of enslaved people as a "state of living death," the author underscores the fact that slavery not only deprives persons of their liberty but also diminishes their humanity, reducing them to become "things" or commodities possessed by others. The mention of the "shadow" implies that the enslaved person's presence is obscured and diminished by their role as property, emphasizing the significant disparity and lack of independence inherent in the master-slave dynamic.

Power over people's lives takes the form of commerce: a person’s humanity is dissolved to the point that the enslaved person’s life can be said to be possessed by the master. Because the enslaved person’s life is like a “thing” possessed by another person, the enslaved person's existence appears as the perfect figure of a shadow (84).

Mbembe underlines the contradictory essence of slavery: despite being dehumanized and reduced to mere instruments, enslaved people tried to show their humanity, creativity, and courage via cultural and physical manifestation. “Breaking up with rootedness and the pure world of things of which he is a mere fragment, the slave can demonstrate the protean capabilities of the human bond through music and the body itself that was supposedly possessed by another”(84). Despite being driven away from their natural environment and reduced to a mere part of the material universe, the enslaved individual can establish relationships and reveal their inherent human qualities.

In *Necropolitics,* Mbembe explores a contemporary form of racism, which he terms "nanoracism".Nanoracism is described as a form of prejudice that manifests in everyday actions, often appearing unconscious. Though this kind of racism is characterized by its subtlety and infiltrating nature, it has a drugging effect on society, making people unaware of its presence and impact. It has become a part of everyday life. Mbembe says that:

> What is nano racism, if not that narcotic brand of prejudice based on skin color that gets expressed in seemingly anodyne everyday gestures, often apropos of nothing, apparently unconscious remarks, a little banter, some allusion or insinuation, a slip of the tongue, a joke, an innuendo, but also, it must be added, consciously spiteful remarks, like a malicious intention, a deliberate stamping underfoot or tackle, a dark desire to stigmatize and, in particular, to inflict violence, to injure and humiliate (68).

He describes how nano racism places marginalized individuals in unbearable situations and subjects them to repeated racist acts. He describes how those in authority deprive the dignity and rights of these individuals. By doing so, those in power try to assert their authority over dehumanizing groups by reducing them to objects of disdain and mistreatment. Mbembe argues that:

> It consists of placing the greatest number of those that we regard as undesirable in intolerable conditions, surrounding them daily, inflicting upon them, repeatedly, an incalculable number of racist jabs and injuries, stripping them of all their acquired rights, to smoke them out of their hives and dishonor them until they are left with no choice but to self-deport. Moreover, speaking of racist injuries, it should be remembered that these lesions and cuts are endured by human subjects who have suffered one blow or many blows of a specific character: they are painful and hard to forget because they attack the body and its materiality, but also, above all, they attack the intangible dignity, self-esteem (69).

Mbembe asserts that the injuries caused by nano racism are not just physical ones intern. They deeply affect the intangible aspects of human identity, such as dignity and self–esteem. Authority figures maintain an over-lasting impact on the psyche of marginalized individuals. This psychological control supports the authority's capacity to dictate societal norms and ensure their power over those they oppress.

Moreover, Mbembe suggests that nanoracism is characterized by its banality, which means that it has become so ordinary in everyday life. It infiltrates into the very fabric of society, affecting interactions and social structures. He also asserts that nano-racism has become a cultural phenomenon by arguing that “Nanoracism, in its banality and capacity to infiltrate into the pores and veins of society, is racism turned culture and into the air one breathes, at a time of the generalized idiotizing, machinic decerebration and bewitchment of the masses” (70). It is not just an individual act of racism, but it has societal attitudes, becoming usual and accepted as part of the cultural landscape. It becomes like the air we breathe, meaning it permeates every aspect of life.

In *Necropolitics,* Mbembe shed light on the idea that colonial rule was sustained by an ideology that dehumanized and marginalized the colonized. This

dehumanization was not only about racial differences but about the idea that the colonized were less human. This view justified the colonizers' violence and lawlessness in the colonies. He also highlights the extreme violence inherent in colonialism, where the sovereign has unchecked power to kill unrestricted by any legal "The sovereign can kill at any time and in any manner"(88), which asserts the absolute nature of this power. Colonial warfare lacks legal and institutional rules, making it a non-codified and lawless activity.

Mbembe underscores the harsh realities of living under late-modern occupation, in which death and life are linked in a complex manner. He also examines how contemporary power structures use space to control people, creating exclusion zones. This spatialization of death involves the use of militarized zones, surveillance, and physical barriers. Mbembe comments that:

> To live under late-modern occupation is to experience a permanent condition of “being in pain”: fortified structures, military posts, and roadblocks everywhere; buildings that bring back painful memories of humiliation, interrogations, and beatings; curfews that imprison hundreds of thousands in their cramped homes every night from dusk to dawn; soldiers patrolling the unlit streets, frightened by their shadows (102).

Mbembe's portrayal of late-modern occupation highlights the profound and diverse suffering inflicted upon populations living under occupation. Occupiers employ a blend of physical, psychological, and geographical manipulation to establish an atmosphere characterized by unrelenting subjugation and terror, so embodying the notion of death politics and the formation of death worlds. His concept of necropolitics offers an important framework for understanding how current manifestations of authority function using control of death. Modern regimes maintain control over populations by actively constructing environments that are highly dangerous and deadly. These

environments fundamentally change social existence, causing a blurred distinction between life and death and between resistance and submission.

He asserts that contemporary manifestations of authority employ weaponry and violence as means to achieve the utmost devastation of individuals and communities. This refers not only to the act of causing death but also to the establishment of an environment where the presence and possibility of death are widespread. The objective is to establish dominance by instilling fear, inflicting pain, and maintaining a pervasive atmosphere of violence. He introduces the term Death-worlds to describe new and distinct types of social existence characterized by extreme limitations and dehumanization, resembling a state of living death. In this context, Mbembe says:

> Moreover, I have put forward the notion of necropolitics, or necropower, to account for the various ways in which, in our contemporary world, weapons are deployed in the interest of maximally destroying persons and creating deathworlds, that is, new and unique forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to living conditions that confer upon them the status of the living dead. (103)

Within these worlds, vast populations endure living conditions that deprive them of dignity, autonomy, and hope. The conditions include abject poverty, widespread violence, absence of essential rules, and perpetual instability. Mbembe employs the phrase "living dead" to define individuals who, although alive, experience profoundly repressive and dehumanizing circumstances that deprive their lives of the essential attributes that render life significant. The status of the living dead represents the deep psychological and physical agony endured by individuals in realms of death. This encompasses the deprivation of individual self-governance, enduring anxiety, and the unceasing occurrence of mortality and aggression.

In this research, the conceptual framework is grounded in Achille Mbembe's *Necropolitics*, which provides a critical lens for analyzing the dynamics of power, sovereignty, and the politics of death. Mbembe's theorization of necropolitics exposes the ways in which sovereign power exercises the prerogative to determine who may live and who must die, illuminating the insidious mechanisms through which certain populations are subjugated and dehumanized. This research will employ Mbembe's incisive critique as a foundational framework for interrogating the selected texts of Kevin Powers, scrutinizing the representations of power, violence, and resistance therein. Furthermore, to augment and enrich the analysis, this study will incorporate complementary concepts from secondary sources, such as Frantz Fanon's seminal work on decolonization and Michel Foucault's theorizations of resistance. Fanon's insights into the processes of decolonization and the reclamation of agency by subjugated populations will provide a valuable lens for examining the dynamics of resistance depicted in Powers's works. Additionally, Foucault's conceptualizations of power relations and the possibilities of resistance will offer a nuanced understanding of the complex interplay between dominant forces and counterhegemonic movements. By synthesizing Mbembe's groundbreaking ideas with the theoretical contributions of Fanon and Foucault, this research endeavors to construct a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the intricate interplay between power, resistance, and the necropolitical realities depicted in Powers's literary works.

1.7 Methodology

The present qualitative study examines the enduring impact of warfare and resistance in Kevin Powers's novels The Yellow Birds and A Shout in the Ruins through the theoretical framework of Achille Mbembe's Necropolitics. Mbembe's framework analyzes how those in power use necropolitical tools such

as wars, slavery, and the instrumentalization of people to control lives and dictate fate as a means of maintaining sovereignty. According to Mbembe, the state's sovereignty resides in its ability to decide who matters and who is disposable. In this context, the theory explores how those in power adopt specific tactics to subject individuals to their will and determine their lives and deaths, whether through systematic death (both physical and spiritual), wars, slavery, or nanoracism.

This study employs textual analysis to examine the representation of necropolitical forces and acts of resistance within the selected novels. Data are gathered and analyzed through close reading of dialogue, narrative descriptions, and character interactions. To identify strategies of resistance, the study applies discourse analysis to examine how language, silence, and counter-narratives function as tools of defiance against necropolitical structures. Additionally, thematic analysis is used to categorize and interpret patterns of resistance, whether through direct rebellion, subversive survival strategies, or the assertion of agency within oppressive conditions. By integrating these methodological approaches, the study aims to uncover the nuanced ways in which characters navigate and resist necropolitical power in Powers’s works. To further enrich the conceptual grounding, this research will draw from secondary sources such as Frantz Fanon's influential work on decolonization and Michel Foucault's theorizations of power and resistance. Fanon's insights illuminate the processes by which subjugated populations reclaim agency and dismantle oppressive colonial structures, offering an invaluable perspective on the acts of resistance depicted in Powers’s novels. Foucault's nuanced conceptions of power relations and possibilities for counterhegemonic movements provide a framework for analyzing the complex dynamics of domination and subversion manifested in the literary texts. By integrating these complementary theoretical lenses with Mbembe's work, this study aims to conduct a multilayered exploration of necropolitics, resistance of war as portrayed in Powers’s powerful narratives.

The study also follows the MLA style in the 9th edition in documentation and structure. The author uses the war fiction genre to criticize the legacies of war and resistance. Different types of data support this study. Both primary and secondary. Primary data consists of several stories and quotes from the two novels, *The Yellow Birds* and *A Shout in the Ruins*. Secondary data, which helps primary data analysis, is commonly obtained from other textbooks, journal papers, and relevant websites about the research. Concerning data processing and analysis, the study closely reads the novels to examine how these novels critique systems of power, violence, and control. It helps explore the dehumanizing effects of war and highlights acts of resistance against power dynamics. Thus, the study applies the work of the theorist Achille Mbembe *Necropolitics*.

1.8 Scope and Limitation

This study is grounded in Achille Mbembe's theoretical framework of Necropolitics (2019), which explores the intersection of sovereignty, violence, and the politics of death. It examines the representation of necropolitical systems of control and authority within contexts such as warfare, slavery, and systemic violence. Additionally, the study investigates the colonial and imperial legacies of violence and their persistence in contemporary warfare.

A key focus of this analysis is the resistance of subjected individuals against necropolitical forces that seek to strip them of their humanity and dictate their lives and deaths. Drawing on Michel Foucault’s concept of power and resistance, the study considers how individuals navigate structures of control, employing subversive strategies to challenge dominant necropolitical systems. Furthermore, the study engages with Frantz Fanon’s perspective on decolonial resistance, emphasizing the ways in which oppressed individuals reclaim agency through acts of defiance, self-assertion, and counter-narratives.

By employing character analysis, this study explores the complexities of human agency and resilience under regimes of control and dehumanization. The analysis is limited to selected passages from *The Yellow Birds* and *A Shout in the Ruins*, as these texts provide rich material for examining necropolitical forces—such as war and slavery—and the ways in which individuals resist them. The study is limited to the following texts:

The Yellow Birds by Kevin Powers (2012)

A Shout in the Ruins by Kevin Powers (2018)

1.9 Justification for Selection

The selected novels of this study are:

1. *The Yellow Birds*

2. *A Shout in the Ruins*

There are certain purposes behind selecting these texts. Both novels are highly preoccupied with the themes of conflict and resistance, rendering them exemplary texts for examining how literature depicts the human encounter with conflict. Every story explores the psychological, emotional, and physical consequences of war, providing distinct viewpoints on the effects of violence and the different types of resistance that arise in reaction.

The Yellow Birds offers a heartbreaking portrayal of the Iraq War, specifically emphasizing the experiences of soldiers who find themselves entangled in contemporary warfare's harsh and unrelenting aspects. The tale delves into combat's psychological and emotional impact, the challenges faced to stay alive, and the intricate nature of memory and remorse. These elements are crucial in comprehending the lasting effects of war.

A Shout in the Ruins provides a captivating examination of the consequences of war, specifically about how it influences the physical environment, societies, and personal identities. The emphasis on the remnants resulting from warfare, whether tangible or symbolic, enables an exploration of the consequences of war and the enduring defiance amid the devastation.

Secondly, the chosen novels are highly pertinent to examining necropolitics since both texts exemplify the mechanisms of authority over life and death, a fundamental focus of Achille Mbembe's theoretical framework of *Necropolitics*. These novels illustrate how various institutions of authority, such as the military, government, and society, wield power over determining who lives and dies. Additionally, they explore how individuals and communities resist this control. For instance, *The Yellow Birds* offers a striking depiction of the necropolitical elements of contemporary combat, in which soldiers serve as both agents and victims of state authority. This text explores the process of dehumanization that takes place during war and the methods through which the government exercises authority over the physical and mental well-being of soldiers. It strongly aligns with Mbembe's examination of necropolitics. At the same time, *A Shout in the Ruins* enhances the examination by specifically addressing the remains of conflict and their ongoing impact on the lives of survivors. The novel examines many locations characterized by violence, such as deserted structures, destroyed urban areas, and divided communities. This analysis provides a perspective on the continued influence of necropolitical power long after the end of direct hostilities.

Moreover, the chosen novels give a variety of viewpoints on warfare, encompassing distinct geographical and cultural aspects. This allows for a more comprehensive comprehension of how various wars and situations influence the experiences of violence and resistance. *The Yellow Birds*, for example, offers a Western viewpoint on the Iraq War, shedding light on how American soldiers

perceive and navigate their involvement in a faraway and intricate fight. It emphasizes the individual and group expenses of these conflicts, adding to conversations about the ethics and outcomes of military involvement. *A Shout in the Ruins*: In contrast, it may provide a viewpoint more deeply connected to a distinct cultural or historical background, possibly emphasizing the consequences of warfare in a non-western environment. This enables a comparative examination that considers the impact of diverse cultural narratives and historical circumstances on the depiction of conflict and resistance.

1.10 Research Layout

The study is divided into five chapters. The first lays out the thesis proposal. It consists of the background of the study, the problem statement highlighting the study gap, the research questions and objectives, the significance of the study, conceptual frameworks, methodology, the scope and limitations of the study, and the justification for data selection. The second chapter includes a review of existing literature on the topic, including studies, to highlight the gap in the current study. It includes studies about Mbembe's theory of *Necropolitics*. This chapter also contains previous studies on the selected texts. The third chapter examines Mbembe's ideas of necropolitics in Powers's *The Yellow Birds*, focusing on how the author represents war as a necropolitical power that determines human lives and death and how those in authority subject certain groups to the power of death to maintain their power. This chapter also examines how subjected individuals assert agency against necropolitical forces. The fourth chapter explores Powers's second novel*, A Shout in the Ruins,* in light of Mbembe's *Necropolitics*. This chapter also examines how those in power use necropolitical power, such as slavery and nano racism, to control those subjected people. This chapter also looks at how those marginalized people resist those oppressors. Finally, the last chapter presents the study's conclusions and offers the study's contributions and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER TWO
Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Examining previous studies facilitates the identification of gaps or unexplored areas within the present field of knowledge. This may underline the possible advantages of our research and justify its necessity. This establishes the foundation for the theoretical model and the selected data. By examining the methodologies employed by these scholars, researchers may enhance or suggest new interpretations of past research on the subject matter. The chapter is structured into distinct sections to facilitate systematically exploring the topic. The first section delves into studies that have applied Achille Mbembe's conceptual framework of Necropolitics (2019) as an analytical lens. The second section surveys studies that have been done on Kevin Powers's *TheYellow Birds*, while the third section addresses reviews that have been written on Powers's second novel, *A Shout in the Ruins*.

2.2 Previous studies of Mbembe's *Necropolitics*

In his theory of *Necropolitics* (2019), Achille Mbembe examines how sovereign power decides who lives and who dies, putting these choices in the context of systemic dominance, dehumanization, and disposability. This theoretical view has been used extensively in political theory, sociology, literature, and cultural studies. It gives us new ways to think about how power works in war, colonialism, slavery, and modern government. For this reason, Mbembe's theory is widely used as a theoretical framework across various fields, including literature, films, and sociopolitical studies. Among these studies is Ryan Michael's "Necropolitics and Contemporary Hungarian Literature and Cinema" (2009), which examines how necropolitics can be used in modern

Hungarian literature and film. Kehoe says his research shows examples of postcolonial "aesthetic acts" that upset, weaken, and finally overthrow the global systems Achille Mbembe discusses. So, Hungary's status as a postcolonial is talked about in the context of Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek's and David Chioni Moore's argument that postcolonial cultural analysis needs to be broadened to include Central and East Europe's exit from the Soviet sphere of influence. He also uses ideas from the field of comparative politics called "transitology" to look at the literature and society of the area. While looking at two modern Hungarian works, László Krasznahorkai's book War and War and Nimród Antal's film Kontroll, Kehoe looks at the ways that narratives are used to question necropower and build a politics of resistance.

Moreover, in his dissertation "Conditions of (Im)possibility: Necropolitics, Neoliberalism, and the Cultural Politics of Death in Contemporary Chicana/o Film and Literature" (2012), Edward A. Avila examines how modern Chicana and Chicano writing and film refocus our attention on both popular and critical depictions of political abandonment, denationalization, and social deprivation in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands during the late stages of capitalism. The visual and literary texts looked at in this study offer different ways of thinking about how neoliberal sociopolitical rationalities and the new necropolitical order of power continue to make it possible for abuse against women on each side of the U.S.-Mexico border. They connect previous research on revolutionary rationalities, necropolitics, and the creation of bare life and exceptionality.

Additionally, Anne Quéma's study, “Dionne Brand’s Ossuaries: Songs of Necropolitics” (2014), examines how Brand’s lengthy poem Ossuaries addresses issues of mortality, remembrance, and political violence via the framework of necropolitics. Quéma understands Brand's oeuvre as a critique of the circumstances that leave Black lives susceptible to mortality in both physical

and metaphorical contexts. The brand uses poetic language to portray "ossuaries"—locations of bones—as emblematic spaces of loss and resilience. Her art serves as a conduit for the intersection of historical pain, encompassing slavery and colonial violence, with contemporary battles against structural injustice and disposability. Quéma contextualizes Ossuaries within the broader discourse of biopolitics and necropolitics, specifically interacting with the theories of Achille Mbembe and Michel Foucault. This analysis elucidates how Brand's poetry compels readers to confront the historical narratives and power structures that perpetually categorize some groups as "killable" or expendable.

Furthermore, in his 2014 study, "Never Let Me Go, and the Necropolitics of Biomedical Engineering," Samuel Humy examines how Kazuo Ishiguro's book shows how biomedical progress can have grave political effects. Humy says that *Never Let Me Go* questions the morality of a society that judges people based on their usefulness in medical and technology systems. Through the cloned characters' controlled lives and untimely deaths, Ishiguro shows a necropolitical system in which some lives are designed to serve others and are then thrown away. Humy is mostly interested in how necropolitics works in this biological setting. Ishiguro's book is a comment on how technological progress can make people less human and more like things by showing clones whose bodies are routinely harvested to extend the lives of others. Humy says Ishiguro's writing makes people think about who benefits and suffers from medical progress. It makes people think about the moral limits of biological engineering and what it means to treat some lives as merely a means to an end.

Similarly, the study by Amrita Ghosh, " Discourses of Power and Violence in Emerging Kashmiri Literature in English: The Collaborator and Curfewed Night" (2018), explores how power, violence, and identity are dealt with in modern Kashmiri literature in the setting of the Kashmir conflict. Ghosh looks at how two well-known works, "The Collaborator" by Mirza Waheed and

"Curfewed Night" by Basharat Peer, show what it is like for Kashmiris to live through long-lasting political conflict. Ghosh uses Mbembe's necropolitics and Foucault's ideas about power to examine how the state's role in daily life is a force that both changes and shapes Kashmiri's identity. These works of literature expose how strong and determined the people of Kashmir are. Characters fight back differently by directly opposing or fighting the system from within by holding on to their culture and personal identities. Ghosh says these stories are a kind of "subaltern history" because they keep memories alive and show points of view that differ from the official history of the Kashmir War.

