INTERNATIONAL PREMIER JOURNAL OF LANGUAGES & LITERATURE (IPJLL)
VOLUME 3, ISSUE 2, 2025 p-ISSN: 3007-2336 e-ISSN: 3007-2344

THE TOPOLOGY OF NECROPHILIAC WAR AND TOPOGRAPHIES OF EXCEPTIONALISM IN RATHER'S *THE NIGHT OF BROKEN GLASS*

Sanniya Sara Batool Sanniya.sara3@gmail.com	PhD Scholar, Department of English Literature, Govt. College University, Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan.
Prof. Dr. Gulam Murtaza drgmaatir@gcuf.edu.pk	Chairman, Department of English Literature, Govt. College University, Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan.

Abstract

The developing critical scholarship concerning Kashmir challenges traditional state-centric narratives and offers innovative perspectives on the region's past, present, and future. The stories are seen to be fueled by bare life, where life is laid bare to death within a space of exception. Mbembe's examination challenges the politics of death and the concept of the lifeless body, suggesting that sovereign power does not primarily rely on abandonment. The understandings of Kashmir and its violence in representations of its literature call for deeper engagement with internal contestations within Kashmiri society regarding rights of life and death. The constant threat and surveillance prevailed in the valley transformed the space not only into a heterotopia but normalizes death and the presence of living dead. Rather navigating and challenging the oppressive forces highlights the interplay of necropolis. Necropolitics operates as a persistent manifestation of violence and terror within the text, positioning Kashmir's conflict zone in a peculiar liminality, perpetually suspended between life and death. The stories encapsulate the essence of what this liminal space of Kashmir signifies within the current political discourse. The existence of Kashmiri Muslims is not merely neglected to its most fundamental state but is continually under looming threat of death.

Keywords: *Bare life, Feroz Rather, Homo Sacer, Living Dead, Necropolis, The Night of Broken Glass.*

Corresponding Author: Sanniya Sara Batool (PhD Scholar, Department of English Literature, Govt. College University, Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan).
Email: Sanniya.sara3@gmail.com

1.The Interplay of Biopolitics, Necro politics and Thanatopolitics

The ideas of biopolitics, necro politics, and thanatopolitics are essential for comprehending the intricate dynamics of contemporary governance and the politics surrounding life and death. Foucault's pioneering research on biopolitics has illuminated the novel mechanisms of power that surfaced with the emergence of modern nation-states, where the oversight and regulation of populations became critical. Scholars such as Mbembe and Agamben have further developed and contested Foucault's insights, investigating the more sinister dimensions of these power structures. Biopolitics, as articulated by Foucault, signifies a transformation in the exercise of sovereignty, wherein the authority to take life or allow life is supplanted by the authority to create life or permit death (Vint, 2011). This novel power dynamic not only shapes and nurtures specific types of lives through disciplinary institutions but also facilitates the neglect or even the deliberate eradication of others (Vint, 2011). Mbembe's notion of necro politics builds on Foucault's theories, emphasizing how contemporary power is increasingly wielded through the regulation of mortality and the determination of who is allowed to live and who is condemned to die. Thanatopolitics is a term closely linked to the writings of Agamben, particularly in *Homo Sacer* and *State of Exception*. In these texts, Agamben elaborates on the concepts of biopolitics and explores the complex interplay between life and law. He specifically investigates the *state of exception*, in which standard legal protections are momentarily suspended. The intriguing combination of biopolitics and necropolitics that portrays the characters as "living dead" within this state of emergency is clearly reflected in the text.

