

TRIBAL LIFE AND INSTRUMENTALIZATION OF HUMAN BODY: A NECROPOLETICAL STUDY OF JAMIL AHMAD'S THE WANDERING FALCON

Rafia Kiran Zahid

(Corresponding author)

PhD scholar at the Department of English Language & Literature, University of Lahore.

Email: Rafiazahid.765@gmail.com

Dr. H.M. Zahid Iqbal

Associate Professor & Chair, Department of English Language & Literature, University of Lahore.

Email: zahid.iqbal@ell.uol.edu.pk

Abstract

According to this study, the state, by placing differential values on certain populations, exposes them to death or near-death experiences. This exposure is a necropolitical practice that marginalizes certain groups by enabling their exclusion from positions of power. Jamil Ahmad's (2011) novel *The Wandering Falcon* is a fascinating literary portrayal of necropolitics in the tribal cultures and border regions of Pakistan and Afghanistan. This paper analyzes the complex relationships between power, sovereignty, and human existence, employing Achille Mbembe's (2003) Necropolitics as the primary theoretical framework. It highlights that the intricate relationships between tribal customs, governmental entities, and marginalized populations lead to material destruction because the instrumentalization of such indigenous populations is not possible. Nomadic tribes' fragile existence serves as an example of how fleeting life is in such circumstances. Nativity and tribal values haunt governmentality, so the state will always institutionalize them for better control. Violence, eviction, and displacement are some other necropolitical technologies discussed, and how they are frequently reflected in this fiction. This research explores why modern post-colonial states invariably sacrifice segments of their people using various necropolitical technologies under neo-colonial and imperial powers and why this political calculation of life and death is considered necessary for democracy to work.

Keywords: Necropolitics, displacement, nomadic tribes, violence, governmentality.

TRIBAL LIFE AND INSTRUMENTALIZATION OF HUMAN BODY: A NECROPOLITICAL STUDY OF JAMIL AHMAD'S THE WANDERING FALCON

INTRODUCTION

The Wandering Falcon (henceforth TWF), written by Ahmad (2011), is an intriguing novel that offers a unique glimpse into the lives of tribal groups that reside along the Pak-Afghan borderlands. His superb prose description of the region's landscape and cultural diversity transports readers to a stunning and challenging world. The narrative is vividly told, tying together themes of custom, conflict, and the intersection between tribal traditions and the advances of civilization. TWF is a potent literary examination of the tenacity and adversity of tribal people. It also offers a compelling and sympathetic portrayal of a largely unseen world, inviting readers to think about the complexities of identity, authority, and survival on the peripheries of contemporary states through the excursions of its characters and its artistic rendering of the region's landscapes. Ahmad (2011), who was a seasoned bureaucrat, published this novel several years after the completion of the novel. At first, it seems quite contradictory when we see someone in such an influential position speak against the state institutions practicing necropolitical technologies and exposing tribal people to death or near-death experiences, but as we move ahead in the book, it takes us to an entirely ravishing experience of the indigenous tribes and their ways of living with a sympathetic insider's perspective. Abbas & Iqbal (2023) explicate that "the knowledge which is constructed and published based on power about the powerless and poor nations has surely chances of ambiguity and misrepresentation" (p. 413), but in Jamil Ahmad's case, he is experiencing the lived experiences with the tribal people. This self-experienced writer makes a unique formation to indulge the reader in the in-depth details of different forms of living, which, if measured by the contemporary gauges of development, will be so unjust by the reader and researcher.

The novel crafts a tapestry of interrelated stories, each depicting the difficulties and ambitions of the nomadic people against the backdrop of untamed landscapes and evolving political forces. The primary character of the text, *Tor Baz*, which means 'a wandering falcon', and the novel takes its name after him, was born to a tribal couple who were on the run after breaking the tribal oath of marriage. The couple has called upon the wrath of the tribal customs because the man had fled with the chief's married daughter while working as his servant, but later the couple was killed to ascertain the honor of the tribe. Death has been an overshadowing theme throughout the novel,

exposing marginalized characters to disposability. This couple's execution was a tragedy by exposing them; however, the 'letting live' of the child in the vast desert is the horror that invigorates necropolitical technology because he is in the position of "living dead." He was left alone with the graves of his parents and a dead camel to rot in the desert.