In addition, in (2018) Sarah Arens conducted a study titled "Narrating the (Post)Nation? Aspects of the Local and the Global in Francophone Congolese Writing ". She studies how national identity, postcolonialism, and globalisation are dealt with in Sony Labou Tansi's *The Seven Solitudes of Lorsa Lopez* (1985) and Pie Tshibanda's novel *A Black Fool in the Country of the White* (1999). Using Achille Mbembe's ideas of necropolitics and the grotesque, this study looks at how the dead and dying bodies in these two books are used in different ways to create localities and globalities. This article argues that the two novels' depictions of geographical space are central to their ideas of the postcolonial nation they present. They are still interested in the spatial politics of the former colonizer and the failed patriotic projects after the end of formal European colonialism, which shows that they want us to think about post-nationalism in a more complex way than is usually thought in existing scholarship.

Taïeb Berrada's study, "Migrant Necropolitics at the Table: "Civilized Cannibalism" in Mahi Binebine's Cannibals" (2019) examines how necropolitics influences the experiences of migrant characters in Binebine's novel. Berrada utilizes the notion of "civilized cannibalism" to attack the dehumanization and exploitation of migrants in a context where survival transforms into a negotiation and fight. This cannibalism is figurative, indicating how migrants

are exploited by social and political structures that swallow their work and render them expendable. In Cannibals, Binebine depicts a distressing narrative in which migrants endure severe exclusion and misery, situating the story within a necropolitical framework. Berrada analyzes Binebine's portrayal of the power dynamics between migrants and the societies that exploit and reject them. The notion of "civilized cannibalism" serves as a potent metaphor for societal structures that deem migrant lives expendable.

Furthermore, in Mayte Cantero-Sánchez's "On Racism and the Impossibility of Mourning: A Critical Reading of Claudia Rankine’s Citizen: An American Lyric"(2019), Sánchez's looks at how Achille Mbembe's idea of necropolitics— the power to choose who lives and who dies—affects the racial relationships in Rankine's work. Cantero-Sánchez says that "Citizen" shows how Black lives are constantly devalued in American society, which prevents people of color from mourning the deaths of bodies that have been subjected to institutional violence and exclusion. Cantero-Sánchez looks at how Rankine shows Black people living in necropolitical situations, where they face not only overt forms of violence but also microaggressions and social erasure that make their already precarious position in society even worse. The text of "Citizen" shows how Black people who have been victims of state violence and social failure are dehumanized and cannot mourn with honor. Rankine's poetry shows that necropolitical forces include more than just violent acts; they also include daily experiences of racial trauma and erasure that are harder to spot. Cantero-Sánchez says that necropolitics shows up in Rankine's work not only in life-or-death situations but also in the way that Black identity and humanity are constantly weakened by the way people act and think.

In her thesis, "Necropolitical Resistance in Early Modern Drama: Violence and Death as Agentive Acts in Kyd's The Spanish Tragedy" (2020), Madison Jansen tackles necropolitics in Thomas Kyd's famous revenge play.

Jansen uses Achille Mbembe's idea of necropolitics to look at how death and violence are shown in *The Spanish Tragedy* as damaging forces and as ways of taking control and fighting against unfair systems. According to Jansen's analysis, *The Spanish Tragedy* uses death as a political tool to question sovereign power and social hierarchies. This allows the characters to express their agency when they are not given traditional power. In particular, the main character, Hieronimo's search for revenge, is looked at through necropolitics. He regains control over a broken justice system by using violence and planning his death as a protest. This use of necropolitics is similar to the fight against authoritarian systems in the early modern era. It suggests that death in the play is not just an end but a conscious act of resistance. Jansen's thesis also says that *The Spanish Tragedy* deals with themes of being left out of society and not having any power by showing people whose only way of choosing for themselves is to face or use death in a way that suits them.

Moreover, “Colonial Articulations: Race, Violence, and Coloniality in Kafka's 'Penal Colony” (2020) by Marshall Pierce examines Franz Kafka's short story in terms of colonial and racial power relations. Pierce argues about Kafka's fictional prison colony's colonial setting, which is often ignored. He says that the story does more than talk about oppression in general. Instead, he sees the colony as a place that is shaped by colonial and racialized structures that decide who is violent and how power is used. Pierce uses the ideas of Frantz Fanon and Achille Mbembe to argue that the violent "apparatus" in the story is a representation of how colonial systems dehumanize and control racialized people. Pierce says that Kafka's writing criticizes colonial violence and how power creates racial identities and maintains dominance from this point of view. This reading sheds light on Kafka's allegory's racial and historical specifics, showing how it can be used to discuss colonial violence and necropolitics today.

Rosana Hunt conducted an article in the same year titled "Necropolitics in the Andes: Reading the Senderista as Sovereign Subject or as Subject of Sovereignty in Two Peruvian Novels" (2020). She looks into how necropolitics affects how the Peruvian armed conflict is shown, mainly through the Shining Path member Senderista. Hunt looks at how these books show the Senderista as either violently exercising their sovereign power or being controlled by the government through necropolitical means. This shows the dual nature of power and suffering in conflict zones. Hunt argues how the Senderista represents necropolitics as both a person who brings death and someone who is put in harm's way by the government. In this way, she shows how the books portray the Peruvian government and the Senderista forces as rival powers that have power over life and death. The books make it hard to tell the difference between an oppressor and an oppressed person by making the Senderista a vague character who can act violently but can also be repressed by the government. This shows how necropolitics is a big part of war and social unrest.

Toqeer Ahmed's article "Precarious Lives Precarious Geographies: Representation of Biopolitics, Violence, and Necropolitics in Contemporary Pakistani Anglophone Fiction"(2021) examines how Pakistani writers write about violence, biopolitics, and necropolitics in the tribal areas that border Afghanistan. Ahmed looks at two stories, *The Wandering Falcon* by Jamil Ahmad and *The Shadow of the Crescent Moon* by Fatima Bhutto, to see how ongoing conflicts, like drone strikes and insurgencies, affect people's lives. Ahmed examines how the works of Foucault, Mbembe, and Agamben show changes from traditional government through community organizations like the Jirga to violent actions caused by foreign invasions and regional conflicts. He claims that tribal societies used to keep order on their own, but the "War on Terror" after 9/11 has created new areas of sovereignty that put people at risk of death and danger from outside military activities. This piece talks about how literature can be used to look at Pakistan's social and political problems

critically. This makes Pakistan an interesting subject to study for anyone interested in how violence and biopolitics are seen in South Asia.

Kakar et al., in their article titled "War as Remedy or Poison’: Reading the Blind Man's Garden and the Kite Runner with a Critical Lens of Mbembe’s Necropolitics" (2021), explore war through the lens of Mbembe's necropolitics to see how it can be both a cure and a poison. The research also emphasizes the depiction of death worlds via the radicalism of the Taliban. The American assertion that their intervention in Afghanistan organized the populace, safeguarded sovereignty, and established world order has been discredited. Evidence from both works illustrates that America employed war as a mechanism for self-defense, reinforcing its belief that war served as a solution for American existence and global peace. The American defeat is unequivocally declared in its withdrawal from Afghanistan.

José M. Yebra and Alfonso Revilla's article "Necropolitics in Sinan Antoon The Corpse Washer" (2022) examines the relationship between life, death, and politics in Iraq, focusing on how the protagonist, Jawad, fulfills his role as a corpse washer amid persistent violence and suffering. This study integrates a necropolitical analysis with literary analysis to explore how Antoon illustrates the omnipresent nature of death in conflict zones, highlighting the state's authority over life and death. In *The Corpse Washer*, necropolitics manifests in Jawad’s conflict with his inherited duty of washing the bodies of the departed in war-torn Iraq. Yebra and Revilla examine how this obligation compels Jawad to confront personal suffering and the communal sorrow inflicted by political violence, demonstrating the impact of governmental policies and warfare on individuals' perceptions of life, death, and dignity. The essay presumably emphasizes Antoon's narrative as a potent indictment of governmental and militarised entities that manipulate and diminish human lives

during crises, illustrating how necropolitics influences societal frameworks and individual identities and destinies.

In his paper titled "Political Violence and Necropolitics in Omar Shahid Hamid’s The Prisoner "(2022), Toqeer Ahmed explores how Omar Shahid Hamid's debut novel, *The Prisoner* (2013), depicts the violence and necropolitical events in the handling of life and death in Karachi, the largest metropolis in Pakistan. Using Mbembe's *Necropolitics*, the study demonstrates that the sovereign uses death and violence as instruments to govern and control a populace. The growth of the United Front has led to increased political violence in the city. As demonstrated by Hamid in the novel, the United Front's power in the story validates Mbembe's (2019) claim that private organizations can exercise the right to kill and that exceptional spaces are no longer solely the purview of the military or the governmentalized state.

In (2024), Abraham Enefu conducted a study titled "Necropolitics in Francophone African Novel: Examining Power and Resistance in Tansi's La Vie Et Demie". He examines the issue of necropolitics and its portrayal of death in postcolonial Francophone African literature, emphasizing power relations and resistance as illustrated in Tansi's *La vie et demie*(1979). This study elucidates the diverse manifestations of necropolitics in postcolonial society by examining this work. It examines how the subjugated characters (Martial, Chaïdana, and the populace) maneuver through the interplay of power and the demise of the providential guide and his estate agents while illuminating acts of defiance that contest necropolitical authority. Tansi's *La vie et demie* powerfully illustrates the brutal essence of the Providential Guide, an authoritarian ruler akin to former African tyrants, and his ruthless treatment of Martial, the opposition leader. This results in social demise and psychological suffering.

The 2024 book *Postcolonial Theory and Crisis* by Paulo de Medeiros and Sandra Ponzanesi discusses necropolitics in the context of postcolonial crises. It

looks at how power structures rooted in colonial histories control life and death. The collection looks at how problems, whether they are environmental, social, or economic, affect disadvantaged groups more than others, making their lives seem like they do not matter. In this context, necropolitics is an important way to look at how states deal with people as "surplus" or "disposable," these terms are often connected to ethnicity, race, or national identities. The book shows through different case studies how the effects of colonialism are still felt today, with global and state powers controlling resources, healthcare, and safety, putting minority or postcolonial groups at risk.

Rajaa Moini's thesis "Ghosts at the Threshold: Disembodied Memory and Mourning in Post-War Violent Death in Contemporary Middle Eastern and South Asian Literatures" (2024) looks at how Middle Eastern and South Asian literature remembers and mourns violent deaths and trauma after the war. Moini uses *Necropolitics* to look at how writers in these areas write about the aftermath of violent battles, focusing on "disembodied memory"—memories that are not tied to a clear or stable story of past violence. The study says that literature helps people who are still grieving and do not feel like they can talk about their feelings by focusing on "ghostly" or ambiguous presences. Moini considers the idea of "thresholds" as symbolic places where the living and the dead meet, giving us new ways to think about memory, loss, and identity. She sees these lines as places where culture and identity break down, and literature shows how violence affects people and groups for a long time. This method not only brings up themes of loss and strength but also asks how these societies deal with memories that are broken up.

In her article "The Necropolitics In Through The Arc Of The Rainforest By Karen Tei Yamashita1" (2024), Mariana da Silva Santos argues that Karen Tei Yamashita's portrayal of necropolitics forces readers to face the terrible human and environmental costs of global capitalism. Santos talks about how

Yamashita's story shows how disposable disadvantaged groups and nature are, showing how constant corporate exploitation destroys spaces for people and nature. Santos concludes that "Through the Arc of the Rainforest" does more than show how bad necropolitical power is; it also asks us to rethink what is important in life. Yamashita shows how modern capitalist and neocolonial regimes keep destroying lives by writing about individuals and groups whose lives are controlled, pushed to the edges, or ended by forces that want to take advantage of others. Santos's last words make it sound like the book is a call to action and awareness, asking readers to think about long-term solutions that respect both human lives and the natural world so that the violence and disposable nature of necropolitical structures do not control the future.

2.3 Previous Studies on *The Yellow Birds*

The Yellow Birds receives widespread acclaim from prominent newspapers. The New York Times Book Review regards this novel as concise and impactful, comparable to a footlocker filled with ammunition. Kevin Powers, the author, profoundly reflects on humanity's vulnerability and the harsh realities of war. The review encourages readers to pay close attention and engage with the novel's message(Flood 2012). However, renowned authors also hold this novel in high regard. Philip Caputo, the author of *A Rumor of War*(1980), states that Powers's literary abilities vividly capture the emotional intensity of Americans' experiences in Iraq. War has been a recurring theme in literature since the Iliad. Exceptional writings surpass the limitations of their era and conditions to articulate timeless and authentic insights about the conflict itself. *The Yellow Birds* can be classified into that category (Burnside 2012).

Benjamin Percy, the author of *The Dead Lands* and *Red Moon*, highly praises *The Yellow Birds*, stating that every sentence is remarkable, with words that gleam and resonate like discarded bullet casings. Kevin Powers, a former Army machine gunner, has authored a highly acclaimed book that has the

potential to be the quintessential novel about Iraq (Percy 2014). Daniel Woodrell, the author of *The Winter's Bone*(2010), also commends the musicality of Kevin Powers's writing style. Woodrell states that Powers has produced an outstanding novel about the Iraq war, characterized by its polished, evocative, and vivid prose. The narrative is lyrical and visually descriptive, with a confident and rhythmic flow. Woodrell considers this story relevant not only for the present but also for the future (Kidd 2012). The journalist William Leith highly praises this dramatic, terrible, and wonderful war story. Kevin Powers, a veteran of the Iraq war, vividly portrays the experience of murdering and coming close to death with a profound sense of negative joy (Marzillier 2013).

In addition to receiving accolades from newspapers, writers, and interviews, scholarly research on *The Yellow Birds* has steadily risen. Researchers have made extensive endeavors to investigate the new. They conducted investigations into many issues from multiple angles. According to Amelia Precup (2017), *The Yellow Birds'* complex examination of memory is the main topic of Rome. She praises the investigation of memory that covers a wide range of topics, including self-construction techniques, personal history narratives, reenactment, and eidetic representations. She also discusses modern theoretical methods for the mechanisms and potentialities of memory. *The Yellow Birds* highlights the significance of actively engaging with memory content and revisiting it to address the issue of forgetting humanity. It also sheds light on John Bartle's suffering following the loss of his friend during the war and his subsequent return to his homeland. *The Yellow Birds* have been thoroughly examined from various angles in China. For the first time, this novel was briefly introduced by Wang Ai Juan (Wang 2014). She looks at three key imageries from the novel—dust, snow, and ghost—to examine the imaginative components from the ―empathy aspect‖ in light of the author's involvement in the Iraq War. In her paper, she explains three typical images. However, she ignores the other most significant images that Powers disclosed in the book,

including the river, the hyacinth flower, the yellow birds, Murphy's photograph, and the casualty feeder card.

Daniel O'Gorman (2015) discusses three modern books set in England that deal with the current Iraq war: Kevin Powers's (2012) *The Yellow Birds*, Don De Lillo's (2010) *Point Omega*, and Hari Kunzru's (2011) *Gods without Men*. He examines *The Yellow Birds* through the lens of Derek Gregory's "imaginative geographies." Furthermore, he contends that the three novels in question employ the geographically situated in a manner that highlights its topological inconsistency—that is, the erratic ascription of meaning or identity—to a site via political discourse and culture. Furthermore, he contends that in the context of Western media representations of loss, the novels help to rehabilitate what Judith Butler has called a dehumanizing "derealization of loss" or "insensitivity to human sufferance and death (O'Gorman 2015).

In her thesis "Imagining the Perpetrator in Iraq War Fiction: Evan Wright's Generation Kill and Kevin Powers's *The Yellow Birds*" (2016), Karen De Loof focuses on modern trauma studies and investigates the relationship between trauma studies and perpetrator fiction, specifically concentrating on fiction about the Iraq War. The two books she talks about are *The Yellow Birds* by Kevin Powers and *Generation Kill* by Evan Wright. Both of these Iraq War novels authors highlight the role that overwhelming warfare plays and the psychological states of the individual soldiers. Kevin Powers assumes the role of the experienced individual, translating his personal experiences and challenges from direct conflict. She talks about how these books provide a complete picture of the troops' experiences in the Iraq War from the perspective of trauma studies. *The Yellow Birds* places a greater emphasis on the consequences of trauma as the reader accompanies Private Bartle on his road to recovery. The perpetrator's perspective was also investigated in greater detail to defend the crimes committed (De Loof 1).

The following year, a discussion of the novel *The Yellow Birds*' portrayal of grieving by American scholar Joelle Mann (2016). The author highlights that *The Yellow Birds* portrays a soldier who falls prey to the brutality of a never-ending conflict and the political and social dishonesty that characterizes modern American war politics. Consequently, *The Yellow Birds* presents a fragmented narrative that emphasizes the grief of a soldier as well as the national grief that accompanies America's involvement in the War on Terror. Additionally, Joelle Mann concentrates on how the book depicts grief through psychological cartography that investigates how grief blurs boundaries and Bartle's memories map a nonlinear narrative that renders textual as the trauma experience. He concludes that *The Yellow Birds* is not just about Bartle's grief but also about the grief of a society that grows accustomed to ignoring the soldier's grief (Mann 2016).

German- scholar Walter (2017) cites Vergil's *The Aeneid* and *The Yellow Birds* as two modern books that interact with the war fiction genre. In particular, Walter compares and contrasts these two works admirably while analyzing *The Yellow Birds* from various angles, including similar stories, the feelings of war, the senses and tradition, and memories-related imagery. Furthermore, it is evident that Walter observed and examined the imagery, customs, and memories, mentioning the Hyacinth Flower. However, he overlooked the key imagery Kevin Powers chose for his book, including the river, the yellow ribbon, the snow, the ghost, and the river.

In addition, Zeng Yan-Yu discusses three war books in her article: "Ben Fountain's "Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk," Kevin Powers's "*The Yellow Birds*," and Phil Klay's "Redeployment." She contended that these three war books exposed the power dynamics and underlying ideology present in the global scene. Based on her analysis, she asserts that these novels bring attention to the unequal power dynamics between nations, reveal the war landscape as a form of consumption, and emphasize the influence of broader political and

economic processes such as solipsism, ethnocentrism, and American ignorance of the outside world (Yanyu 2017).

Zainalabdeen A. Al Shnian Al-Janabi discusses the novel's symbolism in his article “Critique of the Cruelty of the Iraq War: The Symbolism in Kevin Powers’s *The Yellow Birds*” (2019). The psychological struggle that the troops experience is made clear by the symbolism employed in *The Yellow Birds*. AL-Janabi discusses that the book demonstrates the detrimental psychological effects that such desensitization to violence has on soldiers' psyches as they attempt to come to terms with the horrifying deeds they have both watched and taken part in. Powers contends that cruelty and the unpredictable nature of death are the true hallmarks of war rather than its glory or justice. Powers’s view of the war as an uncontrollable force is highlighted by his choice to discuss it in a neutral tone, avoiding any mention of political strife or animosity toward the adversary. This explanation also helps strip the war of all pretence of grandeur or dignity (AL-Janabi 46).

In his article "Survival Psychology in Kevin Powers’s *The Yellow Birds*” (2020), Alosman also delves into the survival psychology that shapes the actions of both Private John Bartle and Private Daniel Murphy, the book's two central protagonists, as well as a few supporting roles. The pre-impact, impact, and post-impact phases—the three main impact periods in survival psychology—are used to analyze the book. Years after leaving the army, Bartle recovers psychologically from his war experience, but Murphy perishes in the depths of battle after losing all of his faculties. Even for those who physically endure these threats, there is no assurance of psychological survival. Those who have such horrific death experiences may be more susceptible to psychological effects like psychosis. According to Alosman, examining Powers’s book through the lens of survival psychology allows us to understand character behavior in the setting of conflict. Since the novel's author is a war veteran, we may also understand the psychological effects of being in combat simultaneously. It seems that more

people are impacted by artificial disasters like wars than by natural ones. The psychological toll that combat takes can be extensive. They occasionally outlast battle and outweigh their victims in terms of numbers (Alosman 139 -147).

Gerald Davison's trauma theories, published in 2006, are the basis for Faizal Yusuf Satriawan and Mundi Rahaya's examination of the main character's trauma in a PTSD research based on the same novel, *The Yellow Birds*. The authors attribute John Bartle's PTSD to the death and destruction he experienced during the Iraq War. The symptoms they discuss include "re-experiencing" when he remembers the events after returning from war and "avoidance," which is the same as "denial" or "undoing." The research is reliant on the PTSD research conducted by psychologist Gerald Davison. It designates Murphy's passing as the primary trauma cause. However, it does not discuss other psychoanalytic ideas or recount the pre-war situation, nor does it discuss the PTSD of war on other characters rather than the main character (Satriawan & Rahaya 9).

Raihanah, in her article "Post-Heroic Portrayal of War in Kevin Powers's *The Yellow Bird*" (2022), depicts the war's distorted face in the context of a post-heroic world that is beginning to emerge. Instead of courage and gallantry, post-heroism denotes the collapse of the heroic ethos in the setting of war, leaving warriors to wonder what the real cost of sacrificing on the battlefield is. Powers represents the victims of the continuing war on Iraq by placing Americans and Iraqis under the same group, "us," by the narration of death. Those who survived the Iraq War feel guilty and regretful after reading Powers's post-heroic portrayal of the conflict (Raihanah 189).