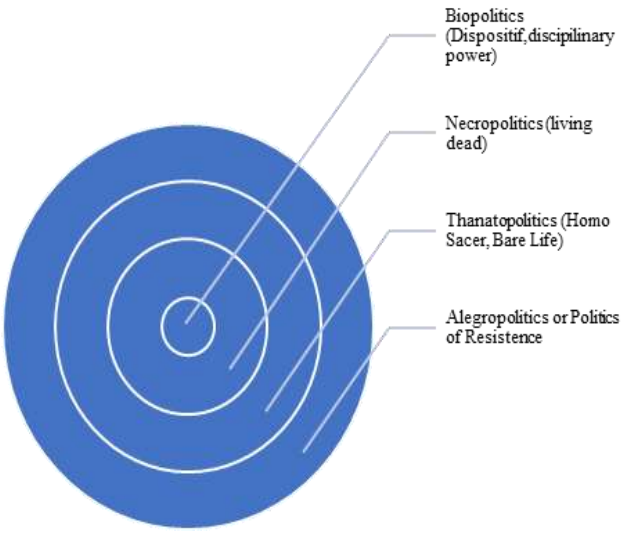

Figure 1: *The Interplay of Politics*

To achieve this, the essay outlines a theoretical trajectory that illustrates the evolution from Foucault and Agamben's concept of biopolitics to Mbembe's idea of necropolitics. Subsequently, the essay concludes by demonstrating that Agamben's concept of bare life is insufficient for comprehending subjects existing in this distinct postcolonial context. The existence of death and the presence of dead bodies transcend the notion of bare life, revealing how these bodies serve as important signifiers that shape a diverse understanding of agency.

Necropolitics elaborates on this concept by exploring how sovereign power dictates the conditions under which life may be ended, highlighting the significance of death within political authority. Thanatopolitics examines the legal and political frameworks that expose life to the threat of death, especially through the suspension of laws and the creation of states of exception. Together, these theoretical frameworks provide a thorough understanding of how modern states wield power over life and death, uncovering the complex and frequently harsh methods through which sovereignty is enforced. They underscore the mechanisms by which life is regulated, controlled, and, in certain cases, deemed expendable. This research thus offers a synthesis of concepts related to power politics and reveals the narrative formed by the circumstances, whether material or ideological, under which it is created.

2. The Enactment of Brutal Violence in *The Night of Broken Glass*

During the colonial era, legislation implemented in India granted the military in Kashmir extraordinary powers, allowing them to kill or detain individuals, stifle dissenting opinions, and confiscate or destroy property deemed a threat to India's claims of sovereignty over the region. These threats included a broad range of actions, from armed assaults on Indian facilities to breaches of military regulations concerning public movement, as well as the expression of freedom through poetry and maps that portrayed Kashmir as distinct from India. The occupation in Kashmir was fundamentally organized around a triad of spatial control over public spaces, military supervision of daily life, and the systematic use of violence, fostering an environment where the permanence of this occupation appeared assured. As a result, Kashmir transformed into a true space of exception, where existence depended on the caprices of Indian soldiers and their interpretations of what constituted a threat. India's unlawful occupation of the Muslim-majority areas of Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) represents a blatant denial of the Right to Self-determination for the innocent Kashmiri populace, constituting a clear violation of United Nations Security Council resolutions. Moreover, the sudden revocation of the Special Status of Kashmiris through rapid constitutional amendments exemplifies a manifestation of the Hindutva ideology. These actions indicate a renewed resurgence of

the indigenous struggle within IIOJK. (Javed, 2020). The narrative of the rebels' return confirms:

> "Inspector Masoodi and his companion, Major S, had thrown my nearly lifeless body, bound to a large rock, into the lake. My file had been closed by the high command because they presumed I was dead, like the countless prisoners I had encountered and befriended in prison, whose pale bodies I saw at the lake's bottom in the moonlight (p. 5).