The halt of independent seasonal migrations by nomadic tribes put them in precarity as they and their animals need documentation according to the revised policies of the bordering. They are designed to keep moving, and "the decision to move" would not cause them some extraordinary worry because they know that their sole survivor lies in their movement, and "what did it matter if they set off now rather than in a few more weeks?" (Ahmad, 2011, p. 143). The tribal struggle for survival under shifting institutional dynamics following the establishment of borders, forced dislocation, violence, and the intersection of life and death are some themes that appear concurrently in the book. In post-colonial nations, people frequently form bonds through their common experiences of resistance, survival, and oppression. This critical formation of interpellated subjectivity is shaped by how state procedures and societal norms define them. This leads to the establishment of a shared epistemic framework. This interpellation-based connection of people emphasizes the relational aspect of identity, in which people are not isolated but rather part of a larger social fabric that influences their perception of the world. Ahmad (2013) in an interview at the JLF blatantly defended the tribal values and their concept of honor. He has urged the world that to comprehend their life system and their indigenous cultural sensibilities fully, one has to live among them. He is concerned about how the contemporary forms of politics consider them a threat to the order. "Every system is threatened by the tribe... the tribes have been on the defensive all along... They need to be protected." (Jaipur Literary Festival)

LITERATURE REVIEW

The term 'necropolitics', introduced by Achille Mbembe, a Cameroonian philosopher and social scientist, refers to the state's exercise of power through the regulation and manipulation of death, determining how certain lives are viewed as disposable while others are given special treatment and protection. Necropolitics is based on a Foucauldian term; biopolitics, which to Lemke (2011), is a "historical phenomenon" without which we cannot understand the political relationship of a subject with the state, but Mbembe (2003) argues that the modern challenges and politics on life as well as the death of the people involve the need to engage Necropolitics in the political and historical

TRIBAL LIFE AND INSTRUMENTALIZATION OF HUMAN BODY: A NECROPOLITICAL STUDY OF JAMIL AHMAD'S THE WANDERING FALCON

understanding of modern sovereign state powers. The state apparatuses do not work to make their populations live now but also decide when to create a state of exception for some people to put them to death. Mbembe (2003) explains necropolitics as “the subjugation of life to the power of death” (p. 39). Kamal et al. (2022) discursively argued that TWF has portrayed the hegemonic structure of the tribal Jirga system, undermining the weaker in the tribal society. He also projected “the precarious position of FATA subalterns who have been the victims of political neglect” since its inception and have been put under the “dark law” of Frontier Crime Regulation (p. 632). The exceptional formulation of the law for the tribal population is itself necropolitical because it provides the state with a hegemonic power over tribal populations, deeming them an easy target of annihilation by putting them to death whenever it becomes a necessity. This law was abrogated by the former Prime Minister of Pakistan, Yousaf Raza Gillani (Haq et al., 2005).

The study explores the relationships between gender, cultural identity, and ethnicity and the disparate valuation of human life. The novel's female characters, for example, experience many levels of subjection, illuminating how necropolitical practices may exacerbate gender-based vulnerabilities. This study illuminates the cunning workings of necropolitics and the ramifications for comprehending state authority, sovereignty, and the debatable notion of human dignity. The analysis of TWF makes a significant addition to the larger discourse on the politics of life and death in modern nation-states by providing crucial insights into the uneven power structures and the survival battles on the margins of the modern world. Agamben (1998) explains the status of 'bare life' as someone who is doubly excluded from political life and is exposed to the violence of the killings, which are unsanctionable so the populations may be killed yet not sacrificed, and the executioner will not be charged with homicide (Sacred Life). Ahmad (2011) explains the despicable condition of the Baluch subjects who “died a final and total death” (p. 34) and their sacredness declared by the state did not permit them “to live in no songs” nor will any memorial be raised for them (Ahmad, 2011, p. 34). It was the necropolitical technologies working at their best to not only reduce some to death with impunity but also to have the ability to make them submit to the totalitarian law.

The key component of democratic governance is the political evaluation of life and death. In democracies, it is the responsibility of state institutions to

safeguard the general welfare while maintaining a delicate balance between individual liberties and the common good. This necessitates decisions about how to distribute resources, formulate policies, and put security measures into place. All of these decisions inevitably include determining which lives should be given priority and protection and which should be put in danger or seen as expendable. Agamben (qt. in Lemke, 2011) borrows the term *homo-sacer*, which is Latin for 'bare life', from early Roman legislation as someone outside the political community and hence can be "killed with impunity" (Homo Sacer, 1998, p. 47). These people are "excluded from the protection of the law," which gives the right of 'putting to death and letting live' to the sovereign authority (pp. 54–55). Agamben (1998) explains sacred life as someone "that cannot be sacrificed and yet maybe killed" (p. 52). As a form of government, democracy charges the state with being responsible for the welfare and protection of its people and emerge as an equitable governance; however, this charade of common good is limited to the privileged strata of society only. This requires making judgments about social welfare programs, safety laws, and public health that inevitably involve evaluating the risks and effects on individual lives. For example, in TWF, the reader is informed that the paramedics ensure that the Pawindah¹ people (tribesmen on foot) are vaccinated and are not carrying any vermin, exposing the larger population to typhus fever (p. 49).