2.4 Previous Studies on *A Shout in the Ruins*

Due to the lack of electronic studies on *A Shout in the Ruins*, this section will mostly focus on reviews. In his review "Slavery's Repercussions Unspool in a Dark Southern Tale: A Shout in the Ruins," Hillary Jordan denotes that the novel is a message of the contentious and divided current state of American

politics when a large number of people choose to consciously ignore the terrible consequences of the past that continue to plague the present. Powers describes the heinous crimes with grace, moderation, and a welcome lack of emotion. Even the most terrible parts of the book have a sinister beauty thanks to his minimalist, methodical lines, which nevertheless give the characters' struggles emotional weight and immediateness. Violence strikes all of them, and the effects cascade down the generations and among them. The moral of the narrative is crystal clear: We are all more closely related than we think, and the cruelty we inflict on others hurts our victims and us (Jordan 2018).

Michael Schaub's review “A Shout In The Ruins' Probes: The Lasting Infections Of War And Slavery", considers the novel a brutal examination of the devastation caused by war and how violence can permanently alter a country. Of course, it is practically hard to write about slavery and war without including violent moments, and Powers does not hold back when describing atrocious acts of brutality. Although the book can be challenging to read, nothing gruesome or dramatic happens; instead, the inhumanity is portrayed honestly and matter-of-factly, which only heightens the horror. According to Schaub, anyone who has read *The Yellow Birds* will not be surprised to learn that Powers is an amazing writer (Schaub).

In his “A Shout in the Ruins by Kevin Powers review – an American Civil War epic,” Andrew Motion focuses on the characters and how Powers portrays inhumanity. Some of his characters do not have enough time to solidify in our minds, and the drama's plot points come across as rushed or hazy. When Powers mulls over images of inhumanity and considers the lessons they impart, he is at his most brilliant. When Powers ponders scenes of inhumanity, examines issues of self-determination in a crisis, and analyzes the lessons they impart about the importance of lovingkindness, he is at his best. Despite the risks of narrative overload, these themes are powerfully evident in the section of the story during the American Civil War because it is vividly conceived and

resonates with us. We feel the passages about George, even if they are closely related to them and entirely honourable in goal (Motion).

In conclusion, Despite the extensive examination of Kevin Powers's novels from various perspectives, such as trauma, war symbolism, memory, and survival psychology, these analyses have neglected a postcolonial interpretation informed by Achille Mbembe's concept of necropolitics. Necropolitics, emphasizing the management of life and death by authority, provides an important framework for examining the depiction of violence, disposability, and resistance in Powers's narratives. This perspective enables the discovery of new perspectives into the fundamental control structures and dehumanization illustrated in his works, which tackles a notable gap in the present study.

CHAPTER THREE

Necropolitical Landscapes: Kevin Powers's *The Yellow Birds* and the Control of Life and Death

"THE WAR tried to kill us in the spring" (*The Yellow Birds* 3)

3.1 Introduction

Power over life and death remains a key component of human lives and influences societies and cultures. It has been the topic of philosophers´ discourses, ethical considerations, and literary works, revealing complex and thought-provoking aspects of death, control, and existence. The ability to decide the outcomes of people and cultures is significant not only in societal formations but throughout history and geography. Ideas like biopower, necropolitics, and bioethics become the concepts scholars, thinkers, and artists use to consider ethical, societal, and existential aspects of governments' control over life and death. In literature, the issue of life and death is depicted in different epochs and genres, among mythological and historical tales, contemporary and futuristic novels, and speculative fiction, as the purpose of the literary work is to discover the secrets of life and reveal the costs of mastering the right to life and death.

Many writers worldwide tackle the issue of life and death, the deconstructive effects of war, and necropolitical powers in their literary works; among those writers was the American writer Kevin Powers, who was born and raised in Richmond. He joined the US Army when he was twenty-one years old. He finished high school at James River. Later, from February 2004 to March 2005, he worked as a machine gunner in Mosul and Tal Afar, Iraq. Powers's first novel*, The Yellow Birds,* based on his own experience, made him an official American fiction writer. Through this book, he discusses his experience as a machine gunner in the US Army, where he held an engineer command position. Powers's *The Yellow Birds* provides a powerful representation of the destructive

effects of war and illustrates its potential effects on people and communities. This is because *The Yellow Birds* portrays ordinary soldiers not only as heroes who came to save the Iraqi people from a tyrant and introduce democracy on a golden dish but also as tortured individuals, torn between death and survival, and not solely focusing on the sadness and regret of modern American soldiers serving in the Iraq war. Furthermore, Powers avoids focusing on the debate regarding the justification of the Iraq war. He frequently asserts in interviews that he wrote his work as a response to questions concerning the events that happened during the war (AL Janabi 1).

Powers's *The Yellow Birds* follows John Bartle, a 21-year-old soldier, and Private Daniel Murphy (Murph), who serve under Sergeant Sterling. It highlights war's physical and psychological impact and the importance of balancing individual and collective survival. Bartle comforts Murph, who becomes distant and often disappears. He seeks help from Sterling, who predicts Murph will die due to distracted thinking. Murph rebels against the brutal unpredictability of war and chooses to form memories in his mind. Bartle and Sterling find Murph's lifeless body at the bottom of a minaret, tortured to death. Bartle feels sick and sorry for Murph's mother, who will have to see her son's body destroyed, so they decide to throw Murph's body in the river, pretending not to find it.

After returning to the United States, Bartle realizes his war experience is cruel and at odds with civilian attitudes. He is accused of being responsible for Murph's death and learns that Sterling committed suicide. Bartle is sent to prison for Murph's death, finding peace in the absence of social interactions. Eventually, after leaving prison, Bartle moves into an isolated cabin, finding peace in the absence of guilt and pain. The Iraq war, which started in 2003, stands as one of the worst wars in American history. This war deeply affected American soldiers who served in the war zone. Those veterans are exposed to a high-risk environment. As a result, many soldiers suffer from severe physical

and psychological tolls, compounded by social, economic, and familial challenges. In his campaign for the US 2016 elections, Bernie Sanders said, “Education is too expensive? The Iraq War was pretty damn expensive” (“Campaign rhetoric”).

In Powers’s novel, the author represents the brutality and ruthless face of war and its harsh consequences on American soldiers. Through the eyes of the protagonist, Private John Bartle, Powers provides a powerful exploration of the consequences of the Iraq war on those veterans. The reader views how the Iraq War veteran slowly loses faith by watching Bartle's life for a long time. As the novel shows, soldiers are often helpless in battle because what happens depends on the circumstances and not what they do (De Loof 33).

Meanwhile, at the center of Powers’s vision are dystopian visions of necropolitical worlds in which the domination of life and death forms the core of existence. In this dark and complex fiction, Powers examines the relationships between this society’s protagonists and reveals how the ability to decide when people live and die becomes a way of maintaining dominance. In this assertion, death is ever present in *The Yellow Birds*, though its definition is as encompassing as the war. It is the state of existence surrounded by pain, death, and an overwhelming feeling that, at any moment, life might be snuffed out. Using the experiences of the protagonist and other novel characters, Powers shows how people try to find meaning in the theme of war to end wars and the animating presence of death even in conflict.

As Powers traverses the strong current constituted by violence and power, examining Powers’s *The Yellow Birds* in light of Achille Mbembe's theory of *Necropolitics* (2019) is vital. Mbembe's concept of necropolitics provides a profound framework to analyze the novel and to show the relationship between power and death, especially in the context of war and violence. According to

Mbembe, Necropolitics refers to how sovereign power "dictates who can live and who must die" (Mbembe 81).

This concept challenges traditional notions of sovereignty by focusing on the capacity to dictate the conditions under which individuals are allowed to exist or condemned to die. In this respect, Powers's *The Yellow Birds* depicts the brutal realities of the Iraq war through the experiences of soldiers whose lives are controlled by those in power. By applying Mbembe's concept of necropolitics, this study will explore how the novel reveals the dehumanizing aspects of the war on those soldiers who are reduced to a state of living death and left to die in their civil lives socially. This study uses the concept of necropolitics to uncover the harsh effects of war on human conditions. Also to show how those in power suppress individuals and use them as instruments to achieve their goals, even at the cost of soldiers' lives.

In *The Yellow Birds*, the characters are entrapped in cycles of forces to kill or be killed, to remain sane or go insane, and to remain moral or lose morality altogether. The study of necropolitics exposes how some individuals gain control over life and death, thus establishing domination, terror, and perpetuity of violence in territories of exception. By exploring the highly sensitive themes of necropolitical spaces as depicted in the novel, Powers wants to establish how the novel presents the unpalatable facet of war, trauma, as well as the contest for the right to live in territories that are defined by the sovereignty of power in the deployment of life and death.

3.2 The Iraq War 2003 as a Necroplolitical Power

Like many postcolonial conflicts, the Iraq war is justified using ideological rhetoric, such as the fight against terrorism or the spread of democracy. This reflects the colonial justification where civilizing missions masked exploitation and violence. This section will examine how war represents a tool of sovereign power to control life and death, particularly in the context of

post-colonialism. Also, it shows how the Iraq war 2003, which is an extension of colonial legacies, affects not only the colonized (Iraqis) but the colonizers (American soldiers)as well; they become both enforcers and victims of the system.

3.2.1 Iraqi People and War

Kevin Powers presents the suffering of the Iraqi people and the dehumanizing effects of war as a necropolitical toll upon them, as narrated by Bartle. In a scene, Bartle describes the aftermath of fighting in the Iraqi town of Al Tafar. He observes that the joy of Iraqi people is extinguished, and their bodies are spread in the alleys, including those killed by US troops. Their bodies were scattered about from the past four days of fighting in the open space between our positions and the rest of Al Tafar. They lay in the dust, broken, shattered, bent, their white shifts went dark with blood" (Powers, *The Yellow Birds* 5). Bartle reflects on how the dead bodies of the Iraqi civilians are left in an open space after four days of fighting. They suffer under the violence of war; they are not only lose their lives but are reduced to something meaningless or, as Mbembe asserts, they are "disposable" (96) in the eyes of those in power; they have no concern for the value of people, they are concern only in the way in which they control others.

The destructive effects of war seem to transcend human suffering and extend to the environment and natural world. The totality of war's destruction is clearly shown in the novel; in a scene, Kevin Powers describes the picturesque nature of Iraq before it turns its orchards into fires. His depiction of Al Tafar as a ghost town represents a microscopic sample of Iraq during the occupation. Nothing can be heard except "the noise of rockets, machine guns, and helicopters"(Powers, *The Yellow Birds* 8) flying close to buildings in which defenceless civilians are living. The presence of helicopters and the sound of machine guns all reflect how sovereign power asserts its control through death

and violence. The portrayal of Al Tafar as a place in which Iraqi people live in constant fear mirrors Mbembe's criticism of the harsh realities of living under late modern occupation, in which people experience a permanent condition of "being in pain" (102).

In the same vein, the novel shows the dual devastation of war and how it transforms spaces that once were meant for living into uninhabitable runs. Bartle describes this in a scene where they storm a building searching for terrorists. However, when they came inside this building, they did not find anyone. The building was empty…chairs had been turned over in some of the rooms, and the glass of the windows had been shot out..we yelled out sharply for the people who were not there" (Powers, *The Yellow Birds* 8). The emptiness of the building refers to the displacement of people who flee the horrors of war, and the chairs' turning over and the glass shot out give a vivid image of how the community places had been violated. Also, the soldiers yelling at the people not there reflects the wiping off of human presence. This highlights how war transforms families' places into ghostly places.

Furthermore, Keven Powers describes the beautiful nature of Iraq before the war destroys everything. This is shown in the novel as Malik, the platoon's translator, talks with Bartle and Murphy about his old neighbourhood: this is my neighbourhood…Mrs Al-sharifi used to plant her hyacinth in this field"…she was this crazy widow.. the neighbourhood women were so jealous of those flowers..he paused then. They were burned up in the battle last fall..she did not try to replant them this year" (Powers, *The Yellow Birds* 10). Malik's recollections of his neighbourhood, with its distinctive life, contrast sharply with the current reality; the transformation of this land, once filled with beauty, into a battlefield represents the necropolitical power of war that reconfigures living spaces into zones of death as suggested by Mbembe.

Moreover, Bartle's description of the green grasses that waved in the breeze and how they are burned by the fire of war symbolizes the destructive nature of war that demolishes the natural environment. The fields that once prospered with life, symbolized by the imagery of hyacinths and green grasses, are now reduced to scorched wastelands. He also refers to the loss of human life and Iraqi people that once were a vibrant festival of people on the market street with its long white shifts and loud voices, which contrasts with the aftermath of war, where people either die or flee in sluggish caravans. This imagery highlights how war fractures communities and displaces entire populations. War not only displaces people but also dehumanizes them; they are "speckled lines of color in the dark". This line refers to how those individuals are stripped of their identities and agency. They did not raise their eyes in "the curfewed hours" which emphasizes their dehumanization and submission under the oppressive gaze of war and occupation (Powers, *The Yellow Birds* 14-15).

Bartle reflects on the devastating nature of war and how it turns Al-Tafar city into ashes. His description of the "thick black smoke" curling upward the town reflects the destruction of lives. The fire refers to the consumption of homes and families, leaving Al Tafar displaced, injured, or dead. Bartle's phrase of "a hundred fires" suggests that the destructive effects of war are widespread and wipe off the vibrancy of the community. War's fires consume everything in the town, turning it ash and ruin. It affects not only humans but also the natural environment. The burning town and the rising smoke suggest environmental degradation on a large scale. This image suggests that the Iraqi people are victims who are forced to endure the loss of their towns and the cultural fabric that connects them (Powers, *The Yellow Birds* 18).

The futility of war as a necropolitical power and its cyclical nature of violence is evident in the novel. Bartle's repeated reflection on the environmental destruction of war and how it causes "wounds in the earth" (Powers, *The Yellow Birds* 19) evokes an image of how the violence of war scars

the land. The earth is described as if it was a living entity. The wounds on the earth symbolize how war imposes death not only on people but also on the physical world. War as a necropolitical tool transforms life into zones of death and destruction, which stratifies Mbembe's idea of death –worlds in which survival and mortality are in constant tension (Mbembe 88).

The Iraqis' devaluation under the necropolitical regime of American occupation is also reflected in the novel. Bartle describes an older man and woman in a car who are killed at a checkpoint. However, their car is marked with two white flags, a universal symbol of surrender and peace.

> Two large white sheets billowed from its rear windows. I looked through my scope and saw an older man behind the wheel and an older woman in the back passenger seat. Sterling laughed. Come on, motherfuckers. He could not see them. I will tell him they are old, let them pass. But bullets bit at the crumbling road around the car (Powers, *The Yellow Birds* 21-22).

Despite the noncombatant status of the older men and women, they are killed. This illustrates Mbembe's idea of how the occupier's power over life and death reduces the humanity of the occupied population to irrelevant or "disposable" (Mbembe 96). Powers also shows us the ruin and despair brought about by war. The protagonist, John Bartle, describes the scene of war where there were:

> No sound had come from them that morning. No adhan had been called. The long line of refugees that snaked out of the city for the past four days had slowed. Only a few older men bent over worn canes of cedar shuffled between the field of dead and the grove of trees (Powers, *The Yellow Birds* 18).

Because of the absence of inhabitants and their flight from combat operations, the minarets of mosques are no longer raised in some of its adhans. The silence of the minarets, which are symbols of faith and community, signifies

the decline of life under the necropolitical conditions. The adhan is a daily marker of spiritual and cultural continuity; its silence refers to the disruption of civilian life and the imposition of a war-driven presence. Bartle also describes Iraq‘s peaceful life before the occupation and how it was turned into hell by the American military presence. This reflects Mbembe's assertion of how sovereign power creates "death –worlds" in which life itself is constantly subjected to the power of death, and survival becomes peoples' ultimate aim (103).

3.2.2 American Soldiers and War

The American government claimed that the Iraq war was launched to bring the Iraqi people civilization and justice. Ironically, the American soldiers try to be good by following the orders of those in power. As a result, they killed civilians brutally, and they did not realize their savagery. Those soldiers were used as tools by their governments to spread their necropolitical power and maintain their control over the colonized people. From the beginning of the novel *The Yellow Birds*, Kevin Powers tries to show the horrors and the brutal realities of war. The title of the novel, *The Yellow Birds*, from a traditional U.S. Army marching song, which is also used as a prelude to the novel, symbolizes the loss of innocence in war and the haunting memories that dawdle with soldiers long after the conflict. The prelude includes the following lines:

A yellow bird

With a yellow bill

Was perched upon

My windowsill

I lured him in

With a piece of bread

And then I smashed

His fucking head... (Quoted in *The Yellow Birds* 2013).

In the context of war, this song can be seen as a commentary on the violent nature of war. The bird, like the troops, represents a life that is stuck in a system that kills it without feeling bad about it. Just as a piece of bread lures the bird only to smash its head, the war also lures the soldiers who participate in the sense of duty or patriotism with something they desire only to kill them or destroy them psychologically and mentally. It is also possible that the "yellow birds" are a metaphor for troops whose lives are ignored by war machinery. Soldiers like Bartle and Murph are nothing more than tools of violence, and their lives are always in danger. Powers shows that war is an unending force that takes away troops' humanity. The above song shows how war can turn something that was once nice or even fun into something horrible.

In his book *Necropolitics*, Mbembe states, "The ultimate expression of sovereignty largely resides in the power and capacity to dictate who can live and who must die" (81). To kill or to let live thus constitutes sovereignty's limits and principal attributes. In *The Yellow Birds*, the war is personified as a cruel killer. War is depicted as a sovereign power over life and death. As a sovereign entity, it controls who will live and who must die: "The war would take what it could get" (Powers, *The Yellow Birds* 4). Here, Powers tries to show his readers the heavy pain caused by the war, its terrifying images, and its horrible consequences. He illustrates soldiers' challenges in determining their place against the surrounding death. It is not other soldiers, notions, leaders, or politicians that seek to harm them; it is war itself. The war has the ultimate authority over whether the soldiers live or die; they have no control over their lives; as a necropolitical power, war exerts that control. The novel shows this clearly, beginning with a repeating phrase, "The war tries to kill us in the spring" (Powers, *The Yellow Birds* 3).

Similarly, the novel shows how war operates as a sovereign power. The soldier's routine preparation of their guns is followed by their recognition that this is" the same old shit again" (Powers, *The Yellow Birds* 7). This reflects how they are dictated to and subjugated to the sovereign power of war. They have no control over their lives. Only war decides where and when they will fight, when they will die, and how long they will survive. This reflects Mbembe's argument that necropolitical power controls the lives of individuals, deciding who lives and who dies (Mbembe 81).

The novel also represents the idea of control over life and death through the character of the lieutenant (LT) and his command over soldiers, whose lives depend on the decisions made by those in authority. The lieutenant's orders for the soldiers to prepare for another mission represent the sovereign figure in Mbembe's framework. "How long have those fires been going? "Probably started last night," said Murph. OK, you and Bartle keep an eye on that" (Powers, *The Yellow Birds* 17). His command over Bartle and the other soldiers reflects how sovereign power in war determines who will live and who must die. In a war zone, soldiers have no control over their lives, their survival is dependent on the orders they receive from those in power. They are no more than instruments of violence; their lives are subjected to the decisions made by the sovereign power of the military hierarchy.

Sergeant Sterling is another important character who represents an embodiment of necropolitical power. He possesses life-and-death authority over the soldiers in his command. His leadership is marked by certain "evolutionary competence" that the soldiers admire. He is described as someone the platoon trusts to guide them, yet this trust is based on the necessity of survival in the war, not the emotional connection. Sterling's ability to command the soldiers and direct their movements "made us trust him when he pointed and told us to move on. It was easy to follow him wherever he was going", this illustrates that in war,

subjected people are subsumed under the sovereign power of the war machine (Powers, *The Yellow Birds* 33).

Again, the novel shows how those in power reduce soldiers into instruments of violence. Bartle's inability to stop Sterling from killing the man and his wife symbolizes his submission to the necropolitical authority "I looked through my scope and saw an old man behind the wheel and an elderly man in the passenger seat. Sterling laughed."come on, mother…." I will tell him they are old; let them pass. But bullets bit at the crumbling road around the car...I said nothing. I followed the car with my scope..." (Powers, *The Yellow Birds* 22). This reflects Mbemb's idea of how necropolitical power renders individuals powerless, forcing them to participate in a system of violence that they cannot escape.