The new regime of control regarded every native as a significant threat to its survival and advancement. This other of Mbembe is articulating Indian domination. This text explores the connections between physical injuries or scars and a person's identity, positing that these wounds act as a means of identification and illustrate their potential impact on the individual's societal standing and destiny. The depiction of the mutilated bodies of Shahid and his father, along with the lamentation over the cries of a deceased body, underscores the influence of power: "Do you think the dead body flinched as the soldiers struck it with their guns and broke its forehead? What are the screams like when a dead body cries? (p. 38). The Pheran has historically represented the culture and traditions of the Kashmiri people; however, it has now become a symbol of the brutality of a dogmatic Indian sovereign state in the context of Shahid. The Pheran featured three holes on its front side: "Surrounding each hole was a patch of dark red, with the patch around the heart being the most prominent. It extended…around the abdomen" (p. 39). Shahid's Pheran was torn due to three bullets fired by Indian soldiers while he was delivering food to his brother. Now, Abdul Rashid opens the trunk each night and holds the Pheran, stating: "So that the memory of his son's murder remains vividly etched in his mind" (p. 40). This ongoing violence compels him to acknowledge his status as a powerless Kashmiri in the face of oppression and control.

"The Souvenir," another narrative from Rather's collection, draws our attention to the necropolis of Kashmiri lives in a unique manner, where a schoolboy is captivated by: "a sign of DANGER inscribed in large, capital letters beneath the universal emblem of the skull and crossbones on a metal sheet, which was affixed to a wooden pole to indicate the presence of potentially hazardous electric cables" (p. 48). The boy, overwhelmed by the sight of this sign and an unnamed terror, found himself frozen in place near the signboard. He experienced feelings of desolation and emptiness, as his surroundings transformed into a grim environment, with the earth enveloped in darkness and an inhospitable atmosphere. For many days, he attempted to circumvent the signpost that lay on his route to school, but one day he halted, groaned at it, and endeavored to master his fear and dread by clenching his fists and gritting his teeth before hurling a stone at it. Following this incident, he contemplated his mortality and was astonished at the prospect of confronting death at such

a young age. He expresses: “When I am dead, I thought, my body will be buried. My skin and flesh will eventually rot away. But how can death be possible when in this moment, I feel so alive” (p. 48). Tariq, conversely, is a child enduring conflict and violence, who has lost all faith; he declines to pray at the shrine and only visits to feed the pigeons, as it brings joy to his father. His existence is punctuated by instances of violence and the need to conceal himself from a looming terror that perpetually shadows his everyday life. Their home in the downtown area frequently finds itself caught in the crossfire of bullets exchanged between insurgents and the military, and he experiences through “reek of gunpower and charred flesh” (p. 70).

The main character is an elderly man accustomed to praying and feeding the pigeons that gather at a shrine near his home. The narrative reflects on a time in the 1990s, when conflict engulfed Kashmir, and the narrator recalls the effects of hidden violence on the lives of the Kashmiri people. As the narrator expresses: He brought these shells home and hid them in a cache… “I don’t want Tariq to see the bullet shells when he goes out to play,” he had replied” (p.168). Two aspects arise in the lived experience of this family: Firstly, the ongoing state of conflict in Kashmir manifests as a complex phenomenon characterized by various forms of covert violence. Secondly, the narrative presented in "Souvenir" conveys a frozen sense rather than an escape from imminent death; it reflects a reality of looming violence embedded in the everyday life and the terror of existing in circumstances that exploit the body's vulnerability. Killing and death are no longer regarded as the "elementary goals" (Cavarero, 12), but rather, there is a focus on horror that fosters a sensation of suffocation and an awareness of the "fragility of life” (Cavarero 101). The specific approach of necropolitics, which involves the control of both air and marine spaces as well as the cartography of Kashmir, is effectively demonstrated by settler colonialists in the region. The intertwined lives of individuals in Kashmir draw the reader's attention: "The soldiers fired mortar shells, tearing down the walls of the house. The reek of gunpowder and charred flesh sent me into a paroxysm of coughing" (p. 51). Consequently, the troops transformed the entire area into a desolate and empty landscape. The blackened remnants of destruction are visible throughout all the cities of Kashmir.