In nations with democracy, the moral ramifications of political calculations present important ethical issues. In light of the concepts of equality, justice, and human rights, such decisions must be carefully examined for equity and impartiality. Mbembe (2003) believes that the concept of biopower is insufficient to explain modern manifestations of life's subjection to the power of death. (p.40) In modern times, where 'death worlds' are made for large people to select who should be allowed to live and who should be put to death, the sovereign power given to the state to govern, control, and manage populations takes a new turn. Nomadic life is the life of a closed, well-knitted community, and the Western imperatives to judge the rationality of the tribal life fall short of understanding the depth of this culture. For instance, in one of the incidents Ahmad (2011) writes about another tribesman who never visited his in-laws, and upon his visit with his friend after twenty years of marriage, he had to explain which daughter he was married to (p. 115). This situation might sound extremely disturbing for an outsider, but for the locals, survival means being on

¹ An Indo-English term to define tribes, usually who travel by foot with their animals

TRIBAL LIFE AND INSTRUMENTALIZATION OF HUMAN BODY: A NECROPOLITICAL STUDY OF JAMIL AHMAD'S THE WANDERING FALCON

the move and being static is deadly; hence, meeting relatives from some other tribe might be a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Ahmad (2011) understands the pace of life of the tribal people, and he writes, “The pervading silence of their land had taught their people to be deliberate in their actions and slow in responding to emotions” (p. 29). TWF contains several necropolitical technologies that show how governments exploit their power and how people are valued differently in tribal communities and border areas. The novel depicts a world where people are vulnerable to violence, dispossession, and marginalization to highlight the precariousness of life for those living on the outskirts of nation-states.

METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This is a qualitative research which investigates the techniques affecting the lives and ways of living of the marginal tribal populations on the borders of Afghanistan and Pakistan using “Necropolitics” by Achille Mbembe (2003) as the main theoretical framework.

NECROPOLITICS IN THE WANDERING FALCON

*TWF demonstrates how repressive and brutal governmental border control is a hazard from state authorities attempting to retain territorial sovereignty as a continual menace for the tribes living along Pakistan's and Afghanistan's borders. Ahmad (2011) depicts, how the state apparatuses are engaged to practice the instrumentalization of human bodies that is to make these bodies usable otherwise to make them perish. Tribal social structures are disrupted by these forced relocations, which frequently result in the loss of cultural assets and traditional lifestyles. Since Jamil Ahmad's service in this region as a government representative was a political position, his description of this land can't be apolitical. Ansari (2018) “Ahmad's agency as author and third-person narrator of the novella is thus closely tied to the power relations and disciplinary techniques adopted by the postcolonial nation state from the colonial era, for the administration of the so-called 'Pashtun problem'" (p. 152). The lives of the dispossessed are seen as worthless in the lofty pursuit of national goals. Badkhan (2011) submits that Ahmad doesn't add extraneous “curlies” to his prose. Like the Kuchi tribe, he just takes the absolute necessities of his literary *hejira*². The beauty his nomadic people discover in the land that feeds and perplexes them, affording them a thousand hues of grey and*

² Travel, flight

brown, with which it colored its hills, its dunes, and its dirt, is also present in his spare prose, which is nearly magnificent. The vibrant colors of the tiny desert flowers concealed in the dusty shrubs, the scurrying lizards and the gliding snakes in the sand, and the darkness of the nights and the brightness of the days all showed subtle color variations.

It is the sovereign power of the state that decides someone is not worthy of living anymore and can be killed with impunity. “Inclusion in political society” requires, as Lemke (2011) maintains, “a simultaneous exclusion of human beings who are denied full legal status” (p. 54). While speaking of the power axis that legitimizes a few to live if they are Christian, rich, white, and cisgender, it is also important to discuss how the distance from the axis of power defines the disposability of certain populations. Mbembe (2003) in “Necropolitics” develops an argument that “the calculus of life passes through the death of the Other” (p. 18), which highlights that the law of survival depends upon the killing of the weaker. Because of this, killing specific individuals is often considered the lowest yet most efficient means of retaining power, but this is unlikely to continue for very long because sustaining the population is essential to preserving the legitimacy of the state. The absence of the population will rule out the existence of the state itself. According to Mbembe’s ‘logic of survival’, every man is a rival of every other man, and the only way a survivor can feel safe is by killing an enemy. Each enemy slain also increases the survivor’s sense of security, as Mbembe (2003) asserts, “And each enemy killed makes the survivor feel more secure” (p. 36).