Mbembe's idea that in necropolitical systems, individuals cannot exert any control over their lives is clearly shown in the novel. Bartle's reflection that "I did not die, Murph did" (Powers, *The Yellow Birds* 14) highlights the arbitrariness of individuals in war. Bartle's inability to understand why his friend died while he was still alive mirrors the powerlessness of those subjected individuals. Soldiers are exposed to random violence, and their survival is a matter of chance rather than decision-making. Their lack of control reflects the broader necropolitical structure where individuals are at the mercy of tyrannical forces of violence.

The novel describes war as an entity that "rubbed its thousand ribs against the ground in prayer" (Powers, *The Yellow Birds* 3). This description reflects its status as a sovereign power that dictates life and death. As Powers writes," did not care about objectives, or boundaries, whether you were loved by many or not at all... its sole purpose: to go on, only to go on. Moreover, I knew the war would have its way" (Powers, *The Yellow Birds* 4). The war's primary function is to assert control over life and death, not to achieve any specific objective. Also,

the war's indifference to objectives or boundaries mirrors the way necropolitical regimes dehumanize individuals, treating them as expendable. As a necropolitical power, war devalues human life; their lives or deaths serve no purpose other than feeding the machinery of violence. It defines whose lives matter and whose lives is not. This aligns with Mbembe's assertion that sovereignty means the capacity to define who matters and who does not, who is disposable and who is not" (Mbembe 96).

In necropolitics, the sovereign power is careless about the value of individuals' lives; its only concern is how to maintain control over those dehumanized people. It exercises control through the constant threat of death. It considers death as a means of asserting control. The novel shows this when Bartle observes that the knives that killed Murph are addressed "To whom it may concern" (Powers, *The Yellow Birds* 14). This phrase underscores the impersonal nature of death in war. The sovereign power is not concerned about the identity of those who are killed. This reflects one of the main key features of necropolitical power. Soldiers like Murph are no more than another casualty; any meaning does not mark their deaths.

Bartle's reflection on the time he spends with his friend Murph indicates how life is quickly reduced to an experience of survival and loss in war "Ten months, give or take, from that day to the day he died, It might seem like a short time, but my whole life since has merely been a digression from those days, which now hang over me like a quarrel that will never be resolved" (Powers, *The Yellow Birds* 30). Bartle's words underscore how war becomes a defining force controlling life and death. It becomes a sovereign power that decides human life and death, which conforms with Mbembe's idea that sovereign power dictates who may live and who must die (Mbembe 81).

War, a necropolitical sovereign, operates without concern for moral or individual value. It determines who will live and who must die. "The war had

killed thousands by September. Their bodies lined the pocked avenues at irregular intervals... the war had tried its best to kill us all: man, women, child, But it had killed fewer than a thousand soldiers like Murph and me" (Powers, *The Yellow Birds* 4). The war here is portrayed as an all–power that renders human lives expendable. The lives of soldiers are exposed to this power. This reflects Mbembe's idea that necroplitical systems treat certain populations as "disposable" (Mbembe 96).

Further, the novel's sovereign power of war is evident in how individuals are reduced to mere statistics. The death of soldiers is treated as part of the numbering system. How do Murph and his friend Bartle count how many people die "Nine sixty-eight? Nine seventy?" (Powers, *The Yellow Birds* 11) reflects the idea that death is no longer considered a tragic or personal event but rather an inevitable part of the war, something to be counted. The fact that the soldiers hesitate towards Malik's death, whether to "count" or not, emphasizes the idea of how war dehumanizes individuals and turns them into disposable entities. His death is reduced to a number, part of the larger count of casualties that the soldiers are tracking.

Again, Bartle's reflection on the banality of individuals in war is as follows: "You are nothing, that is the secret: a uniform in a sea of numbers, a number in a sea of dust. Moreover, we somehow thought those numbers were a sign of our insignificance" (Powers, *The Yellow Birds* 12). This captures the essence of necropolitical dehumanization. The soldiers understand that their death is appointed in advance; their names are already on the list, waiting to be added once they die. This reflects Mbembe's idea that sovereign power treats human lives as expendable and reduces them into predetermined casualties in a system of control.

Consequently, the soldiers' realization that the names of the dead were on a list even before their arrival in Iraq reflects a deep understanding of how necropolitics work, effectively reducing lives to mere numbers in a larger system of violence. It also suggests that the soldiers feel a sense of inevitability concerning death, a notion that their lives, like those dead soldiers, are decided before by war:

> We had a sense, something we only felt in the brief flash of the synapse to synapse, that these names had been on the list long before the dead had come to Iraq. That the names were there as soon as those portraits had been taken, a number given, a place assigned. Moreover, they had been dead from that moment forward. (Powers, *The Yellow Birds* 12)

The idea of disposability of individuals is also reflected by Murph's casualty feeder card, which has to identify information and places to mark what has happened to a soldier, with boxes for“Killed in Action” and “Captured,” among others (Powers, *The Yellow Birds* 82-83). This card represents a necropolitical tool designed to reduce soldiers to statistical entries in war machinery. These cards confirm that those soldiers are treated as something they can eliminate within the military system.

The novel also shows how those who have power determine human fate and deal with soldiers as instruments to attain their goals; in chapter four, there is a scene where a colonel addresses his soldiers before a mission; he tells them that they will soon be asked to do great violence in the cause of good", the idea of using the word "violence with the word" good seems to be a technique used to justify military aggression by framing it as something virtuous, even though violence is destructive. Then he tells them that "some of you will not come back with us." this line means to prepare those soldiers for the harsh realities of a war zone. It is framed away as if death is something normal or part of the settlement.

After that, he tells them, "If you die, know this: we will put you on the first bird to die. In this line, although the colonel tries to comfort the soldiers, at the same time, it reflects how those in authority dehumanize people by focusing on their death as something to be memorialized rather than valuing their lives. He added, 'I cannot go with you boys…. I will be in contact from the operation centre" (Powers, *The Yellow Birds* 87). The colonel's acknowledgement that he will not be on the frontlines with his soldiers creates a sharp contrast between the soldiers who will face death and the brutality of war and the colonel who will stay in a safe place. He ends his speech by saying, "We are counting on you, boys; the people of the United States are counting on you" (Powers, *The Yellow Birds* 89). This positions the soldiers not as individuals but as tools to carry out the will of the state. The colonel's act supports Mbembe's idea of how those who have sovereignty determine human life and death.

Mbembe's idea of " disposability" is also evident in Bartle's reflection that "nothing made us special" (Powers, *The Yellow Birds* 14). How soldiers are treated as objects or numbers by the necropolitical system makes soldiers aware of their situation. They are devalued and used as tools that can be sacrificed or eliminated as necessary. The novel also shows the soldiers' awareness that their lives are disposable; whether they survive or not is irrelevant to the larger goals of the war:" Murph and I had agreed. We did not want to be the thousandth killed. If we died later, then we died, But let that number be someone else's milestone" (Powers, *The Yellow Birds* 4). The soldiers understand that their survival is temporary and that their lives are only valued insofar as they contribute to those in power.

In the same context, the novel shows how soldiers struggle to stay alive. For instance, Mr.Sterling's putting Tabasco sauce in his eyes shows how life is reduced to a constant state of caution. The soldier is no longer concerned with comfort or well-being; his only goal is how to stay alive. He jerked his head back occasionally and swivelled to see if anyone had caught him...held up his

trigger finger and daubed Tabasco sauce into his eyes to stay awake" (Powers, *The Yellow Birds* 6). The soldier's action highlights how life in a war zone is not about flourishing but how to survive under extreme conditions. The war does not care whether the soldier suffers or not. It only concerns how he continues to do his part as the war machine.

In a war zone, the soldier's ultimate goal is how to stay alive. Bartle asserts that" War is the great maker of solipsists: how will you save my life today? Dying would be one way. If you die, it becomes more likely that I will not" (Powers, *The Yellow Birds* 12). The idea that for one soldier to die is a chance for another soldier to survive reflects the selfish logic of necropolitical power. This solipsism discusses the dehumanizing nature of necropolitical authority, where individuals are reduced to isolated beings, unable to form meaningful connections with others. They focus only on their survival. In his book *Necropolitics*, Mbembe discusses how the necropolitical authority considers death not a sorrowful event but an everyday aspect. They normalize death and reduce life to a simple channel for death" Necropolitical power proceeds by a sort of inversion between life and death, as if life was merely death’s medium (51). The novel shows this idea clearly when Bartle reflects on how death becomes something normal in their daily life as soldires"Nothing seemed more natural than someone getting killed" (Powers, *The Yellow Birds* 11). The soldiers here are no longer shocked or feel sad by death since it becomes part of their everyday experience.

Mbembe criticizes how those in power deal with human life as a means to an end, creating widespread violence and destruction. Those subjected people are no more than a tool in the hands of those with power. Such acts create a distance between those who have the authority and those marginalized people. The novel shows this idea when the lieutenant's report is relayed upward, where the people receiving the information are far from the danger:" The lieutenant quietly gave our situation report to our command." yes, sir," he said," Roger, sir."

It passed, at each level, more removed from us, until I am sure somewhere someone was told, in a warm, dry, and saif room" (Powers, *The Yellow Birds* 15). This reflects the hierarchical nature of necropolitical power. Those at the top of the chain of command make decisions that affect life and death while far from the risk of war. Meanwhile, soldiers like Murph and his friend Bartle are fully exposed to the danger of death.

Keven Powers's novel reflects Mbembe's idea of the "death world" (103). This idea refers to conditions or environments created by the states or institutions where certain groups are forced to endure extreme conditions of violence, poverty, exclusions, and dehumanization. Those groups are essentially confined to a state of living death due to the constant exposure to death or violence. The notion of the death world highlights how those in power dispossess marginalized people as if they are less valuable. The novel shows this idea in the soldier's constant struggle with death. For instance, the two characters, Murph and his friend Bartle, are physically alive but mentally dead. The shadow of death consumes their lives, and war looms over them like an inevitable force:" The war had become a presence in our lives" (Powers, *The Yellow Birds* 37).

Throughout the novel, the struggle to survive consumes Bartle and other soldiers' daily existence. Their fear of becoming the "thousandth killed" reflects how they understand their lives are precarious and could be taken at any moment. This stratifies with Mbembe's idea that being sovereign means creating a whole group of people who live on the edge of life or even the outer edge of life. These are people for whom living means constantly facing death, and they do this in a way that makes death seem more and more like a ghost, thanks to both how they live and how they are given death. There is no need for this life (Mbembe 50).

In war, bodies are not only killed but destroyed, bloated, and left scattered in the streets. The novel describes how the dead "lined the pocked avenues at irregular intervals" (Powers, *The Yellow Birds* 4). This signifies the war's sovereignty over life and death, turning people into casualties or waste, mere remnants of its violent exertion of power. As a sovereign power, war constructs this death world where death is not just a possibility but a pervasive presence that shapes the soldier's every thought. Bartle's reflection on the possibilities of his death –whether he would die, survive, or be wounded "I became certain that I would die. Certain that I would live, then certain that I would be wounded, then uncertain of anything" (Powers, *The Yellow Birds* 44) shows how war exposes individuals to a liminal space between life and death.

Bartle's description of Al Tafar as a place that is covered with "the stench of the dead had cut itself free from the other odours coming from Al Tafar, the trash fires and sewage, the heavy scent of cured lamb, the river; above all this was the stink of decay from the bodies themselves" (Powers, *The Yellow Birds* 88). This actually sets the stage for Mbembe's idea of "death –worlds" places where individuals live under harsh conditions and they have to be under the constant threat of death. Dead bodies are scattered everywhere, and death becomes a backdrop of everyday existence. This world of death is shaped by war and decay, and the line between life and death is blurred (Mbembe 103).

The novel shows how those soldiers live in fear, how Murph compares the experience of combat to a" car accident that instant between knowing that it is going to happen and slamming into the other car, feels pretty helpless…. it is staring you in the face. You do not have the power to do shit about it…" (Powers, *The Yellow Birds* 93) signifies their helplessness and inability to stop this war, though they know the impact is inevitable. The soldiers exist in a state where life is precarious, and death is always there, just like the moment before the car crash is suspended between safety and disaster. The description aligns with Mbembe's concept of death worlds "in which vast populations are subjected

to living conditions that confer upon them the status of the living dead" (Mbembe 103).

3.3 Acts of Resistance in *The Yellow Birds*

The concept of resistance involves challenging and confronting authority, bargaining with it, and potentially eroding its power. It is a response from below that rejects or opposes the established authority. Resistance can also manifest in various forms, ranging from passive non-compliance to active confrontation or rebellion against the authority. It may arise from dissatisfaction with the existing power structures, perceived injustices, or a desire for change or autonomy. The nature and intensity of resistance can vary greatly, from individual acts of defiance to organized movements or uprisings (Lilja,209).

It is essential to recognize that resistance is a complex phenomenon with different motivations, tactics, and consequences. While some forms of resistance may be nonviolent and aimed at peaceful change, others may involve more confrontational or even violent methods. The study of resistance involves exploring the interplay between power, authority, and dissent, as well as the social, political, and cultural contexts in which resistance emerges and evolves. Mona Lilja also presents the idea of resistance in her article Exploring Irrational Resistance". Lilja believes that power and resistance are a single binary that intermingles, whereby they affect each other. She states that:

> The close relationship between power and resistance implies that resistance challenges or provokes power and sometimes ends up supporting power. For example, when a few people opt out and refuse to cooperate, these few differing 'others' who deviate from the norm expose themselves to the risk of being defined as abnormal. (204)

In academic discourse, the concept of resistance encompasses various forms of opposition and defiance against oppressive forces or structures of power. As Mbembe's *Necropolitics* theory posits, "resistance refers to acts or

choices that resist the practices of reducing individuals to a state of 'living death'" (Mbembe 39). This idea resonates with Foucault's notion of resistance as an inherent response to power relations, as he states, "Where there is power, there is resistance" (Foucault 95). Additionally, Fanon's work on decolonization and the resistance of subjugated peoples aligns with Mbembe's framework, emphasizing the struggle against oppressive systems that deny humanity and agency (Fanon 238). Resistance, a human response to external pressures, particularly in conflict situations, can manifest through active rebellion, survival efforts, or subtle psychological forms(Mbembe 55). However, War as a sovereign power, imposes profound physical, psychological, and moral burdens on those caught within its reach, sparking acts of resistance ranging from overt defiance to internalized struggles. In his novel *The Yellow Birds*, Powers portrays the resistance experienced by American soldiers and Iraqi civilians, demonstrating how individuals on opposing sides of the conflict engage in forms of resistance against the dehumanizing or necropolitical power. For instance, in one of scenes, an Iraqi civilian is holding an AK-47, and the soldier Bartle yelled at him to "go fast" to avoid being killed by other soldiers (Powers 20). This encounter highlights the resistance of the Iraqi civilian, who is armed and potentially defiant, while also capturing Bartle's reluctance to escalate the situation through force, exemplifying the moral dilemmas and psychological burdens faced by soldiers. This exploration of resistance highlights the human capacity for resilience and defiance in the face of oppressive forces, shedding light on the complex dynamics of power, subjugation, and the pursuit of agency.

3.3.1 Iraqi Civilians and Resistance

The Iraq War had a devastating impact on Iraqi civilians caught in the crossfire of the conflict. Kevin Powers's novel *The Yellow Birds* provides a haunting fictional account that sheds light on the struggles and resistance of the Iraqi people during the war. Through the experiences of the narrator John Bartle and his compatriots, the novel bears witness to the trauma inflicted on regular

Iraqis by the harsh realities of urban warfare and military occupation. Powers critiques how the machinery of war and occupation turns both the occupiers and the occupied into subjects of systemic violence, reflecting Achille Mbembe's concept of necropolitics. Mbembe argues that sovereignty resides in the power and capacity to dictate who may live and who must die, emphasizing how the state exerts control over life and death, often relegating certain populations to conditions of perpetual violence and precarity (Mbembe, 81). This framework is evident in the experiences of American soldiers like John Bartle, who grapple with the trauma of being tools within a mechanism that reduces lives, both their own and those of Iraqis, to expendable objects, mere statistics in the theater of war.

Similarly, the novel depicts Iraqi civilians not as passive victims but as individuals forced to navigate the necropolitical space of the militarized zone, where survival demands morally ambiguous choices. Fanon's insights in *The Wretched of the Earth* further illuminate this dynamic, as he asserts that in the colonial context, "violence is the natural state of the colonized" (112). The occupied space becomes a site of resistance and survival, where Iraqis, subjected to dehumanization and systemic oppression, are compelled to act within a framework of violence imposed by the occupying forces.

Mbembe's notion of necropolitics examines how sovereign authority dictates who is possible to live and who is condemned to die, especially in the zones of warfare and occupation. This viewpoint underscores the dehumanizing consequences of war while exposing acts of resistance by people living in hellish conditions. In this context, analyzing the Iraqi people's resistance to necropolitical authority in *The Yellow Birds* through Achille Mbembe's concept of Necropolitics provides a compelling framework for understanding the interplay of war, sovereignty, and survival. Although the novel primarily follows the journey of Bartle, an American soldier, some scenes underlie Iraqi civilians

struggling to survive death and the sovereign power of war; they resist the American occupation.

Throughout the novel, Powers subtly alludes to the resistance of the Iraqi people. While reading the novel, one can see various forms of resistance represented by Iraqi civilians. Powers illustrates the Iraqi people's resistance to necropolitical power, as theorized by Mbembe, through their resilience and refusal to surrender to domination, even under the extreme circumstances of war. Necropolitical power, which governs through control over life and death, is resisted by the Iraqis in both direct and subtle ways. For example, Bartle reflects on a woman serving tea in a war-torn environment "I could not stop thinking about a woman Malik's conversation had reminded me of, who had served us tea in small, finely blemished cups" (Powers, The Yellow Birds 14).

This small act of hospitality, despite the surrounding violence, represents a refusal to submit to fear and the dehumanizing control of the occupiers. Furthermore, resistance is reflected in the constant paranoia experienced by the soldiers, resulting from threats like roadside bombs and sniper attacks. These dangers reveal the Iraqi people's rejection of occupation, creating an ever-present tension that signifies their unseen resistance. The hostile environment, described as barren and indifferent, also symbolizes resistance, highlighting how even the landscape appears unwelcoming to the occupiers. As Bartle describes being stuck in a muddy ditch, he notes:

> We were lined along the ditch up to our ankles in a soupy muck. It all seemed in that moment to be the conclusion of a poorly designed experiment in inevitability. Everything was in its proper place, waiting for a pause in time, for the source of all momentum to be stilled, so that what remained would be nothing more than detritus to be tallied up. The world was paper-thin as far as I could tell. And the world was the orchard, and

> the orchard was what came next. But none of that was true. I was only afraid of dying. (Powers, The Yellow Birds 115)

This imagery highlights the destruction and inevitability of violence while illustrating the soldiers' fear and fragility. Resistance emerges as a response to this necropolitical context, where life and death are controlled. Drawing on Foucault's concept of biopolitics, which examines the governance of life, and Mbembe's extension into necropolitics, the novel shows how acts of endurance and cultural preservation push back against the mechanisms of power. Even in the face of domination, these moments of defiance challenge the control imposed by occupation and demonstrate the resilience of the Iraqi people. At the same time, the speaker ultimately admits that beneath these reflections, his true fear is the simple human terror of dying. Bartle also describes how they are being attacked by invisible resistance:

> When the mortars fell, the leaves and fruit and birds were frayed like ends of rope. … No one saw where the fire came from. For a moment it seemed to come from far away through the trees… we only saw the leaves as they flicked about… we heard bullets, sounds like small rips in the air, reports of rifles from somewhere we couldn't see. (Powers, *The Yellow Birds* 116)

This violent attack foregrounds how the violent resistance awaits those soldiers as they advance toward the battle to retake the city. Foucault's concept of biopolitics, which underpins Mbembe's theory, further contextualizes this resistance. While biopolitics seeks to regulate life through governance, necropolitics extends this power into spaces of death. As Foucault states, "Wars are no longer waged in the name of a sovereign who must be defended; they are waged on behalf of the existence of everyone" (Foucault 241). The soldiers' fear and vulnerability, particularly during the scenes of chaotic attacks—"we heard bullets, sounds like small rips in the air" (Powers, 116)—expose how this

resistance undermines the occupying force's attempt to maintain control over life and death.

In another scene, the description shifts to the consequence of this attack when the medics lift a private from the ground who was shot, bleeding and dying. Some scenes later, the attacks resume, and fear of death by the soldiers increases and vividly appears in how terrifically they respond as they see their friends fall one by one, and the description of blood intensifies the situation, “we did not take more than a few steps before we heard the whine of incoming mortars” (Powers, *The Yellow Birds* 166). Bartle describes how afraid he is throughout the attack, and the memory of his friend Murphy intensifies his feeling of fear, “I gave up, surrendered, whatever, I was gone. My muscles became marionetted by nerve endings and memory, “ Murphy!” I heard the sound of my own voice, disembodied, arching into and out of the dust and smoke” (Powers, *The Yellow Birds* 167).

The American occupation exercises sovereign power through the control of death and life, rendering citizens' lives the "living dead" by the use of violence. However, the novel reveals a radical resistance to the power of war and occupation. Murphy's kidnapping and killing by Iraqi people and the mutilation of his body can be seen as a resistance to war and occupation. The horrible scene of Murph's death can be seen as an assertion by the occupied against the occupiers.

> He was broken and bruised and cut and still pale except for his face and hands, and now his eyes had been gouged out, the two hollow sockets looking like red angry passages to his mind. His throat had been cut nearly through, his head hung limply and lolled from side to side, attached only by the barely intact vertebrae. We dragged him like a shot deer out of a wood line, trying but failing to keep his naked body from banging against the hard ground and bouncing in a way that would be forever

> burned into our memories. His cars were cut off. His nose was cut off, too. [...] He had been imprecisely castrated. He had been with us for ten months. He was eighteen years old. Now he was anonymous. (Powers, *The Yellow Birds* 205-206)

By killing Private Murphy, the Iraqi people reveal the vulnerability of the invading forces by targeting Murphy, an 18-year-old soldier. His youth and seeming naivety highlight the arbitrary savagery of war, yet his death also illustrates that authority, even in its most horrific manifestation, may be rejected. Moreover, the description of soldiers encountering a decapitated body on the bridge conveys the dehumanization inherent in necropolitical violence. The gruesome detail of "his head... on his chest like some perverted Russian doll" (Powers 193) exemplifies how death becomes normalized in these spaces. The lieutenant's whispered expletive, "Oh fuck," reveals a moment of human vulnerability amid the imposed detachment required to navigate the horrors of war. Mbembe's assertion that "death is no longer an event but a process" (40) is evident here, as the soldiers' reactions show their struggle to process tragedy in an environment where death has become an omnipresent and systematic tool of power.

Bartle's reflections further illustrate how necropolitical power extends its reach, dehumanizing both its victims and enforcers. During a chaotic battle on the bridge, Bartle's sense of place and identity disintegrates as he confronts his role in the violence. He notes, "I disowned the waters of my youth... I was an intruder, at best a visitor" (Powers 195). This disconnection underscores how necropolitical systems strip individuals of their ties to memory and place, reducing them to instruments of survival and destruction. Yet, in his detachment, Bartle's awareness of his alienation becomes a form of resistance, challenging the narratives that glorify war and diminish individuality.

The analysis shows that the depiction of war and resistance in Kevin Powers's *The Yellow Birds* through Achille Mbembe's concept of necropolitics, supported by additional theoretical resources. It argues that war operates as a system of sovereign power that governs life and death, creating "death-worlds" where human lives are made precarious and expendable. Both American soldiers and Iraqi civilians are victims of this dehumanizing system, facing violence, erasure, and loss. The analysis also highlights how necropolitics reduces soldiers, like Bartle and Murph, to disposable tools of war, stripping them of individuality and humanity. Their struggles with survival, guilt, and disillusionment expose the psychological toll of this system. On the other hand, Iraqi civilians endure displacement, environmental destruction, and cultural erasure under the occupation. Despite this, their acts of survival, cultural preservation, and rebellion demonstrate resistance to necropolitical oppression.

The Yellow Birds vividly portrays the destructive effects of necropolitics while showcasing the resilience and resistance of individuals and communities. This chapter emphasizes the human capacity to confront dehumanization, affirm dignity, and reclaim agency amidst the violence and oppression of war. oppression.

3.3.2 American Soldiers and Resistance

In his novel *The Yellow Birds*, Kevin Powers reflects the idea of resistance through soldiers' psychological and emotional struggles against the dehumanizing effects of war and those in authority. At the novel's beginning, we see how soldiers reflect on their struggle between what they have been told by their governments and the reality they face. For instance, Bartle reflects on the gap between his expectations and the reality that he has come to accept: "I was trained to think that war was the great unifier and that it brought people together more than any other activity on the earth" (Powers, *The Yellow Birds* 12). The notion of war as a "great unifier"is designed to inspire enlistment. Soldiers like

Bartle are trained to believe that war serves a noble cause, uniting individuals under a shared mission. However, Bartl's lived experience reveals that war does not unify but alienates and destroys. Fanon writes, "Violence is a cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect" (94). However, this cleansing force is double-edged, as it simultaneously imposes deep psychological scars. For soldiers like Bartle, the violence of war becomes a force of alienation rather than liberation, dehumanizing him and those around him. Fanon further argues that systems of oppression and violence result in "a collapse of the ego", leaving individuals fragmented and disconnected from their humanity (250). Bartle's disillusionment and trauma are manifestations of this collapse, as he struggles to reconcile his identity with the brutal reality of war.

The novel shows how soldiers struggle against the necropolitical forces that reduce individuals into war instruments. Throughout the novel, Powers shows how soldiers struggle against the brutality of war and try to maintain their humanity. For instance, Bartle resists the loss of humanity that war demands; despite the violence and destruction surrounding him, he has kept a crucial sign of humanity. During the battle, Bartle sees an Iraqi man escape the fire unharmed; the Iraqi man is surprised that he is still alive, and an American soldier is cheering him"—You made it, buddy, keep going," but I remembered how odd it would be to say things like that not long before the others saw him, too (Powers, *The Yellow Birds* 20-21). Even though he prevents himself from saying it loudly, Bartle's encouraging the Iraqi man reveals his rejection of the necropolitical power that thrives on the idea that human lives are "disposable" in the hands of those with sovereignty.

In chapter two of the novel, Bartle shows an act of resistance to the necropolitical power of war. Before they ship out, they get a chance to meet their families. Bartle meets Murph's mother, and she asks him to take care of Murphy. However, it is something unacceptable in the necropolitical logic, which strips

humans of their individuality and reduces them into tools of violence. However, Bartle gives her a promise to take care of Murphy and bring him home again: “John, promise me that you will take care of him.” “Of course.” Sure, sure, I thought...“Nothing is going to happen to him. Promise that you will bring him home to me.” “I promise,” I said.“I promise I will bring him home to you.” (Powers, *The Yellow Birds* 47). Bartle's promise reflects his inner struggle against the dehumanizing forces of war. He resists the structure of power that tries to reduce them into mere instruments of violence.

In necropolitical power, resistance is often subtle. It cannot always be expressed directly. The novel shows this through a conversation between Bartle and his friend Murphy, who question the value of war and their mission. Murphy asks Bartle whether the colonel's assertion that their mission is the most important thing they will do is." Damn ", what? "Do you think this is the most important thing we will ever do, Bartle? Then Bartle responds "I hope not this way. Their discussion serves as a form of resistance to the necropolitical narrative of war. Though the soldiers are forced into a system that demands obedience to violence, Murphy's question reveals an underlying awareness of the destructive nature of the war they are part of (Powers, *The Yellow Birds* 90).

Furthermore, Murphy mocks the reporter who asks the soldiers about their feelings about combat, representing resistance to the necropolitical power of war and those in authority. His sarcastic suggestion to the reporter, "Why don't you come out with us and you can take a point?" (Powers, *The Yellow Birds* 93). By doing so, Murphy tries to challenge the narratives that justify their subjection to violence and death; the soldier's laughter that follows Murphy's speech emphasizes the solidarity among the soldiers who share the same resistance against the disposability of their lives by those outsiders.

In his novel, Kevin Powers also uses symbols to show the reader how soldiers resist the necessity of war and its reality. A yellow ribbon shows support

for soldiers in battle, political prisoners, and other people who are being held hostage. In the United States, people wear or display a yellow ribbon to support family members or U.S. Army troops during times of war (Ferber 199). Still, yellow ribbons stand for more annoying truth in *The Yellow Birds*. Most people do not know what war is really like. When Bartle and his men return to the U.S.A. from Germany, he goes to the airport bar to wait for his trip to Virginia"; He pointed to a yellow ribbon on the wall; what does that mean? It is the least I can do. Forget it; I want to pay. I did not want to smile and say thanks. Did not want to pretend I had done anything except survive" (Powers, *The Yellow Birds* 107). That is where the bartender talks to him about war and will not let him pay for his beer, citing a yellow ribbon as a reason to be polite to his young man. Bartle does not feel happy or thankful for what he did during the war; instead, he gets angry because he does not think it serves a higher, more common goal.

Bartle is unhappy because he knows many people have the wrong idea about war, reflected in the yellow ribbon. This idea is too simple and does not consider how cruel, destructive, and brutal war is. People who wear yellow ribbons do not understand the war or the pain that troops go through during battle;"I want to burn every goddamn yellow ribbon sight, and you can not explain it because everybody is so fucking happy to see you, the murderer. the fucking accomplice, the at-bare-minimum, bearer of some fucking responsibility, And everyone is so grateful to you" (Powers, *The Yellow Birds* 145). Anger and refusal to accept praise show he does not want to be part of the state's necropolitical story. Through symbols like the yellow ribbon, the government and society try to show soldiers as heroes who are ready to give up their lives for the good of everyone.

On the other hand, Bartle knows that being alive is not an act of selflessness; it is a desperate attempt to stay alive. He would not accept the bartender's move or talk about what the yellow ribbon means, which shows that he does not want to keep telling stories that make war seem good and justify

keeping it going. By turning down the thanks offered to him, Bartle takes back his power and refuses the neoliberal logic that tries to define him as a soldier. He does not want to be used as a sign of the power of the state or as part of a story that hides the real cost of war, which is the loss of lives and the destruction of individual humanity. This situation stratifies Mbembe's idea of how sovereign power uses people as instruments for maintaining control and achieving their own goals (Mbembe 51). In his novel, Powers employs Bartle's monologue to depict his subtle resistance to the necropolitical power of death, which is embodied by war:

> There is no making up for killing women or even watching women get killed, or for that matter, killing men and shooting them in the back and shooting them more times than necessary to kill them. It was like just trying to kill everything you saw sometimes because it felt like there was acid seeping down into your soul. Then your soul is gone, and knowing from being taught your whole life that there is no making up for what you are doing, you are taught that your whole life, but then even your mother is so happy and proud. (Powers, *The Yellow Birds* 144)

Instead of glorifying his part in the war, Bartle acknowledges the repetitive violence of war. His long monologue reflects his awareness of the dehumanization war imposes on its participants. After the war, Bartle feels angry with himself. He blames himself for participating in the army, which made him act violently and kill people. He also blames himself for being with the state in general, which glorifies war. This anger and frustration demonstrate his resistance to the necropolitical authority that renders him a tool or killing machine. He critiques the loss of his humanity, implicitly resisting the war's attempt to transform him into an agent of necropolitical violence fully. Bartle's statement that "knowing from being taught your whole life that there is no making up for what you are doing " exposes the hypocrisy of those in authority. As a result, Bartle's narrative criticizes the authority members who subject

soldiers to the power of death, showing how their orders force individuals to suffer guilt and trauma that can never be reconciled.

Bartle's acceptance of the psychological suffering represents a form of resistance to the systems that caused his pain. He did not tell his family, friends, doctors, or the police what was going on in his mind. He distances himself from the societal structure that often seeks to justify the experiences of soldiers:

> Marks representing the randomness of the war were made at whatever moment I remembered them: disorder predominated. Entropy increased in the six-by-eight-foot universe of my single cell. I eventually accepted that the only equality that lasts is that everything falls away from everything else. (Powers, *The Yellow Birds* 217)

When he is in prison, Bartle marks the prison walls for every war memory that comes back to him. He does this hoping that one day, the visual collection of memories will show the underlying logic of war. Initially, by doing so Bartle hopes that the collection of memories might reveal the real meaning of war. However, his eventual acceptance represents a deep resistance to the necropolitical ideology that seeks to frame war as justified. This conclusion helps Bartle be free from the psychological control of the necropolitical system that seeks to control humans' lives and deaths.

CHAPTER FOUR

Ruins of Humanity in Kevin Powers's *A Shout in the Ruins* Through Mbembean Lens

4.1 Introduction

The events of Kevin Powers's *A Shout in the Ruins* are set in Virginia and span over a century, from 1865 to the late 1980s. In this novel, Powers constantly shifts narrative settings and appropriately assigns his characters to the period before or after the Emancipation Proclamation. The novel offers readers reliable fiction about two historical events that shaped the United States of America: The Emancipation Proclamation (1863) and the First World War (1914- 1918). Hence, Powers's aim is a successful postcolonial infusion of US literary history with traumatic black American history. In the novel, the author represents slavery and its ruthless, dehumanizing nature, the Civil War and its attendant suffering, and the First World War and its corresponding military battles. Michael Schaub comments on this novel as follows:

> The characters in Powers's bleak, stunning novel are subject to indignities too countless and cruel to name. Like his debut, *The Yellow Birds*, it is a searing look at the ravages of war and how violence can shape a nation in ways that may never be fully recoverable... It will not surprise anyone who has read *The Yellow Birds* that Powers is a hell of a writer. His use of language in *A Shout in the Ruins* - inspired, perhaps, by William Faulkner - is nothing short of brilliant, and he connects with his characters in a very real way; he explores their psyches with an uncommon sensitivity. (Schaub)

In an online review entitled "A Shout in the Ruins,' by Kevin Powers," David W. Bright argues that in this fiction about the awful ruins caused by the companion forces of war and slavery, the past is omnipresent even when it cannot be spoken or known. Everyone bears its weight. However, a few people,

black and white, can live through the weight of history even as it is all but impossible to live with it.

Powers's novel is pregnant with scandals related to the American administration. Powers sanitizes US black history with an attempted Mbembean laugh on relevant, race-cleansing silences. Achille Mbembe comments on the colony and the necropolitics as follows: "The colony represents the site where sovereignty consists fundamentally in the exercise of a power outside the law and where 'peace' is more likely to take on the face of a 'war without end." (Mbembe 92). In a review by The Economist, the novel is praised in such glowing terms:

> Mr. Powers gives a strong sense of a vast body of humanity caught up in a tumult that still reverberates today... Above all, this troubling, stirring book is informed by Mr. Powers's deep understanding of war's complexities and how people are broken and shaped by it. (BookBrowse)

The novel begins with Antony Levallois, owner of the Beauvais Plantation in Virginia, and his family, Emily Reid and Rawls, an enslaved person on the plantation. As the Civil War approaches, the novel shifts its focus to the devastation wrought by the conflict, such as the burning down of the Beauvais Plantation. However, the end of slavery does not equate to freedom or justice for the formerly enslaved. The novel delves into the parallel of history through the introduction of George Seldom, a Korean War veteran who grapples with the demolition of his neighborhood for highway construction, highlighting the ongoing systemic racism and displacement.

Powers's novel also explores themes of memory, trauma, and the cyclical nature of history, highlighting the lasting impact of historical events. The characters are haunted by their pasts, representing broader American narratives. The lingering impact of necropolitical violence continues to shape the world today: "Agony, then quiet, but never silence. No, there would not be silence in

this place for many years. An orderly came out of the tent and tossed a ruined leg onto the pile" (Powers, *the Ruins* 79). This underscores the lasting impact of historical events on the lives of individuals even after the war.

Moreover, Powers's novel highlights the psychological and emotional hurts left by systemic oppression during the American Civil War and subsequent years. The "shout" refers to the cries of the enslaved, echoing through the ruins of a fractured society. The "ruins" symbolizes not only the physical remnants of a brutal past but also the enduring wounds inflicted upon generations of marginalized communities. The novel challenges readers to confront the ongoing consequences of slavery and grapple with how historical trauma continues to shape contemporary realities. Powers vividly depicts the brutal realities of slavery and its enduring legacy through the intertwined lives of his characters. By tracing the historical and personal repercussions of slavery, Powers underscores this institution's profound and lasting impact on American society and individual identities (McPherson 145).

Over the next four years, the war would see major battles, including Gettysburg, Antietam, and Bull Run, resulting in significant casualties and devastation. The conflict ended in 1865 with the surrender of Confederate General Robert E. Lee to Union General Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox Court House (McPherson 459). The Union's victory led to the abolition of slavery and the eventual reconstruction of the Southern states (Foner 123). The American Civil War remains one of the most studied and significant events in American history due to its profound impact on the nation's social, political, and economic landscape.

4.2 Slavery and Nanoracism in Powers's *A Shout in the Ruins*

In Kevin Powers's *A Shout in the Ruins*, the intricate themes of slavery, nanoracism, and power are deeply embedded within the narrative, illustrating

the harsh legacy of violence and racial exploitation in American history. For Mbembe, nanorassism is the consequence of state racism. He clarifies:

> Nanoracism has become the obligatory complement to hydraulic racism—that of juridicobureaucratic and institutional micro- and macro-measures, of the state machine, one that recklessly shuffles clandestine workers and illegals around, that continues to camp the rabble at the urban outskirts like a jumble of odd objects, that multiplies the number of undocumented workers by the shovelful, that presides over their removal from the territory (Mbembe 73).

In the novel, the experiences of enslaved characters such as Nurse and Rawls reveal the profound hardships they endure and their relentless quest for freedom. In their addresses, they emphasize the dehumanizing effects of slavery as well as the powerful control exercised by enslavers such as Anthony Levallois, who views his slaves as nothing more than commodities to be used for profit. Commenting on masters' domination over enslaved people, Archana B Kaku writes:

> Drawing from Aristotle, the relationship between slave and master was understood as a concretized manifestation of the relationship between body and mind. Because the enslaved person is all body, they benefit from the rule of their master, which essentially provides the enslaved person with the benefits of the intellect which they otherwise lack... the enslaved person is thus not only all body but an extension of the master's body. (115)

The novel's depiction of America during the Civil War illustrates the concept of nanoracism, which Achill Mbembe presents in his book *Necropolitics*, where he states that "nanoracism defines an era of scullion racism, a sort of pocketknife racism, a spectacle of pigs wallowing in the mud pit" (72). Here, 'nanoracism' is described as being a crude and low level of

racism. Calling it a ‘pocketknife’ means it is covert and deceitful, not as overt as plain racism but just as dangerous. The ‘spectacle of pigs wallowing in the mud pit’ expresses the nature of this type of racism as shameful and vulgar but at the same time performed unabashedly, as if it is something permissible. In other words, it asks for some global dismissiveness of nanoracism as a more sophisticated but pernicious form of degradation.

Even after slavery was technically ended, characters kept facing institutional discrimination and social marginalization. One outstanding example of this is George Seldom, who was born after the Civil War and struggled with the impacts of racism as well as the devastation of his community due to the construction of an interstate highway. Powers’s novel forces readers to engage with the past and face the enduring effects of racism and slavery. (Powers, *the Ruins* 23-30).

The novel depicts power as both a tangible and elusive force. It manifests in the authority that enslavers exert over their slaves, the control that soldiers wield on the battlefield and the societal structures that perpetuate inequality in the contemporary world. *A Shout in the Ruins* offers a profound discussion on the linkages of slavery, nanoracism, and power through its intriguing characters and moving storyline. Powers indicates this in the novel by saying that, "even when he considered the way he distributed justice among his slaves, he could not ignore the fact that it was always mediated by some instrument or another: a long pine sapling, a whip, or a pair of shears. Not that this caused him much distress" (Powers, *the Ruins* 35-36).

This gives a clear illustration of the several measures of oppression and subjugation exercised by the master on the enslaved people. The master’s contemplation of how he would punish and discipline his slaves/subjects with methods that amounted to doling out “justice” with violent objects such as a piece of long pine sapling, whip, or shears is a clear manifestation of

necropower. These tools of punishment represent the master's right to hurt and assert dominance within a realm of given death, arranging the enslaved person completely as dehumanized objects in a world of death. This comes in line with Mbembe's commentary on slavery as "an instrument of labor...in which slave's life is manifested through the overseer's disposition to behave in a cruel and intemperate manner, as well as in the spectacle of pain inflicted on the slave's body" (Mbembe 83). According to Mbembe, in his Necropolitics:

> power is treated as the disposition of who is to live or die. While the post demonstrates the structural capability of the slave-controlling structure, it also shows that the master does not have any element of apology for his evil actions in this case. The enslaved people's existence is reduced to the constant violence and enslavement, which constructs them as subjects that are either more or less alive (Mbembe 90).

This quote hints at this: "He had bedded a few of his slaves when he was in his twenties to dissipate a foul choleric humor" (Powers, *the Ruins* 36). The novelist here clarifies the objectification and abuse of slavery. In this case, bedding the enslaved people is never portrayed as an erotic scene where a man succumbs to his whims but a purely functional activity to dispel a sour temper. The enslaved people are objects whose function is to allow their master to lash out, which in turn asserts the enslaved people's powerlessness and disregard for their subjectivity.