He contends Foucault’s idea of biopower is insufficient to explain contemporary forms of oppression because it ignores the significance of colonial slavery as the precondition for the emergence of Western capitalism and fails to explain why necropolitical tactics continue to be used in liberal democracies. Imperialism and its racial and power-based technologies are inextricably linked to the Industrial Revolution. In her article “What Is Necropolitics? The Political Calculation of Life and Death”, Verghese (2021) maintains that white supremacy, the prison industrial complex, and colonialism are some of the violent structures of capitalism in necropolitics. She has also criticized how the poor nation-states “rationalize” the deaths of their populations to get aid and fewer sanctions from the Western countries. This submission of the local nation-states will also ensure better living for the rest of the population with quite many scholarships and international funds to repair the damage caused by the foreign bombings. She believes that the disparity

TRIBAL LIFE AND INSTRUMENTALIZATION OF HUMAN BODY: A NECROPOLITICAL STUDY OF JAMIL AHMAD'S THE WANDERING FALCON

between the marginalized populations has increased the chances of getting these people exposed to the politics of death by dragging them away from the axis of power. Deprivation of medical and healthcare facilities to trial people, segregated educational opportunities, and the white man's racial monopoly on certain positions are necropolitical because such practices assign a differential value to each human being, determining his worth based on his whiteness and wealth to calculate his viability to live.

This creates the situation of a camp, which is not a temporary place but a permanent spatial arrangement where certain individuals have to live. The camp is not a temporal condition but a state of permanence, keeping people outside the normal definition of law (Necropolitics, 2003, p. 13). Ahmad (2011) discussed marginalized groups living on the margins of power in TWF who have no say in creating the conditions contemporary democracies impose on them. He views the world through the eyes of a bureaucracy that was given a job in an administrative position in the Pakistani borderlands, where the border meets that of Iran and Afghanistan. While he does not romanticize tribal life, he does criticize how these tribes are victims of necropolitical practices of contemporary states that force them to register and adopt sedentary lifestyles that are almost a death sentence for most of the year when such populations continue to move on foot with tens of thousands of their animals to determine their fate. Because their migration was centered on the green pastures available to their family and animals, the rule of source scarcity was never an issue before the Pak-Afghan boundary became a physical barrier. People in this area were previously unaware of the new atmosphere of dread and collateral damage, which suggests "that the economic ramifications of colonial rule are not confined to the political or social spheres alone but profoundly shape the psyche of the characters" such as Mullah Barrerai (Ahmad, 2023, p. 18). According to him, this book is "a notable repercussion of colonial influence... the dissolution of tribal cohesion and the imposition" (pp. 17–18), and imperialistic tendencies are one way that this influence manifested.

As the tribal inhabitants negotiate the difficulties of political authority, cultural traditions, and territory control, Tor Baz's voyage comes to represent the struggle of the tribal populations. Ahmad (2011) expertly illustrates how state power and international borders affect the lives of underprivileged tribes throughout the story. Ahmad (2011) is not a "newcomer" to the tribal society,

International Research Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vol.:04, Issue: 01, Jan-March, 2025
as Badkhan (2011) asserts that “he might be an outsider,” still not new to the customs. He has used the perfect tinge of humor to explain the precarious practices within the tribes. For instance, he lightheartedly wrote about a man Sher Beg from Chitral who sold his daughter “for a pound of opium and a hundred rupees to the local prince” (TWF, p. 143). The epistemic connection discussed in the above example highlights how power, knowledge, and identity intersect in postcolonial society. Mbembe (2003) highlights the fact that knowledge is intricately linked to power dynamics and is therefore not neutral. The processes of creating, sharing, and using information have the power to support or undermine preexisting hierarchies. The way that people and communities perceive themselves and their place in the social hierarchy is shaped by this relationship between knowledge and power. This is the death world that he talks about, where the existence is deplorably questionable. “new and unique forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to conditions of life conferring upon them the status of living dead (p. 40).

Life has to be captured in the sphere of the sovereign power to be silenced with impunity. For instance, in TWF, the governmental institutions have been found working at the behest of the state. Institutions appear to stifle the personal compassion that the officers stationed in those areas had, as seen by the statement that “no bureaucrat risked dismissal” (p. 34) when standing out in support of the ruthless murder of the Baluch people. Afzidi (2018) appears to criticize Jamil Ahmad's unvarnished account of the land to depict the impenetrable community in her M.Phil thesis. She believes Ahmad's work as a bureaucrat in the borderland region was filtered through the lens of a “political agent” (p. 34) and that anything he said about tribal life was relevant to the state's larger discourse on power, sovereignty, and population control. She supported her assertion by claiming that Ahmad (2011) was targeting the ‘intended reader’ from the West when he wrote the pointless details about the closed community's dress (p. 78), as the local reader is well-versed in the region's specific clothing characteristics. She also blamed Ahmad (2011) for being an accomplice to the foreign world by acquiring market value by demonstrating an intimate knowledge of oriental culture.

Although we share the same country, we remain in oblivion about life on the margins. We tend to disagree with Afzidi's (2018) assessment of Jamil Ahmad's narrative because it required imagination on the part of individuals outside those areas to understand the customs, clothes, and cultural maxims.