It should be added that the novelist makes it easier to understand the magnitude of the moral decay precipitated by slavery. That is, while physical abuse only enslaves these people's bodies, their minds and souls are subdued as well since the pathologies inaugurated by slavery continue to rule their lives. It is shocking to see the master need to treat 'a foul choleric humor' by having to poison his slaves in order to get it out – this mere action shows the immense egoism of the upper class, where the rights of the enslaved people mean nothing

when the master's life is at risk. An even more shocking aspect is the way that such acts have become naturalized within the institution of slavery. This further elucidates how necro power exists within a matrix that is characterized by a system of domination concerning repressive social relations as well as an authority that an enslaved person's life has over their masters through disciplining instruments.

Generally, the novel clearly shows how slavery is a violent power. Violence and fear are the tools that enslavers use in order to remain in charge of their property, which is human beings. The novel shows this clearly when the Nurse's master punishes her on account of her not saving his sick wife "he took to beating her for sport, day after day and week after week. It got so bad that the other enslaved people begged him to show Nurse mercy" (Powers, *the Ruins*19-20). However, this dehumanizing exercise might not only result in physical destruction but also psychological damage as it drains people emotionally, mentally, and spiritually, depriving them of their dignity and individuality. Whether they wield it or suffer from its influence, these characters' lives are significantly impacted by pervasive authority. This aligns with Mbembe's notion of necropolitics as he discusses how enslaved people are reduced to mere objects: "The slave's labor is needed and used, so he is therefore kept alive, but in a state of injury" (Mbembe 83).

Mbembe's concept of sovereignty is embodied in *A Shout in the Ruins*. The plantation represents a space where the master exercises control over the lives of the enslaved people. Enslaved people are vacuumed from their social and political identities. Though they are physically alive, they are socially and spiritually dead, or as Mbembe describes them, "Slave life, in many ways, is a form of death-in-life" (Mbembe 91). Mr. Levallos, who represents the authority in this novel, exerts his power over Nurse by blocking her way, removing her headscarf, and kicking her stomach. "Levallois is standing in front of her, blocking her path. She tried to move around him, but he countered each move so

that Nurse could not pass. Levallois pulled off her headscarf...When she was on the ground, he kicked her in the stomach" (Powers, *the Ruins* 167). This act of violence serves as a tool to maintain control over those targeted people.

The novel closely relates to present-day debates on race, historical injustice, and trauma. The exploration of this book hinges on nanoracism, which is a subtle racism in our lives through benign-seeming ways. It provides an important framework for examining the ongoing inequalities demonizing contemporary society. With an examination of how the novel presents power struggles and uses exclusionary language, this section tries to showcase why slavery still lingers to date and its significance in comprehending the intricacies of race, trauma, and social justice in our times. Mbembe describes Nanoracism by arguing that it is:

> An era of scullion racism, a sort of pocketknife racism, a spectacle of pigs wallowing in the mud pit. Its function is to turn each of us into billy-goat leather mercenaries. It consists of placing the greatest number of those that we regard as undesirable in intolerable conditions, surrounding them daily, inflicting upon them, repeatedly, an incalculable number of racist jabs and injuries, stripping them of all their acquired rights, to smoke them out of their hives and dishonor them until they are left with no choice but to self-deport. (Mbembe 58-9)

Thus, there is no question that the topic of slavery is not a separate phenomenon; this history is closely linked to today's world. Modern structural discrimination and social injustice, which are prevalent in the United States, are rooted in slavery. The significance of the historical background of the slave trade is vital for the analysis of the novel since it is based on the issues of trauma, racism, and history. It offers the best way of understanding how Powers thematicizes the ever-evolving impacts of slavery on people and cultures, showing how the wounds caused remain open and give form to the

contemporary world. In the novel, Levallois discusses the commodification of enslaved people:

> Later that day, Levallois paid Bob Reid less than fourteen hundred dollars for the papers on Rawls, Aurelia, and the big Percheron Emily had ridden with them at night. That sum was a thousand dollars more than Aurelia's price, then pregnant with Rawls, when she was bought from Lumpkin's almost twenty years before. (Powers, *the Ruins* 51)

This illustrates Mbembe's idea of the dehumanizing commodification that is inherent in the institution of slavery, where human lives are reduced to mere items of trade, valued and exchanged like livestock: "The slave's life is like a "thing," possessed by another person, slave existence appears as the perfect figure of a shadow" (Mbembe 84). This transactional description underscores the necropolitical framework wherein the power to determine the value of life and to enact control over death rests in the hands of the enslavers.

Detailing the monetary values assigned to Rawls and Aurelia highlights the brutal reality that enslaved individuals were viewed as economic assets rather than human beings. This commodification is a critical aspect of necropolitics, reflecting how the ultimate authority over life and death is exercised through economic and physical domination. It is a perfect representation of the objectification of the enslaved people as they are treated as money as if they have no value other than the price that has been set for them. This is a good example of necropolitics in which the right to give life or death is exercised not merely through the Kiss of the gun but the reign of the dollar.

Rawls is depicted as a young boy who was prevented from escaping because he was "docked." This is a brutal reminder of how the African-Americans were treated like animals who were owned, and thus, their bodies could be harmed in any way, as is evident by Rawls' toes being removed to ensure he could not escape "Was. Will not be no more. Had to dock his toes. The

boy could not get out of sight for a day now. However, between his bellyaching and Aurelia's wailing over the top, do not neither of them get shit done. Almost feel bad making you pay" (Powers, *the Ruins* 15). The monetary value people put on them deprives them of human dignity, turning them into objects that could be traded, used, and profited from in a given economy.

The above case portrays necropolitics as the control of the power of death and the capacity to kill, as well as deciding who may live and who is doomed to die. However, within slavery and insomuch as power is being exercised, it is done through the physical subjugation and the economic exploitation of the workforce. That was the worst form of domination was the reduction of the enslaved persons and the denial of their humanity and their existence to a mere packet being sold and exchanged in the market in the same way the enslavers exchanged all other economic products.

Analyzing the characters of Rawls and Aurelia, who, besides being persons subjected to physical force, are also enslaved, it is still possible to identify the necropolitics applied to slavery. Their worth was in dollars and cents, not as human beings. The economic aspect of the slave trade means that people were treated as things, and this goes to establish the gruesome aspect of slavery and how it depersonalized as well as annihilated the humanity of millions of people.

Furthermore, the reference to Aurelia's increased price due to her pregnancy with Rawls underscores the generational impact of slavery, where even the unborn are pre-commodified, and the enslaving system predetermines their futures. This ties into Mbembe's concept of "nano racism," which suggests that the legacies of such systemic dehumanization persist in subtler, pervasive forms of racial prejudice and discrimination today (Mbembe 58-9).

The transactional nature and commodification serve as a stark reminder of the deep-rooted economic and social structures built upon slavery, highlighting

the ongoing struggle to address and dismantle the remnants of these structures in contemporary society. This perspective calls for a deeper understanding and recognition of how historical injustices continue to manifest in modern times, necessitating a sustained effort to confront and rectify the lingering impacts of slavery and racism. Bob Reid reflects on slavery and authority: “I do not give a dusty fuck why he ran off, Aurelia. And you can thank John Brown and the rest of abolitiondom for me taking my guns” (Powers, *the Ruins* 22). Analyzing the quotation from a necropolitical standpoint, which focuses on the mechanisms of power related to the governance of life and death, illustrates the character's profound sense of losing control and authority. The abolition of slavery marked a pivotal transformation in the power relations within the Southern states, where the existence of enslaved individuals was previously dominated and exploited. The character's response can be interpreted as an illustration of this relinquished power and an apprehension regarding an uncertain future. Mbembe clarifies the confusion that the colonizer and the colonized experience:

> Colonial war, since this is what, in essence, Fanon is speaking about, is, in the last instance, if not the matrix of the nomos of the Earth, a privileged modality of its institutionalization. [. . .] Like the majority of wars in the contemporary world, including the war on terror and various forms of occupation, colonial wars were wars of extraction and predation. Colonial wars were wars where the sides, winners and losers alike. (Mbembe 14)

Therefore, Bob Reid’s words encapsulate the intricate relationships among historical, social, and psychological elements that Kevin Powers delves into in *A Shout in the Ruins*. It highlights the persistent impact of slavery and the nuanced manifestations of racism that continue to influence contemporary society alongside the necropolitical aspects of authority and dominance. Kaku makes it crystal clear that torture, as an element of necropolitics, does not solely mean receiving some pain. They accentuate the sovereign's authority in determining the difference between light and darkness by deciding who is to be

put to suffering. Furthermore, it is shown whose state of suffering becomes acceptable to showcase for one's authority. This practice not only illustrates the physical breaking point of man but also signifies how power uses that suffering to demonstrate how pain can be hidden or exposed in Submission's game of power (Kaku 224). Rawls missed his big toe as a result of being tortured by his master. This mutilation is a physical example of the necropolitical authority practiced by the masters.

> Rawls was missing the big toe on both of his feet. The soles were rough and calloused and reached up toward the uneven scarring where the toes had been. "Runner," he said.
>
> "Who done this to you?"
>
> "Old man who owned us before."
>
> "Does it still pain you?"
>
> Rawls whistled and smiled. "Not like it once did. I get sore a bit from walking hinky (Powers, *the Ruins*17).

The lack of toes represents oppressive, and depersonalization acts exercised on enslaved people. Through the act of effectively crippling him for life, the enslaver not only disciplined Rawls but also restricted his ability to get around, thereby maintaining dominance. This act of cutting is not simply physical punishment; it becomes an act of total mastery to which Rawls is subjected, with his very existence being stigmatized with violence. The mutilation castrates Rawls and nullifies his capacity to move, metaphorically and physically chaining him to the plantation and, consequently, returning him to a similar position of property rather than a man who has the right to be free. Rawls answers whether it still pains him as follows: "Not like it once did," and his whistle and smile are meaningful. This proposes a type of psychological coping mechanism regarding the tragedy.

Through the lens of necropolitics, Rawls's mutilation is a clear example of how the sovereign power of the enslaver dictates the terms of life and death, extending even to the control of the body and its functions. The calloused soles and the uneven scarring where Rawls's toes once were are a constant reminder of the power dynamics where the enslaved are subjected to the whims of the sovereign, and their lives are managed through violence, coercion, and bodily control.

In chapter thirteen of the novel, a scene demonstrates how those enslaved people are treated as property by their masters. Mr. Lavallois' description of the Nurse as a" property" exemplifies the ultimate form of dehumanization "Levallois took the unblemished pistol out from his waistcoat. He cocked the hammer and pointed the barrel at Rawls. “Go, I said. Get the hell off my property” (Powers, *the Ruins* 168). The phrase "my property" has a significant meaning; for Levallois, "property" is not only the land and the physical objects on it but those people he considers as extensions of his ownership. This highlights Mbembe's suggestion on how masters consider their slaves:" enslaved person’s life can be said to be possessed by the master " (Mbembe 91).

Hence, it can be concluded that the history of slavery is intertwined with the historical truth of America, which could hardly remain unaffected by its negative implications. Prejudices in their crude, direct form may have been sent to the grave. However, prejudice’s supporting framework of discrimination persists and reemerges in the most banal way of everyday social interactions. These include microaggression, to which people cannot give their informed consent since, in most cases, it is perpetrated unconsciously; inherent bias, whereby people are automatically typed based on their race, color, or ethnicity; and racism with systematized prejudice that always make the racially marginalized to feel as if they are in a box so that they do not fit into the dominant group.

In the context of *A Shout in the Ruins*, nanoracism operates through the subtle ways in which the lingering effects of slavery shape the characters' lives. The novel's exploration of trauma, memory, and the struggle for identity reveals how the legacy of slavery continues to haunt the present, manifesting in the seemingly insignificant details of daily life. These details, however, are not insignificant. On a related note, Powers does an excellent job of providing language arts to show how racism works at the nanolevel, portraying its functionality through acts of microaggression. The novel's story, set against the background of the American Civil War, presents an unbroken power of language to shape the existing social paradigms dominant in a particular culture, thus consolidating the hierarchy and slave-master relationships in society. The dialogues are full of tension and silence, which must reflect the nano racism that exists and is hidden away in people's routine lives.

Powers uses the discourse of power to explain various instances of manifestations of nano racism. The dynamics of power can be deduced from the characters' language, which includes what has been said and what has been left unsaid. The problem of nano racism as interference in the main character's life is presented in the novel through John, a young soldier. He experiences verbal insults and prejudices, mostly dismissed as jokes or unimportant matters. However, these subtle aspects of racism are actively involved in sustaining the larger system of prejudice that regards black people as inferior. "John Talbot had often been told he was a stupid boy" (Powers, *the Ruins* 43). As for it, the novel touches upon problems of physical and discursive erasure of the voices of the oppressed. John tries to convey to others what he goes through as a target of racists, but the narcissist's denial overshadows his efforts. They further explain the operation of an independent mechanism of nano racism that seeks to control discourse and ensure that black people are unable to represent their experiences as living under oppression.

Using some interlocking actions, Powers investigates the long shadow cast by slavery on individuals as well as society. His portrayal of personal loss and systemic oppression provides a poignant critique of America's historical and ongoing racial injustices (Davis 102). "Maybe if we are lucky, all these niggers'll drown!" (Powers, *the Ruins* 26) serves as a profoundly unsettling illustration of the dehumanizing rhetoric and perspectives that are foundational to necropolitics, slavery, and nano racism. As is known, necropolitics refers to the authority to determine who is permitted to live and who is condemned to die, often evident through systemic violence and oppression. This highlights the extreme devaluation of black lives, embodying a necropolitical perspective in which the demise of enslaved individuals is not merely tolerated but actively wished for. It emphasizes the harsh reality that enslaved individuals were regarded as disposable, their existence deemed inconsequential.

Moreover, nanoracism implies the hidden and institutional racism permanently found in everyday interactions. As mentioned earlier, John is insulted and discriminated against; for example, Spanish Jim "started by calling him Dumb John" (Powers, *the Ruins* 43). It is worth mentioning that the use of simple profanity, as well as the stated concern as to the extermination of an entire race, points to the prejudicial values and the social acceptance of bigotry. It simply means that this type of language intensifies cultures of dehumanization and violence, reinforcing what is typical of necropolitics, namely, systemic oppression. In other words, this enigmatically epitomizes necropolitics, slavery, and nano racism in one quote. It explains the fact that dehumanizing attitudes and violence are inherent components of the society that is depicted in Powers's work. The nonchalant expression of such a gruesome desire underlines the suffering experienced by oppressed people and the existence of racism and, in this case, enslavement.

Thus, the concept of slavery and nanoracism is not something that we can say was present in the past but was eradicated; on the contrary, it is a present-

day phenomenon that affects individuals belonging to certain categories to this day. In this respect, Powers's novel makes it possible to describe how the cumulative oppression that comes from generations makes the affective states of the characters understandable and explains how institutional oppression works even if its primary manifestations are not as blatant anymore. This trauma manifests in various ways: Emerging memories of the characters' anguishes, their self-esteem issues, defection against the authorities, as well as self-hate and racism pulled out from inside themselves. (Mbembe 196)

Thus, this embodies the tenets of historical enmity, perceived Job-like inadequacy, and ongoing latent prejudices that set the stage in Powers's novel and are at the heart of Mbembe's theoretical framework. This case analysis provides an understanding of such profound curves of society and culture, demonstrating how historic slavery norms and the current trends of microaggressions affect these fields and modify their procedures and relations in a complex and subtle way.

On another note, Powers effectively utilizes language devices to highlight the latent features of nano racism, thereby establishing how it manifests itself through the microaggressive practices that perpetuate the unequal treatment of unprivileged people. Here, an example of anaphora is seen in "If He Could" (Powers 40), which is used to start several clauses. This latter repetition underlines the character's despair and the fact that seemingly unbeatable opponents surround him. The phrase "If he could" (40) underlines the conditional character of the hero's dreams and hopes – his liberty, his possibility to get through to the Nurse, and his desire to free himself and other people from oppression are all very uncertain and depend on the number of conditions which might never occur.

These questions stress the psychological and emotional impacts of slavery. The anaphora again amplifies the characters' helplessness and hope of

success, reflecting the desperate slavery where a character remains filled with nothing but desire and doubt. This is a powerful sort of figurative language that makes it possible to express the enslaved people's burden. It is worth mentioning that some of the enslaved people resisted the oppression of their masters. They were not subject to them, but they rebelled over such acts of abuse: "[Rawls] had no respect for white folks anymore, and very rarely fear, but he sometimes pitied them, allowing himself pity only because he had once heard a traveling preacher say that pity was the cruelest feeling one could have toward another" (Powers, *the Ruins* 14).

4.3 Death, Life, and Power in *A Shout in the Ruins*

The masters trapped their slaves in a system of oppression that reached deeper than just the physical aspect, affecting the hearts of those who were oppressed. So, the colonial system did not merely control the land; it also aimed at manipulating the thoughts and feelings of the people it dominated, thereby creating a form of control that came from within. Mbembe clarifies that the sovereign is an absolute monarch; it is the one that is capable of killing or oppression whenever it wants to do so. Therefore, complete domination over the colonized individuals was established. In his own words, Mbembe writes: "In the colonies, the sovereign might kill at any time or in any manner" (Mbembe 94).

The events of the novel are in line with Mbembe's aforementioned words. For instance, Mr. Levallois's words with the enslaved nurse were, "You cannot even die unless I allow it. All that you have been and all that you will ever be, I own" (Powers, the Ruins 76) is a powerful illustration of the absolute control enslavers had over their slaves, extending even to the most fundamental human experience of death. This can be analyzed through necropolitical theory, which

focuses on the power structures that determine "who can live and must die" (Mbembe 81).

The enslaver has the authority to choose whether enslaved people shall live or die. This reflects necropolitics' central idea of the sovereign's authority over mortality. Mbembe illustrates that the masters can control the existence of their slaves in different ways:

> The obsessive fear of pro-slavery democracies does not merely concern how to keep these slaves carefully out of the way. It is, above all, about knowing how to toss them out by getting them to leave the country willingly or, when need be, by deporting them en masse...For the enslaved person, it is not a subject of rights but a commodity like any other. (Mbembe 29)

In slavery, the owner's control over the enslaved person's death symbolizes ultimate dominion, reinforcing the owner's power and the enslaved person's subjugation. The assertion of ownership over "all that you have been and all that you will ever be" (Powers, *the Ruins* 76) signifies the total dehumanization of enslaved people, reducing them to mere property. This dehumanization is one of the key features of necropolitics since certain people are deprived of their humanity and individual rights that would let the sovereign's decisions govern them.

Necropolitics entails the generation of "death-worlds" (Mbembe 91) environments in which people are exposed to conditions of life that render them living dead. A dead world is such a place where enslaved people do not have any say, are bound, and are prone to violence and oppression. This indicates this condition, as it describes the subject's existential subjugation. In the United States, historically, slavery was a necropolitical condition through which enslavers possessed discursive authority over their slaves' lives and deaths. The aforementioned statement represents the historical backdrop before the enslaved

African Americans' lives were valued, with deaths being controlled to sustain the system of slavery and its hierarchy.

This novel significantly defines the existence of necropolitical power that is practiced in the institution of slavery. It accentuates the absolute authority enslavers had over the enslaved black people, including the power to kill them or make them die, something that is core to necropolitics. The power relations illustrate how enslaved people suffered an almost total dehumanization and existential subjection, in perfect harmony with Mbembe's necropolitics conception. It also discusses the possibility of language being an instrument of oppression and thus eliminating other individuals' voices that are considered inferior. Any attempt John makes to explain facets of racism to them is received with casual dismissal or flat-out denial. His experiences are, therefore, informative on different strategies used by nano racism to limit and police black people's discourse when articulating their daily experiences and to undermine progressive transformations (Powers, *the Ruins* 122).

The novel presents a panoramic view of the Civil War and its aftermath, delving deeply into the brutal realities of slavery and the enduring impacts of violence and oppression. The following encapsulates the tyranny at the heart of slavery when Powers describes the birth of George:

> George entered the world to hear a chorus of anguished voices in a room lit by a single sputtering candle that sent its light weakly toward the canvas walls. Moreover, the nurse quietly wept in that room, and the bawling child she tightly held added his new voice to the chorus as the sun breached the treetops to the east. (Powers, *the Ruins* 97)

This imagery sets the tone for the novel's generational pain and suffering exploration. Another critical scene involves Bob Reid beating his daughter and kicking a dog while ordering his teenage slave, Rawls, to get back to work: "Now leave him be so he can get about my business!" (Powers 13). This

moment highlights the casual brutality and dehumanization intrinsic to the system of slavery. The Nurse reflects on the harsh truths of American history, saying, “In Virginia, the truth had not mattered for a long time... The only thing that matters here … is what people are willing to believe. Lots of dead black folk would attest to that.… There ain’t no telling the kinds of madness people will believe” (Powers, *the Ruins* 103-104).