TRIBAL LIFE AND INSTRUMENTALIZATION OF HUMAN BODY: A NECROPOLITICAL STUDY OF JAMIL AHMAD'S THE WANDERING FALCON

Tribal life is incredibly private; therefore, conveying it while utilizing the advantage of being an outsider but still residing among them is helpful. It is crucial to remind the reader that the text was initially written in the 1970s, a time when no publisher had an interest in publishing a story relevant to the tribal way of life. Therefore, in my opinion, Ahmad's stories helped to preserve the life and culture of the Pak-Afghan tribes before they were commercialized following the 9/11 attack. Majeed (2014) extols the virtues of the work, noting that it was written by a 78-year-old man, long before the subconscious of modern humans became bogged down "by replacing people with numbers and empathy with stock language for the tribal people." She praises the text for being an "unadulterated" portrayal of the landscape and its inhabitants, which later became "nauseatingly marketable." This prevents the poem from being commercialized and turns it into "an effective cultural document."

Necropolitics can be used to examine the strict border controls and immigration laws of Western countries. These policies expose vulnerable populations to violent situations and life-threatening conditions by refusing secure entrance to refugees and migrants escaping conflict and persecution. Ahmad (2011) worries about the Kharot tribe with millions of men and their animals "whose entire lives were spent in wandering with seasons" (p. 37) and who used to confide so much so in their herds that "sometimes they merely let their animals take the decisions for them" (p. 37). The intensive surveillance of some groups, especially those deemed to be dangerous, is a reflection of the various values placed on life and the demonstration of power over life and death. It clarifies the disparate value placed on human lives in current neo-imperial practices and unequal power allocation. The inexorable pressure of forgetting one set of values and getting familiarized with new concepts associated with "civilization, such as citizenship, statehood, undivided loyalty to one state, and adoption of ways of settled living, was nearly the death for the nomadic ways of life (p. 38).

Zahid et al. (2022) assert that "unlearning the empire will demand us to cease the hierarchy that declares certain nations as superiors and others inferior. This unlearning will desire to question such categorization that caused damage to the postcolonial nations" (p. 29). Neo-imperialism and necropolitics have a complicated relationship because they both function in separate domains yet occasionally cross paths. Neo-imperialism is the term used to describe

current methods used by strong nations to dominate and rule over weaker ones. Without using direct military colonization, it entails influencing others through financial, political, and cultural means. Economic exploitation, extraction of resources, and the encroachment of cultural ideals and standards on other nations are frequent characteristics of neo-imperialism. Necropolitics involves deciding whose lives are respected and safeguarded and whose lives are seen as expendable and hence vulnerable to abuse and violence. Through financial, political, and cultural means—oftentimes without the use of force—it entails imposing control and dominance over other nations or regions. Frontier Crime Regulations is one such example that continues to haunt the tribal populations since the British Raj. The most baffling detail about it is that every newborn from the tribal community is born a criminal, thus he is always already in a state of dead-like living (Haq et al., 2005).

The individuals belonging to the governing elites or adhering to the prevailing culture enjoy preferential treatment and protection; the marginalized tribes are seen as inferior and less desirable. Even within these tribes, the strongest ones, like Afridis, Mehsuds and Wazirs, mistreat other less dominant tribes, but we believe that's the logic of their survival. If they will not kill their enemy, they will be killed by one. However, as a tribal collectivity, "nature has bred in both an unusual abundance of anger, enormous resilience, and a total refusal to accept their fate" (Ahmad, 2011, p. 86). Nevertheless, this doesn't mean that these tribes were save from the state's necropolitical technologies because for all of them 'nature' was an undisputed master which gave them freedom from the man-made laws as Ansari (2018) observes that "no tribal in Ahmad's narrative representation can distance him or herself from their pastoral, desert environment" (p. 155). The fluid and mobile aspect of nomadic existence can make conventional ideas of control and sovereignty difficult to understand. Still, hierarchies in place have the power to enforce governance structures that control resources and movement. People in nomadic communities frequently depend on one another and the community for survival. These connections, nevertheless, can also lead to vulnerabilities since hierarchies can decide who gets help and who is on their own. The cultural construction of these hierarchies can place marginalized people or groups in danger of being killed or subjected to other forms of violence, emphasizing the necropolitical nature of their existence. Nomadic societies can have necropolitical conditions due to their hierarchies, but they can also be places of resistance. People and groups may rebel against the established hierarchies of

TRIBAL LIFE AND INSTRUMENTALIZATION OF HUMAN BODY: A NECROPOLITICAL STUDY OF JAMIL AHMAD'S THE WANDERING FALCON

power that govern their lives to reclaim their agency and redefine their positions. This resistance can manifest itself in several ways, such as communal acts that challenge repressive structures or cultural practices that restore identity.

Historical events, such as globalization and colonial contact, frequently have an impact on the hierarchies of nomad societies. These legacies can affect the allocation of power and the classification of people in the social hierarchy. In this setting, the cultural construction of hierarchies has the potential to sustain necropolitical circumstances since past injustices still affect people's lives and communities, affecting their access to commodities and safety. Nomadic societies' established hierarchies are culturally constructed systems that influence power dynamics and interpersonal relationships within the context of necropolitics. These hierarchies determine who is respected and who is not, impacting both situations of life as well as death for people and communities. Mbembe (2003) refers to Foucauldian racism and talks about a 'biological caesura' that divides populations into sub-groups to have better control over them.

Operating based on a split between the living and the dead, such a power defines itself with a biological field—which it takes control of and vests itself in. This control presupposes the distribution of the human species into groups, the subdivision of the population into subgroups, and the establishment of a biological caesura between the ones and the others. (p.17)

This enigmatic tribal man's figure stands for the resilient spirit of tribal cultures, which has adapted to the shifting social and political climate. The narrative develops through several interwoven vignettes, each of which offers a distinctive perspective on the rituals, everyday routines, and difficulties experienced by tribal people. These marginalized communities suffer severe realities that are highlighted by reoccurring themes of survival, relocation, and the fight for autonomy. Ahmad (2023) maintains that "This deliberate and unhurried exploration aims to unravel the layers of voicelessness imposed upon them, emphasizing the transformative potential inherent in amplifying these silenced voices within the novel" (p. 17). This article suggests that it is inevitable for contemporary nation-states to put some populations to death to placate the rest of the populace and why this political assessment of life and death is seen as vital for a democracy to function. Clements (2014) is quite critical about the

ways the Baluch citizens are persecuted, violently positioned, and demonized through “military nationalism,” and he holds the state responsible for this material destruction of human bodies and raises a concern about “how state violence and oppression in this fractious region is slowly eroding its people’s culture and humanity” (p. 49).

Thomas Lemke (2011), in his book *Biopolitics: An Advanced Introduction*, elaborated on Giorgio Agamben’s argument that “the constitution of sovereign power assumes the creation of a biopolitical body” (p. 54), so the state, in that case, predetermines the production of full subjects who can produce “general norms” (p. 13) to practice sovereign rights of power (Mbembe, 2003). The novel examines the disparate treatment of male and female life in terms of gendered necropolitics, exposing the weaker to death. One of the female characters is named Shah Zarina, whose husband had a bear who shuffled to dance and earn money for him. His newly married wife was less than an animal because she was not a source of earnings, so the bear had a room of his own at night while Shah Zarina and her husband were denied the comfort of sleeping inside the room. Unable to find any place for herself in her husband’s or his father’s house, she got manhandled by a pimp, Afzal Khan (pp. 163–167). Women in TWF face abuse and subjugation, often as a result of patriarchal norms reinforced by the government. Forced marriages, honor murders, and other acts of abuse against women are shown as a result of necropolitical power over their lives. Gul Bibi was the first female character who got consumed by gender necropolitics when she was shot dead by her (unnamed) husband, saving her from a more humiliating death.

Marginalized characters in the novel struggle to survive regularly as a result of the necropolitical environments in which they find themselves. The deadly force is employed against those who pose a danger to state power, highlighting the varying value placed on each life. There was total submission and absolute “silence” about the death and cause of the Baluchs, and no newspaper was allowed by the governmental institutions to highlight their deaths. Ahmad (2011) is irked by the unvoiced journalism that kept the unadulterated cause of the political war of the tribes solely for their survival. He mocked that many of the journalists instead took comfort in showing their sympathies for Palestinian and Kashmiri Muslims (p. 33). The narrative shows the erasure of indigenous cultures, identities, and customary practices as governmental authority invades tribal lands. This cultural oblivion further marginalizes people whose lives are viewed as disposable while supporting the

TRIBAL LIFE AND INSTRUMENTALIZATION OF HUMAN BODY: A NECROPOLITICAL STUDY OF JAMIL AHMAD'S THE WANDERING FALCON

hegemony of the state. They are vulnerable and marginalized as a result of displacement, violence, and cultural deterioration, which results in a never-ending struggle for survival and respect. Documentation was a rationale set by the state to serialize these populations where they were expected to belong to a single country: "We are Pawindahs and belong to all countries or none" (TWF, p. 53). State intrusions destroy tribal communities' traditional governing structures. State officials contest or disregard tribal elders' and leaders' authority, undermining their capacity to make decisions for their people. Tribal populations are becoming more and more marginalized as a result of this loss of governing power. Diverse necropolitical expressions such as serialization and documentation are skillfully shown in TWF that depict violence, eviction, and disparate treatment depending on race, sex, and identity, which serves as a potent indictment of how contemporary states wield control over certain lives while undervaluing and harming others. Gržinić (2023) argues that "the contemporary state transforms to a necropolitical regime, where its politics are solely concerned with fighting the state's part in the war of transnational capital, leaving its citizens to fend for themselves" (n.p). The distribution of limited resources and the formulation of public policies necessitate challenging decisions that could have a direct impact on the survival and well-being of individuals. Prioritizing some areas, whether in education, healthcare, or infrastructure development, inherently implies favoring some lives above others.