This underscores the pervasive denial and revisionism that have shaped the collective memory of slavery and its legacy. Throughout the novel, Powers weaves a narrative that connects the personal and the historical, illustrating how the legacies of violence and exploitation continue to resonate. His portrayal of characters such as Rawls and Nurse, who suffer unimaginable cruelties yet strive for love and dignity, emphasizes the novel’s meditation on the cyclical nature of violence and the enduring quest for justice (Jordan).

Eventually, it can be found that the brutal implications of slavery and its presence in the contemporary world are at the core of Powers’s *A Shout in the Ruins*. Given that it depicts the story of two black soldiers – one of which was a formerly enslaved person, and another was a ‘free’ man – the novel sheds light on the suffering of people of color and the effect timely trauma has on their lives. Nanoracism represents covert racism, which is a type of racism that is implemented in modern societies discretely; therefore, Mbembe’s concept of necropolitics can be seen in the novel, Powers reflects on how racism is executed in the present day. The worldview demonstrates that domination commenced by establishing matrices that exclude others and continue with the subjugation of the Other, as was the case with slavery.

The novel is a depiction of present-day racism and social injustices that are still evident despite the numerous efforts by various stakeholders. In the case of the main character Rawls, as well as the actions of Bob Reid, the author makes readers feel the power of the enslavers as well as the unceasing violence

against black people. Such rhetorical features filled his speech and writing with passion, pushing people's memories to a new level, making this story both historical and appealing to recall the past's legacy in the present day. *A Shout in the Ruins* is an account of man's fight for the triumph of justice and a call to continue the contest as it is never in vain; a true symbol of the indomitable spirit of the human person, thus inviting a more elaborate analysis with psychoanalytical and critical literary approaches.

Again, Emily's speech with John says, "I will rely on you now, John," she says. "Levallois is cruel and cold. Look how he treats my father, left in the overseer's house like it is a prison." (Powers, *the Ruins* 150). Epitomizing the idea of power when it comes to having direct authority to dominate other people's existence constitutes necropolitics. "Who taught you your manners, Bob?" "My manners?" "Yes, Bob. Your place, your way of being in the world. How about you, Sheriff? Mr. Baker" (Powers, *the Ruins* 50).

This exchange recaptures the socially imperialistic "etiquettes" of how common or inferior people or marginalized groups should live. Stating, "Who taught you your manners?" questions the assimilation of these manners or such conventions, which are maintained by force, if necessary. This is in extraneous association with necropolitics since it highlights how such individuals are conditioned to perform decisions that justify their subjugation.

Thus, this destabilizes the assumptions about 'place' and 'way of being' and exposes the regimes of power that normalize people's submission. The Sheriff and Mr. Baker are two characters clutch to these norms, and the depiction of power that holds those individuals, once again, comes to life. In both quotes, the notion of power is closely connected with necropolitics. The first quote is fixated on bodily and mental domination over life, which is equal to death, whereas the second looks at how society preserves and educates people in power over others' lives to continue such oppression from generation to

generation. In such instances, Power's novel thus ensures readers understand the enduring impact of slavery and institutional violence within the current social structure and power dynamics.

The novel raises issues associated with killing and death and the consciousness of violence in the United States. These words relate to these themes and feelings through very strong and provocative metaphors, associating them with necropolitics, power over life and death, and the constant presence of death in a world divided by violent force. "Each man had a noose fashioned around his neck, and the distress caused by their bodies being hung and left to swing for three days from a copse of tulip poplars on the east bank of the French Broad River was plain for all to see." (Powers, *the Ruins* 65).

This clearly illustrates the motif of killing and death in living. The destiny of people to be hanged is the best representation of necropolitics. The power to kill is testified by making their death public, and the relative nature of life is underlined by the speed at which one can be killed. The noose demonstrates that death is not only used to punish the guilty but also to control society and maintain control. This aligns with Mbembe's general thesis on the necropolitical order wherein the state controls who ought to live or die to manage its subjects. Mbembe goes into the details of the power of death and the use of death as a way of mastering societies. Nowadays, many individuals are beset with dread, afraid of being invaded, and on the verge of disappearing. All people labor under the apprehension that the resources for continuing to assume their identities are spent. They maintain that an outside no longer exists such that to protect themselves against threats and danger, the enclosures must be multiplied. They did want not to remember anything any longer, least of all their crimes and misdeeds, they dream up bad objects that return to haunt them. (Mbembe 12).

Such executions were not a mere punishment for perceived crimes but also a way of sending continuous threatening signals to the enslaved population

about the constant threat of death. Thus, the 'noose' effectively becomes a 'symbol' of death, and at the same time, it tells the 'enslaved' that the 'enslaver' has total control over his or her life. He had lost a shoe in deep mud somewhere between crossing the waist-high creek and running through the tall grass toward the Federal lines and had awoken some hours later, assuming that he had been killed. He mistook life for death on account of a curious illusion…The world became pain. Pain became the world (Powers, *the Ruins* 69).

The ambiguity of the character's position, which can hardly be distinguished between the world of the living and the dead, symbolizes the necropolitical conditions that regulated the existence and fate of soldiers and civilians during the war. This confusion shows how violence prevails in people's lives and how death thrives where life is usually expected to dominate. As for the American Civil War, necropolitics applies not only to the systematic regulation of the death of the black population in the form of enslaved people but also to the regulation of the lives of soldiers on the battlefields. It was a theatre of war where death was a certainty, and living was as random as one's merit or valor. Such actions as losing a shoe in the mud, crossing a waist-high creek, and anxiety to the line while running through the tall grass all show the effect of war, where every step can be the last one. This confusion between life and death is perfect for portraying the impact of the psychological effects of the war. In the case of necropolitics, this experience demonstrates that life during the war was always on the verge of death. Bob's assumption that he had died shows how the war had pervaded his psyche, as well as the psyches of other soldiers, with the expectation of death.

Powers indicates that "The World Became Pain, Pain Became the World: The World Became Pain, Pain Became the World" (Powers, *the Ruins* 70). The shift in the world and the existence of pain into the world and the world into pain is a lucid demonstration of how the concept of war alters the perception of reality for surviving sufferers. To the Civil War soldier, discomfort was not just

felt but lived; it was the everyday experience and, indeed, the soldiers' reality. These events moved them beyond the abstract structures of nationalism and brought back the crude impressions of malice, dread, and staying alive for soldiers. This reduction of the external reality to one's pain may be viewed as a result of necropolitics since the experience of the subject is pervaded by the notion of death. The abuse of the enslaved people does not stop even after being murdered by their masters:

> Then circling wider over the statues of the white folks' southern saints on Monument Avenue, over the cemetery on the hill, over all those poor enslaved people buried behind Main Street Station where Lumpkin would toss their bodies out like garbage when they would die in his jail, over the river, over the South, the United States, and the whole damn world. (Powers, *the Ruins* 26)

The references to 'circling over the white folk's southern saints' and the impoverished enslaved people 'buried behind Main Street Station' categorize the religious structures that bear the essence of southern pride and dignity with concrete structures that have successfully erased the memory of the shackled people. In addition, this shows how slavery affects not only the present but intertwines with the past, where American societies and the whole world continue to struggle with the complex issue of racism.

4.4 Resistance and Resilience in Powers's *A Shout in the Ruins*

Resistance, as a concept, occupies a central position in contemporary philosophical and literary discourses. In the context of Achille Mbembe and other theorists, resistance emerges as a multifaceted phenomenon, intertwining power, agency, and the reconfiguration of historical narratives. Achille Mbembe asserted that, "In short, the public affirmation of the 'postcolonised subject' is not necessarily found in acts of 'opposition' or 'resistance' to the commandment. What defines the postcolonised subject is the ability to engage in baroque

practices fundamentally ambiguous, fluid, and modifiable even where there are clear, written, and precise rules" (Mbembe 128-129). This statement highlights the nuanced forms of agency available to postcolonized individuals, challenging conventional notions of resistance as direct opposition. Mbembe's emphasis on ambiguity and adaptability resonates deeply with the themes explored in Powers's novel.

Powers's *A Shout in the Ruins* provides a rich textual site for exploring resistance through the lens of these theorists, as it engages with themes of racial violence, systemic oppression, and the enduring struggle for agency in the shadow of the American Civil War and its aftermath. Powers illustrates this form of resistance through the lives of enslaved and marginalized characters. For example, nurse, a former enslaved woman, embodies resistance by preserving her identity and the memories of those who suffered under the brutality of slavery. Nurse declares, "If they won't remember us, we'll remember ourselves" (Powers 123), underscoring her defiance against the erasure of history. This aligns with Mbembe's idea that resistance is a struggle to affirm life against a backdrop of systemic death and dispossession.

Moreover, Rawls's disrespect and cowardice towards white people imply that he never submits to them and becomes as humble as they wish to see him. His ability to pity his oppressors, which a preacher explained as the worst feeling one human could have for another, is rebellion. It also must be noted that, in this case, pity is still more than just a concept as it becomes transcendental and turns into a psychological weapon.

Rawls emphasizes that he does not have any enmity toward the people who attempt to enslave him and that, instead, he feels sorry for them, thus outclassing his masters. This victory is not based on race and violent subjugation, but it is based on the recognition that there is absolute sin in people who commit such heinous acts. It should be added that Rawls's attitude reflects

a broader, often overlooked form of resistance among enslaved people: the kind of derivate, a categorically different kind of play involved in the workings of the mind and spirit. This behavior does not define rebellion in the typical sense of a public or militant revolt; however, it portrays the strategy by which the oppressed tried to maintain the human part of their identity against aggressive subjugation. They engaged in several types of resistance, whether through mutiny, preserving culture, or even redefining their captor's perception, as was seen in Rawl's situation.

The nurse is another character who exhibits her resistance to those oppressors or the necropolitical powers that seek to dehumanize her and others. For example, when Mr. Bob accuses her of pitying him as he was injured in the war and lost his arm, she responds, "No, Mr. Reid, I do not pity you. I do not pity any of you. And I swear I never will " (Powers, *the Ruins* 79). Swearing never to pity emphasizes her resistance, and the Nurse indicates her determination to maintain emotional independence. She refuses to engage in the dynamics of power that rely on pity and condescension. This statement strongly asserts her insistence not to be emotionally manipulated or reduced to a role that would undermine her strength and dignity. Mbembe argues that necropolitics encompasses the systems and structures that determine who has the power to dictate life and death, often rendering specific groups disposable in the pursuit of control. The Nurse's refusal to pity Mr. Reid can be seen as her rejection of the dehumanizing dynamics embedded within necropolitical structures. By refusing pity, the Nurse disrupts the cycle of victimhood and refuses to validate the moral authority of oppressors who expect emotional subjugation. Mbembe's insight that "the colonial system's particularity lay in its manufacturing a panoply of suffering that, in response, solicited neither the accepting of responsibility nor solicitude nor sympathy and, often, not even pity" (16) resonates here. The Nurse's defiance reflects her resistance to being complicit in a system that thrives on pity as a means of sustaining power.

Furthermore, resistance is demonstrated at the novel's end when Nurse struggles with her master, Mr. Levallois, to defend her life. Her stabbing of Levallois represents a form of resistance against the necropolitical order. The narrative describes her violent rebellion as an assertion of agency in the face of those oppressors: “Nurse crawled toward the knife and stood up behind Levallois. She wrapped the elk antler handle with both hands and brought it down toward his shoulder. She stabbed him again. And then again. Time has a weight” (Powers, *The Ruins* 168). In this moment, Nurse’s violent act transcends mere survival; it becomes a symbolic overthrow of the systems that sought to reduce her to an object of control.

Mbembe’s articulation of resistance in necropolitical contexts further elucidates the Nurse’s actions. He contends that the fight against oppressive systems often necessitates force, particularly when those systems deny responsibility for suffering and refuse sympathy or empathy. Mbembe writes, “In these conditions, thought Fanon, decolonization as a constituting political event could hardly forgo the use of violence... This violence was to be directed against the colonial system” (Mbembe 16). The Nurse’s actions embody this ethos, as she employs violence as a form of reclamation of agency and dignity.

Similarly, Rawls’s decisive act of stabbing Levallois symbolizes collective resistance against the necropolitical regime. The narrative describes Rawls’s final act: “He pulled his tobacco knife from the waist of his pants and swung with such force it made a wind that shook the snow from the pines. He buried the blade in Levallois’s skull. It stayed there as the man fell dead” (Powers, The Ruins 169). This climactic moment underscores the downfall of Levallois’s authoritative power, as the very individuals he sought to subjugate ultimately dismantle his rule.

Michel Foucault’s analysis of power dynamics and biopolitics complements Mbembe’s necropolitical framework in interpreting these events.

Foucault emphasizes that power operates not only through direct oppression but also through subtle mechanisms that shape individual agency and societal norms. Nurse's refusal to pity and her ultimate act of rebellion illustrate a conscious subversion of these mechanisms. By rejecting pity and embracing violent resistance, the Nurse undermines the biopolitical control that sought to define her existence within the bounds of servitude and subjugation. As we can see that enslaved people and other oppressed individuals often turn necropower on its head. They appropriate the principle of 'bare life' to affirm their subjectivity and presence through the very means used to dispose of them. "The necro resistor does not so much seek to escape the assignation of bare life as refuse the kinds of deficits attached to this position: they implicitly argue that bare life is not so bare as the sovereign attempts to insist. In dying, they insist they are truly alive" (Kaku 275). Nurse's resistance embodies this principle, as she challenges the dehumanizing forces imposed on her and reclaims her agency through decisive action.

Powers challenges the romanticized versions of the American South, especially the narrative that glorifies the aftermath of the Civil War as a noble cause. Instead, he attempts to expose and end the violent exploitation, the brutality of slavery, and the moral decay it entailed. The shift from the 1860s to the 1950s represents a revisit of dismantling the colonial mindset. This shift functions as a critical literary device to juxtapose the continuing legacy of exploitation with the racism of the 20th century. Through revisiting this transition, Powers dismantles the false notion that the end of the Civil War brought true freedom. Instead, he highlights how oppression and exploitation were merely transformed, not eliminated. The enduring forms of oppression serve to underscore how deeply ingrained these power structures remain.

None of the other men resisted Levallois's escalation, not even the sheriff, who was as malleable in the face of real authority as a dog trained on beef liver. "Or maybe there is another way," said Levallois. The world is changing, he

thought. Moreover, though he was willing to admit it more quickly than most, his real gift was in recognizing that people were not changing with it (Powers, *The Ruins* 51). This is crucial in illustrating the unchanged attitudes of those in power despite evolving social and political conditions. Levallois's observation highlights the dissonance between societal progress and the persistence of deeply rooted prejudices. The sheriff's submission and the other men's lack of resistance reflect how the social hierarchy and discrimination continue to exist, sustained by those in power, even in a transformed world.

Another central character in novel, George Seldom, who is journey begins in the shadow of necropolitical violence. As a young boy, he is found under the blood-soaked skirts of his murdered mother, with a note pinned to him that reads, "Look after me. I now belong to you". This act of abandonment within a violent system of slavery signifies the erasure of family and identity—a key element of necropolitical domination. His mother's death is not an individual tragedy but part of a larger system that commodifies black lives, reducing them to tools of labor or disposable entities. He raised under difficult circumstances, George's life is shaped by displacement and loss. He spends his later years trying to reconcile with his fragmented past, carrying the same note as a physical and symbolic connection to his origins. His journey explores themes of memory, identity, and survival amidst the legacies of violence and systemic oppression. Yet George's survival is itself an act of resistance. His ability to endure and carry forward his identity, albeit fragmented, challenges the necropolitical intent to erase him entirely. Mbembe argues that survival in such contexts is often "life forged in death-worlds," where the continued existence of the oppressed defies their reduction to "bare life". (245)

One of George's most profound forms of resistance lies in his determination to piece together his fragmented identity. The note he carries becomes more than an artifact of his origin; it symbolizes his refusal to be severed from his humanity. As he grows older, George becomes a keeper of

memory, his own and that of others who lived and died within the necropolitical regime. For example, George's time in the Great Dismal Swamp logging camp situates him in a landscape historically associated with resistance. The swamp served as a refuge for escaped enslaved people, and George's survival within this harsh, exploitative environment connects him to a lineage of defiance. Powers writes, "George watched the gaps in the drowned forest... an indisputable record of what man had taken but could never replace" (Powers, *The Ruins* 33). By inhabiting and witnessing these spaces, George becomes a living testament to survival amid systemic destruction.

As the novel progresses, George confronts modern manifestations of necropolitical power in the form of urban renewal projects that target predominantly black neighborhoods. The demolition of Jackson Ward and the forced displacement of its residents reflect the systemic dispossession inherent in necropolitical regimes. George's neighborhood, rich in history and culture, is reduced to rubble to make way for highways, embodying Mbembe's idea of space as a tool of control and erasure. Despite this, George refuses to surrender his autonomy. His decision to leave the ruins of Richmond for North Carolina signals a personal reclamation of agency. The text notes, "George bought a one-way ticket to the place where his memories began, carrying with him what little remained: a suitcase, a note, and his name". In returning to the site of his origins, George resists the erasure of his identity and asserts his place in a world designed to expel him.

A Shout in the Ruins reverberates into the present. The novel demonstrates the effects of colonization, the lingering which continues to shape the lives of individuals (the colonized). Powers uses his characters' experiences—particularly those of marginalized groups—as a way to explore the lingering effects of exploitation and control. The characters are not just living in a post-Civil War world; they are navigating a reality where the structures of power and dominance that defined the colonial era still shape their interactions, decisions,

and sense of self. The line “when the [Nurse] had first seen Rawls before the war when a more predictable cruelty ordered her life” (Powers, *the Ruins* 164) gives a powerful commentary on the new relationship of power, force, and domination, especially in light of a life that was ‘once ruled by a clearer-cut evil.’(Powers, *the Ruins* 164) The nurse's journey reflects one of the novel's main themes: how social justice and racism persist in instability even after radical changes. The predictability of violence in the old South required the oppressed to submit to their masters, and new assaults and domination have replaced this. Thus, for Nurse, the rest of the battle still goes on.

Kevin Powers’s *A Shout in the Ruins* is a valid representation of slavery’s and racism’s perpetual aftermath in America. Along with a detailed plot and the characters, the work demonstrates the real world and the impact of history, which has not been erased with time. Every main character in Powers’s novel becomes a skillful portrayal of the continuous connection between perverted human behavior and the torment engendered by years of slavery before and after the Civil War. Thus, it can be seen that the novel is a moving appeal for justice and the urge to strive for change against the social injustice that remains relevant today.

One important part of the novel is how it shows the strength and determination of enslaved people. Powers clearly shows how these individuals stood up against their oppression through bold and quiet acts of defiance, representing their ongoing fight for freedom and control over their lives. This resistance is not only about escaping physical chains but also about battling the mental and emotional challenges posed by the cruel system of slavery, emphasizing the unbreakable spirit of those who fought back against their oppressors. *A Shout in the Ruins* shows that necropolitics reign in psychological and social power and control spheres. Powers demonstrates how racism and oppression lurk in the textual practices and the construction of stories to warn people that it is necessary to stay vigilant despite all the advancements that have

been made in the fight against racism and oppression. Through her characters and plot, the novel presents complicated questions of history and its role in contemporary society. It demands readers to recognize the importance of changing the past and its effect on today to alter the future.

CHAPTER FIVE
Conclusions

5.1 Conclusions

The current study explored the legacies of warfare and resistance in Kevin Powers's *The Yellow Birds* and *A Shout in the Ruins* through the theoretical analysis of Achille Mbembe's *Necropolitics*. Throughout the novels, Powers sheds light on the profound dehumanization and systematic violence perpetuated by structures of power, whether in the context of war or slavery. He critiques the devastating impact of such forces and, at the same time, emphasizes acts of resistance against these necropolitical powers. Both novels demonstrate how war and systematic violence become mechanisms for managing life and death. As such, Powers's *The Yellow Birds* analysis shows how war represents a sovereign power that controls life and death, creating death worlds where life becomes precarious and human lives are rendered disposable. Powers depicts both Iraqi people and American soldiers as tools and expendable figures to the sovereignty of those in authority, reflecting Mbembe's concept of necropolitics.

For the American soldiers, Powers shows how the necropolitical system utilizes them as tools in war machinery to achieve their politics. Characters like Bartle and Murphy navigate the harsh realities of survival, guilt and alienation, which demonstrates the bad effects of war. Bartle reflects on the arbitrary nature of survival and death through his portrayal of AL Tafar city, which is destroyed by the necropolitical power of war and transformed into a death-world. Muphy also represents another victim who was used as a tool by those in power to achieve their politics; the way in which he is tortured by the harsh realities of the war zone makes him lose his mind and then kidnapped and killed by Iraqi people, which represents his disposability for those in power. Sergent Sterling, although he is represented as a person who has power above other soldiers

through his orders, yet his committing suicide at the end of the novel reflects that he becomes another victim to the above politics.

On the other hand, the novel also shows how Iraqi people are subjected to the power of death and how they endure profound suffering under the American occupation. Bartle describes scenes of destruction, where bodies are left in the streets for days, which reflects how Iraqi people in power disregard people's lives. The novel also shows how war transforms vibrant cities into places of death, like Al Tafar city, where homes, markets and natural environments are destroyed. The novel shows how those in authority, whether military leaders or even the abstract forces of war itself, subject soldiers and civilians to the power of death. The characters of the lieutenant and Sergeant Sterling represent figures who exercise sovereign authority, commanding soldiers into life-threatening situations with no regard for their lives. Additionally, soldiers like Bartle and Murphy understand their instrumentalization and expendability through their casualty feeder cards, which reduce them to mere statistics in war machinery.

Despite the horrific power of war, both American soldiers and Iraqi people engage in acts of resistance. For American soldiers, resistance is reflected by Bartle's inner struggle, his promise to Murph's mother, and his refusal to make his wartime experiences look good, showing a small but important rejection of the forces of war that make people less human. His anger at the fake thanks shown by the yellow ribbons reflects how much he does not agree with the stories that normalize violence and reduce its human cost. Similarly, the unseen resistance of Iraqi civilians is reflected through the American soldiers' constant fears of becoming the next killed. Their daily encounter with death reflects the fact that rebels are always a threat, even though they are hard to see. The soldiers' mental states are affected by the horrors of combat zones, which also demonstrates the unseen resistance of Iraqis, making every step from American soldiers a possible death encounter. Iraqi people's resistance is also represented in their fight against necropolitical dominance by keeping up their cultural

practices, which show their humanity in the middle of chaos. These acts of resistance show how strong the human spirit is in the face of necropolitical power. Extreme Resistance is also shown. In the novel, the brutal killing of Private Murphy by the Iraqi fighters is seen as a violent act of resistance against the occupying forces. Even though it is horrifying, this act is a form of protest that shows how helpless even the group that seems to be in control can be in a necropolitical system.

In the same way, *A Shout In the Ruins* criticises the history of slavery by showing it as a grave political system that turns people into commodities and keeps injustice going. Through characters like Nurse and Rawls, the novel shows how cruel slavery is and how the oppressed struggle hard in both subtle and overt ways. Powers makes links between the past and the present, focussing on how violence repeats itself and how structural discrimination exists in modern forms like nano racism. People are constantly under the control of necropolitical power. Enslaved people, like Nurse and Rawls, are treated like property and are only worth what they can offer for the owner's business. The fact that they were harmed and sold as goods shows how dehumanising slavery was as a whole. For instance, Rawls's docking (removing the toes) to prevent him from escaping shows the cruelty with which those in power exercise control.

Resistance is clearer in *A Shout in the Ruins*. Characters like Nurse and Rawls resist and struggle against being dehumanised. Nurse's violent response to Levallois and refusal to feel sorry for those who hurt her show that she does not accept necropolitical power. Rawls's hate of white supremacy and his last act of rebellion show that the oppressed have an unbreakable spirit. In both novels, the effects of violence last a long time and change cultures, identities, and histories. They also show how people can fight back, whether to stay alive, keep their culture alive, or directly protest. This resistance goes against the neoliberal

political systems that want to describe people only by how easily they can be got rid of and ruled over.

Finally, Powers's novels profoundly reflect the interrelation of history, memory, and identity. By analysing the necropolitical frameworks that dictate existence and mortality, these narratives push readers to confront the past injustices that persist in shaping modern realities. From a postcolonial perspective, *The Yellow Birds* and *A Shout In The Ruins* expose the enduring impacts of war and enslavement and the resilient human spirit that persists against suppression.

5.2 Contributions of the Study

The study contributes to the existing literary studies, particularly postcolonial theory, by analysing Kevin Powers's novels *The Yellow Birds* and *A Shout in the Ruins* through the theory of Achille Mbembe's *Necropolitics*. The study integrates postcolonial theory into modern studies of power, control, and death using Mbembe's necropolitics ideas. It shows that Powers's works about war and slavery are examples of necropolitical systems that control people and take away their freedom and humanity. Examining systemic violence through literature, The study shows how Powers looks at systemic violence as a long-lasting force beyond space and time. It puts his novels in a bigger historical and political picture, showing how power structures, whether colonial or imperial, keep making people less human and unequal. Concerning resistance, the study draws attention to how Powers's novels show resistance as a main theme. Looking at the visible and invisible acts of defiance that characters reveal, whether they are soldiers in war zones or slaves under oppressive regimes, shows that people will always be able to question and resist necropolitical control. This study also contributes to finding similar themes between *The Yellow Birds* and *A Shout in the Ruins*. These include how lives are turned into commodities and how structural oppression ruins people's minds. This study

sheds light on less popular points of view and gives a voice to Powers's marginalized characters, like the Iraqi citizens in *The Yellow Birds* and the slaves in *A Shout in the Ruins*. Finally, this study makes it easier for scholars to understand Kevin Powers's works and how they relate to postcolonial and necropolitical studies. It provides a way to examine how literature, history, and political power connect. This helps to discuss structural violence, resistance, and human resilience in modern and historical settings.

5.3 Recommendations for Further Studies

The researcher suggests that the novels can be studied by applying the theory of Marxism, which focuses on class struggles, labour exploitation, power relations and the influence of economic systems on human lives. Powers's first novel*, The Yellow Birds,* can be studied through Marx's concept of alienation by examining the soldiers' experience in war and how they are alienated from their bodies and sense of self. How those soldiers are treated as instruments of war, and how their lives become defined by the military's demands. Those soldiers fight for the economic elites who control the war machine. A Marxist study can be done on Powers's second novel*, A Shout in the Ruins*, by focusing on the role of slavery and plantation economics as they exemplify capitalist systems of exploitation, where the African American slaves are rescued to property, serving a ruling class.

Works Cited

Ahmed, Toqeer. "Political Violence and Necropolitics in Omar Shahid Hamid's *The Prisoner*." *GEMA Online Journal of Language Studies*, vol. 22, no. 2, 2022.

Ahmed, Toqeer. "Precarious Lives Precarious Geographies: Representation of Biopolitics, Violence and Necropolitics in Contemporary Pakistani Anglophone Fiction." *Pakistan Journal of Social Research*, vol. 3, no. 4, 2021, pp. 456–464.

AL-Janabi, Zainalabdeen A. Al Shnain, and Aihua Chen. "Critique of the Cruelty of the Iraq War: The Symbolism in Kevin Power's *The Yellow Birds*." *Journal of Literature and Art Studies*, vol. 9, no. 5, 2019, pp. 479–487.

Alosman, M. Ikbal M., and M. M. Raihanah. "Survival Psychology in Kevin Powers's *The Yellow Birds*." *GEMA Online Journal of Language Studies*, vol. 20, no. 1, 2020.

Arens, Sarah. "Narrating the (Post) Nation? Aspects of the Local and the Global in Francophone Congolese Writing." *Research in African Literatures*, vol. 49, no. 1, 2018, pp. 22–41.

Arnopoulos, Paris. "Plato and Aristotle on War and Peace." *Philosophia: Yearbook of the Research Center for Greek Philosophy at the Academy of Athens*, vol. 27, 1997, pp. 142–58.

Avila, Edward A. *Conditions of (Im)Possibility: Necropolitics, Neoliberalism, and the Cultural Politics of Death in Contemporary Chicana/o Film and Literature*. Dissertation, UC San Diego, 2012.

Baines, Gary. "Site of Struggle: The Freedom Park Fracas and the Divisive Legacy of South Africa's Border War/Liberation Struggle." *Social Dynamics*, vol. 35, no. 2, 2009, pp. 330–344.

Berrada, Taïeb. "Migrant Necropolitics at the Table: 'Civilized Cannibalism' in Mahi Binebine's *Cannibales*." *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture*, vol. 21, no. 6, 2020.

Biko, Stephen. "Black Consciousness and the Quest for a True Humanity." *Ufahamu*, vol. 8, no. 3, 1977, pp. 10–20.

Bojang, Malang B. S. "The Hidden Agenda Behind the Invasion of Iraq: The Unjust War Over Iraq in 2003." *Central European Journal of Politics*, vol. 2, no. 2, 2016, pp. 1–14.

Bright, David. "'A Shout in the Ruins' by Kevin Powers." *San Francisco Chronicle*, Datebook, https://datebook.sfchronicle.com/books/a-shout-in-the-ruins-by-kevin-powers. Accessed 17 Jan. 2025.

Brosman, Catharine Savage. "The Functions of War Literature." *South Central Review*, vol. 9, no. 1, 1992, pp. 85–98.

Burnside, John. "The Yellow Birds by Kevin Powers – Review." *The Guardian*, 31 Nov. 2012, www.theguardian.com/books/2012/nov/30/yellow-birds-kevin-powers-review.

Cantero Sánchez, Mayte. "On Racism and the Impossibility of Mourning: A Critical Reading of Claudia Rankine's *Citizen, an American Lyric*." *Revista de Estudios Norteamericanos*, vol. 22, 2018, pp. 83–101.

Classen, Albrecht, and Nadia Margolis, eds. *War and Peace: Critical Issues in European Societies and Literature, 800-1800*. De Gruyter, 2011.

Cruickshank, Ruth. "Placing Lost Intersectional Plots in Houellebecq's *Anéantir* (2022): Race, Climate, and Scandalous Textual Necropolitics." *French Cultural Studies*, vol. 34, no. 1, 2023, pp. 92–105.

Da Silva Santos, Mariana. "The Necropolitics in *Through the Arc of the Rainforest* by Karen Tei Yamashita." *Abusões*, vol. 24, 2024.

De Loof, Karen. *Imagining the Perpetrator in Iraq War Fiction: Evan Wright's *Generation Kill* and Kevin Powers's *The Yellow Birds*. Ghent University, 2016.

De Medeiros, Paulo, and Sandra Ponzanesi, eds. *Postcolonial Theory and Crisis*. Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co KG, 2024.

Durán-Almarza, Emilia María. "Uncomfortable Truths: Queer Strangers and Gendered Necropolitics in Akwaeke Emezi's *The Death of Vivek Oji*." *Papers on Language and Literature*, vol. 1, 2022, pp. 70–126.

Enefu, Abraham. "Necropolitics in Francophone African Novel: Examining Power and Resistance in Tansi's *La Vie et Demie*." *ESTAGA: Journal of Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, vol. 1, no. 2, 2024.

Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*. Translated by Richard Philcox, Grove Press, 2004.

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Translated by Alan Sheridan, Vintage Books, 1995.

Flood, Alison. "Guardian First Book Award 2012 Goes to Kevin Powers." *The Guardian*, 29 Nov. 2012, www.theguardian.com/books/2012/nov/29/guardian-firstbook-award-2012-kevin-powers. Accessed 9 Oct. 2019.

Ganor, Boaz. "Defining Terrorism: Is One Man's Terrorist Another Man's Freedom Fighter?" *Police Practice and Research*, vol. 3, no. 4, 2002, pp. 287–304, https://doi.org/10.1080/1561426022000032060.

Ghosh, Amrita. "Reading Discourses of Power and Violence in Emerging Kashmiri Literature in English: *The Collaborator* and *Curfewed Night*." *Review of Human Rights*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2018, pp. 30–49.

Hawkins, Ty. "The Great War, the Iraq War, and Postmodern America: Kevin Powers's *The Yellow Birds* and the Radical Isolation of Today's US Veterans." *The Great War in Postmemory Literature and Film*, edited by Martin Löschnigg and Marzena Sokolowska-Paryz, De Gruyter, 2014, pp. 95-108.

Humy, Samuel. "Never Let Me Go and the Necropolitics of Biomedical Engineering." *Emergence: A Journal of Undergraduate Literary Criticism and Creative Research*, vol. 5, 2014.

Jordan, Hilary. "All Book Marks Reviews for *A Shout in the Ruins* by Kevin Powers." *Book Marks*, https://bookmarks.reviews/reviews/all/a-shout-in-the-ruins. Accessed 17 Jan. 2025.

Jordan, Hilary. "Slavery's Repercussions Unspool in a Dark Southern Tale: *A Shout in the Ruins*." *The New York Times*, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/24/books/review/shout-in-the-ruins-kevin-powers.html.

Kaku, Archana B. "Sovereign Bodies: The Necropolitics of Torture, Self-Immolation, and Suicide Bombing." *Dissertation*, University of Pennsylvania, 2021.

Kehoe, Ryan Michael. "Necropolitics and Contemporary Hungarian Literature and Cinema." *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture*, vol. 11, no. 4, 2009, https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1562.

Kidd, James. "The Yellow Birds, by Kevin Powers." *The Independent*, 8 Sept. 2012, www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/reviews/the-yellow-birds-by-kevin-powers-8119943.html. Accessed 9 Aug. 2019.

Lilja, Mona, Mikael Baaz, and Stellan Vinthagen. "Exploring Irrational Resistance." *Journal of Political Power*, vol. 6, no. 2, 2013, pp. 201–217.

MacKenzie, Simon P. "A Forgotten War: World War I in the United States." *Comillas Journal of International Relations*, vol. 2, 2015, pp. 49–60.

Malik, Anjali. "Representation of War in Victorian Era and Modern Era: Through Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* and *Arms and the Man* by G. B. Shaw." *International Journal of Advances in Engineering and Management*, 2022, pp. 170–173.

Mandakovic, Sasha. "Exploring the Rise of Black Consciousness in South Africa Using Gale Primary Sources." *Gale Ambassador at Erasmus University, Rotterdam*, 4 July 2023, https://review.gale.com/2023/07/04/exploring-the-rise-of-black-consciousness-in-south-africa-using-gale-primary-sources/.

Marzillier, John. "Eye on Fiction: *The Yellow Birds*." *The British Psychological Society*, 3 May 2013, https://thepsychologist.bps.org.uk/volume-26/edition-5/eye-fiction-yellow-birds. Accessed 8 May 2019.

Mbembe, Achille. *Necropolitics*. Duke University Press, 2019.

Moini, Rajaa. *Ghosts at the Threshold: Disembodied Memory and Mourning in Post-War Violent Death in Contemporary Middle Eastern and South Asian Literatures*. MS thesis, Purdue University, 2024.

Motion, Andrew. "A Shout in the Ruins by Kevin Powers Review – An American Civil War Epic." *The Guardian*, 10 May 2018,

https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/may/10/a-shout-in-the-ruins-by-kevin-powers-review.

Nester, Thomas. “Book Review: The Price of Par.” *Bridgewater Review*, vol. 32, no. 1, 2013, pp. 39-40.

Page, Gabriel. *The Post-American Novel: 9/11, the Iraq War, and the Crisis of American Hegemony*. Diss. UC Berkeley, 2018.

Percy, Benjamin. "The Yellow Birds, by Kevin Powers." *The New York Times*, 4 May 2014.

Pile, Steve. *Opposition, Political Identities, and Spaces of Resistance*. Routledge, 1997.

Precup, Amelia. "Reversing Absence: The Exploration of Memory in *The Yellow Birds* by Kevin Powers." *Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai Philologia*, vol. 62, no. 1, 2017, pp. 173–190.

Pugliese, Joseph. *Biopolitics of the More-Than-Human*. 2020.

Powers, Kevin. *A Shout in the Ruins*. Little, Brown and Company, 2018.

Powers, Kevin. *The Yellow Birds: A Novel*. Back Bay Books, Little, Brown and Company, 2012.

Quéma, Anne. "Dionne Brand’s *Ossuaries*: Songs of Necropolitics." *Canadian Literature*, vol. 222, 2014, pp. 52–68.

Raihanah, M. M., and M. Ikbal M. Alosman. "Post-Heroic Portrayal of War in Kevin Powers’s *The Yellow Birds*." *Jordan Journal of Modern Languages and Literatures*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2022, pp. 189–202.

Sanders, Bernie. "Campaign Rhetoric in Reno, Nevada." *RealClearPolitics*, 15 Feb. 2016, https://www.realclearpolitics.com/2016/02/15/campaign_rhetoric_in_reno_nevada. Web. 20 Mar. 2016.

Satriawan, Faizal Yusuf, and Mundi Rahayu. "A Soldier's Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in Kevin Powers's *The Yellow Birds*." *Jurnal Pembelajaran Sastra*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2020, pp. 1–11.

Schaub, Michael. "'A Shout in the Ruins' Probes the Lasting Infections of War and Slavery." *NPR*, 16 May 2018, https://www.npr.org/2018/05/16/609366318/a-shout-in-the-ruins-probes-the-lasting-infections-of-war-and-slavery. Accessed 19 Aug. 2024.

Siu, Anthony. "Necropolitics and Visuality: Remembering 'Speculative Fictions in Hong Kong After Rancière and Mbembe." *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture*, vol. 24, no. 1, 2022, pp. 14.

Stevenson, David. *1914–1918: The History of the First World War*. Penguin Books, 2004.

"The Economist." "Summary and Reviews of *A Shout in the Ruins* by Kevin Powers."*BookBrowse*, https://www.bookbrowse.com/bb_briefs/detail/index.cfm/ezine_preview_number/13970/a-shout-in-the-ruins. Accessed 19 Aug. 2024.

Yebra, José M., and Alfonso Revilla. "Necropolitics in Sinan Antoon's *The Corpse Washer*." *Nordic Journal of English Studies*, vol. 21, no. 1, 2022, pp. 96–114.

Yordán, Carlos L. "America's Quest for Global Hegemony: Offensive Realism, the Bush Doctrine, and the 2003 Iraq War." *Theoria*, vol. 53, no. 110, 2006, pp. 125–157.

المستخلص

الحرب والمقاومة تركتا آثارًا لا تُمحى على المجتمعات، مما أسهم في تشكيل الذاكرة الجماعية، والهوية، وهياكل السلطة . في سياقات ما بعد الاستعمار، تتداخل هذه الذكريات مع العنف المنهجي وسياسات الحياة والموت، مما يوفر أرضية خصبة للاستكشاف الأدبي. ومع ذلك، غالبا ما تغفل هذه السرديات عن التجارب المعقدة للأفراد الخاضعين للقمع وأشكال مقاومتهم داخل هذه العوالم المميتة. لقد ركزت الدراسات السابقة حول رواية الطيور الصفراء (٢٠١٢) للكاتب كيفن باورز على موضوعات الصدمة النفسية وامكانية البقاء بعد الصدمة، محللة التأثير العاطفي للحرب على الجنود. بالمقابل، لم تحظ روايته الثانية صيحة في الاطلال (٢٠١٨) بنفس الاهتمام النقدي، ولم تتناولها سوى مراجعات محدودة تستكشف وموضوع العنف التاريخي وإدامة تجريد الإنسان من إنسانيته.

لذلك، تسعى هذه الدراسة إلى تحليل الديناميكيات النيكروبوليتيكية في روايات باورز من خلال تطبيق نظرية نيكروبوليتيكس (٢٠١٩) لأشيل مبيمبي كإطار مفاهيمي. يركز التحليل على آليات السيطرة والسيادة التي تجعل الحياة البشرية قابلة للاستغناء عنها، متتبعا كيفية تنقل شخصيات مثل الجندي بارتل في الطيور الصفراء والمجتمعات المستعبدة في صيحة في الاطلال داخل هذه العوالم المميتة. من خلال استكشاف تصوير نزع الإنسانية وهشاشة الحياة البشرية في هذه النصوص، تناقش الدراسة كيف تشكل البنى القمعية التجارب المعيشية للأفراد الخاضعين للاضطهاد. كما تحلل أشكال المقاومة المختلفة التي تقدمها الروايتان، موضحة كيف يمارس المقموعون أشكالا من الفاعلية في مواجهة القمع النيكروبوليتيكي. تجادل الدراسة بأن روايات باورز تقدم سردية مزدوجة عن الحرب والمقاومة. ففي الطيور الصفراء، يتم استكشاف الآثار النفسية الدائمة للحرب وتأثير العنف النيكروبوليتيكي على الجنود والمدنيين العراقيين بينما يوسع صيحة في الاطلال هذا الفحص ليشمل إدامة نزع الإنسانية عبر الأجيال من خلال هذه السرديات، تتناول الروايتان العلاقة المعقدة بين السلطة والمقاومة، والصراع المستمر من أجل الإنسانية داخل المساحات التي تهيمن عليها السيادة النيكروبوليتيكية.

جمهوريـــة العراق
وزارة التعليم العالي والبحث العلمي
جامعـــة الانبـــار
كليـــة الاداب
قسم اللغة الإنكليزية

إرث الحرب والمقاومة: دراسة مابعد إستعمارية لروايات مختارة لكيفن باورز

رسالة مقدمة
الى مجلس كلية الاداب بجامعة الانبار
وهي جزء من متطلبات نيل درجة الماجستير
في الأدب الإنكليزي

من طالبة الماجستير

سارة شاكر غريب نايف العلياوي

بإشراف:

الأستاذ المساعد

ياسر مطلب عبدالله

م 2025 هـ1447