TWF makes references to how international aid and policies have an impact on tribal areas. The governing bodies in the region may receive financial and military assistance from outside powers, which can further influence political dynamics and exercise control over local populations. It discusses situations in which outside forces, embodied by government officials or troops, interfere with indigenous communities' governance and decision-making. This meddling might be viewed as an example of neo-imperial tactics used to manipulate the local population. Foreign countries' presence in the area, especially during occasions of conflict, emphasizes the geopolitical importance of the borderlands. These outside parties might try to further their own goals and agendas, which could affect the lives and welfare of the native populations. The aforementioned features imply a continuation of neo-imperial practices, although the novel's primary focus is on the internal conflicts and tenacity of the tribal communities. The way Ahmad depicts the borderlands hints discreetly at

CONCLUSION

As anticipated by Agamben (cited in Lemke, 2011), the threshold of "biopolitical modernity" (p. 56) has been surpassed because bare life has passed the point of exception and is now a crucial political tool for population control. The paradigm of exception is no longer exceptional; rather, it has taken the place of the rule and is now the law. The political calculus of life and death is necessary for a democracy to function, and institutions take on the role of the state's instrument of power. The novel offers a powerful critique of how contemporary nation-states handle tribal populations. The novel illustrates how these groups, with their centuries-old customs and ways of life, are sometimes considered barriers to the establishment of nation-states through the lives of numerous tribal people. Tribal people are frequently displaced or eliminated because these regimes see them as disposable or even a threat to their authority in their pursuit of strict borders, control, and modernization. In contemporary post-colonial governments, this study has explored the contradictory relationship between democracy and necropolitical practices, exposing how the deliberate sacrifice of particular people is frequently seen as essential to the operation of democratic regimes under neo-imperial oversight. The study illustrates how post-colonial nations, influenced by past imperial legacies and current global power systems, sustain violence against vulnerable communities by looking at the mechanics of necropower—technologies that decide who lives and who dies. These sacrifices are not exceptions; rather, they are structural elements of a world order that places security, profit, and the consolidation of power above the lives of the weak.

Ahmad (2011) presents a striking image of how these nomadic tribes' independence and territory are invaded by national governments, bureaucracies, and military forces, who force them to abide by national rules and borders that are frequently at odds with their customs. The book is a critique of how contemporary political systems treat indigenous and tribal peoples as disposable, ignoring their distinct identities and rights in the service of state formation and advancement. Democratic administration requires rigorous ethical considerations, openness, and accountability to strike a balance between safeguarding individual rights and advancing the welfare of the group. As democratic societies advance, the struggle to achieve a just and equitable social order continues as a result of these complex calculations. When it becomes

TRIBAL LIFE AND INSTRUMENTALIZATION OF HUMAN BODY: A NECROPOLITICAL STUDY OF JAMIL AHMAD'S THE WANDERING FALCON

essential to put certain people to death so that the remainder of the ship can sail smoothly, scarcity has always been used as a technique to warn those who might jump off the sailing ship. For everyone to have enough to exist, sources must be redistributed. It is also ethically significant to note that the nomadic population will perish if they are relocated or documented. The indigenous culture and nomadic communities will be saved via unrestricted movement, mostly following the seasonal cycle, not by the imperial order's serialization of them.

The conclusion highlight the pervasiveness of necropolitical technologies in post-colonial democracies' governance, including biopolitical control, state-sanctioned violence, and militarized borders. Discourses of national unity, growth, and security are frequently used to defend these policies, hiding the dehumanization and disposability of the targeted communities. Additionally, the study shows how neo-imperial surveillance, which is made possible by transnational organizations and global powers, strengthens these processes by indirectly regulating post-colonial governments to guarantee that they adhere to hegemonic standards. In the end, this study exposes democracy's dependence on violence and exclusion, challenging the romanticized concept that democracy is essentially egalitarian and inclusive. It demands that democratic systems be rethought to put the rights and dignity of all people—especially those who have historically been marginalized by colonial and neo-imperial structures—above necropolitical logics. A really just and equitable democracy can only be achieved by addressing these contradictions.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](#).

References

- 1- Abbas, A., & Iqbal, H. Z. (2023). Investigating the East-West encounters: A postcolonial re-orientalist reading of kamila shamsie's burnt shadows: a novel. *Pakistan Journal of Social Research*, 05(01), 412–418. <https://doi.org/10.52567/pjsr.v5i01.1021>
- 2- Abid Ansari, U. (2018). The taming of the tribal within Pakistani narratives of progress, conflict, and romance. In *The Routledge Companion to Pakistani Anglophone Writing* (pp. 151–161). Routledge. <https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315180618-14>
- 3- Agamben, G. (1998). *Homo sacer: Sovereign power and bare life*. Stanford University Press.
- 4- Ahmad, J. (2011). *The Wandering Falcons*, Penguin Books.
- 5- Ahmed, T. (2023). Between past and present: Unravelling colonialism's

enduring impact in the wandering falcon. *Journal of Contemporary Poetics*, 7(1), 15–31. <https://doi.org/10.54487/jcp.v7i1.3103>

6- Ameena Saiyid. (2022, October 12). #JLF 2013 The Flight of the Falcon. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EoAlf3PY7Gk>

7- Badkhen, A. (2011). The Progress of the Nomads. *The New Republic*, 29.

8- Clements, M. (2014). Reframing 'violence', transforming impressions: Images in contemporary Pakistani visual art and English-language fiction. *Wasafiri*, 29(1), 46–55. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02690055.2014.861632>

9- Ettensohn, D. M. (2014, May). Globalism, Humanitarianism, and the Body in Postcolonial Literature [Doctoral Thesis, Brown University]. Brown Digital Repository. <https://repository.library.brown.edu/studio/item/bdr:386277/>

10- Gržinić, M. (2023). The body in the field of tensions between biopolitics and necropolitics: Analyzing the future of the prosthetic body in the 21st century. *Filozofski Vestnik*, 44(2). <https://doi.org/10.3986/fv.44.2.02>

11- Haq, N. ul, Khan, R. A., & Nuri, M. H. (2005). Federally administered tribal areas of Pakistan. Islamabad Policy Research Institute.

12- Iturriaga, N., & Denman, D. S. (2022). The necropolitical spectrum: political lives of the surplus dead. *Human Remains and Violence*, 8(1), 3–22. <https://doi.org/10.7227/hrv.8.1.2>

13- Jaffar, Saad, and Nasir Ali Khan. "english-the rights and duties of minorities in islamic welfare state and its implementation in the contemporary world." *the scholar islamic academic research journal* 7, no. 2 (2021): 36-57.

14- Kamal, M. (2022). Lethal Hegemony over Subaltern Tribes: Textual Analysis of Jamil Ahmad's The Wandering Falcon. *Pakistan Languages and Humanities Review*, 6(IV). [https://doi.org/10.47205/plhr.2022\(6-iv\)57](https://doi.org/10.47205/plhr.2022(6-iv)57)

15- Kanwal, A., & Aslam, S. (Eds.). (2019). *The Routledge Companion to Pakistani Anglophone Writing*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

16- Lemke, T. (2011). *Biopolitics: An Advanced Introduction*. NYU Press.

17- Majeed, F. (2014, August 30). 'The Wandering Falcon': Understanding Balochistan, the Literary Way. *The Express Tribune*. <https://tribune.com.pk/article/23847/the-wandering-falcon-understanding-balochistan-the-literary-way>

18- Jaffar, Dr Saad, Dr Muhammad Waseem Mukhtar, Dr Shazia Sajid, Dr Nasir Ali Khan, Dr Faiza Butt, and Waqar Ahmed. "The Islamic And Western Concepts Of Human Rights: Strategic Implications, Differences And Implementations." *Migration Letters* 21 (2024): 1658-70.

19- Mbembe, A. (2003). Necropolitics. *Public Culture*, 15(1), 11–40.

20- Minca, C. (2005). The return of the Camp. *Progress in Human Geography*, 29(4), 405–412. <https://doi.org/10.1191/0309132505ph557xx>

21- Paley, D. (2014, January 1). Book review: Undoing border imperialism. *Upside Down World*. <https://upsidedownworld.org/archives/international/book-review-undoing-border-imperialism/>

22- Shamsie, M. (2009). Covert Operations in Pakistani Fiction. *Commonwealth Essays and Studies*, 31(2), 15–25. <https://doi.org/10.4000/ces.8800>

23- Verghese, N. (2021, March 10). What Is Necropolitics? The Political Calculation of Life and Death. *Teen Vogue*.

TRIBAL LIFE AND INSTRUMENTALIZATION OF HUMAN BODY: A NECROPOLITICAL STUDY OF JAMIL AHMAD'S THE WANDERING FALCON

<https://www.teenvogue.com/story/what-is-necropolitics>

24- Zahid, R. K., Rehman, Dr. S. U., & Alam, Dr. K. (2022). Unlearning the Empire: Indigenizing Sovereignty and Decolonization. Orient Research Journal of Social Sciences, 7(No. 2), 29–35.