Agamben, in *Homo Sacer*, posits that the camp serves as the essential biopolitical framework of the West in its establishment of sovereignty. However, in the context of Kashmir, which is characterized as a *space of exception*, a distinct representation of sovereign power is being articulated. This situation resembles a perpetual state of hunting, where life and death are intertwined in a "game." The body exists within the scope of a specific symbolic significance and manifests a "necropower," described as a "death in life"(p. 14). This dynamic ultimately engenders a third realm for the colonized individual, specifically the Kashmiri Muslim under Indian-occupied Kashmir, who finds themselves

in an unusual liminal space between life and death. On one side, there is the reality of biological existence; on the other, there is their continuous state of exception, which can invariably lead to their reduction to a condition of civic or social death. As previously noted, this text unveils unique configurations of biopolitics and necropolitics, which consistently intertwine to form the concept of the *living dead*.

3. The Intersections of Kashmiri *Bare Life*

Rather's choice of title and allusion to the *Kristallnacht* presents an intriguing perspective. It suggests the provocative notion that Kashmiris endure the torment of unending nights filled with terror. Rather than viewing it solely as a direct comparison, we might interpret his title as a call for global human empathy and understanding for Kashmir, articulated by a Kashmiri author to a broader international audience, extending beyond the confines of Kashmir and the Indian state. As traced thus far, Rather's narratives vividly illustrate the violence inflicted upon individuals, transforming their daily lives into a grotesque and altered reality. One particular story stands out, seemingly devoid of any overt signs of violence, yet it subtly alludes to the tragic Bijbehara massacre of 1993. In "The Cowherd," Rather deliberately employs the Kashmiri term Bijou and unfolds the tale of Gulam and Halim's missing son Jamshid, who is seized by the influential and prophetic Syed Anzar. At first glance, the narrative mirrors the existing caste tensions and hierarchies in Kashmir, particularly among Pirs, Syeds, and the tannery workers, referred to as *watuls* in the story, who occupy the lowest rung of the caste hierarchy. However, alongside its critique of caste, Rather utilizes this narrative to reference the events of October 22, 1993, when Border Security Forces opened fire on civilians protesting the siege of the revered Hazratbal shrine, resulting in the deaths of approximately thirty to fifty individuals, including children. The tragic event transpired in a children's park where Ghulam Qadir Shah, the son of a woodcutter, lost his life in the gunfire. Undoubtedly, Rather employs the characters in "The Cowherd" as poignant reminders of that horrific night, while also revealing the caste tensions present in Kashmir, as Gulam's family is marginalized as *impure* and "contaminated" due to their association with deceased animals (Rather 149). The narrative presents a troubling reflection of the transformed lives of the doubly marginalized Kashmiri individuals. As hunger and an unending wait gnaw at Sultan Sheikh and his family, it serves as a metaphor for contemporary Kashmir. A deceased cow, belonging to a wealthy neighboring family of Rafiq Galwan, lies immobilized in the snow, potentially providing sustenance for the family. Driven by desperation, it is struck repeatedly with an axe by Gulam and his father, Sultan Sheikh. Sheikh continues to strike the lifeless creature until its entrails and insides spill forth in a grotesque scene, and he begins to throw the dismembered remains of the animal onto the trees and the surrounding

nature, amidst a chaotic blend of laughter and tears. The tale concludes with this absurd moment, encapsulating the essence of Kashmir's current state. Nature, sustenance, the act of eating, and the dynamics of father-son relationships have all devolved into a surreal chaos, oscillating between the living dead and the extreme abject the decaying flesh of the deceased cow. In a manner akin to Diprose's focus on the social significance and the impact of violence on the body, Guenther "underscores how an individual's way of existing can be compromised or warped due to the systematic deprivation of or exclusion from common social interaction patterns" (Body/Self/Other p. 5). Guenther's research highlights the collective disintegration that can arise from severe systematic violence, while also stressing the potential for collective resistance (Dolezal & Petherbridge 6). "The Cowherd" conjures an indescribable horror and a collapse of meaning. Halim and her husband Gulam exhibit a quiet resignation following the loss of their son. Their primary concern becomes managing their persistent hunger and the quest for sustenance.

The relationship of belonging to space is altered by the impact of violence on collective bodies. For example, in 2019, the bodies of Kashmiris experienced violence that symbolized the body itself, as individuals were physically *marked* with an official *pass* stamped on their hands to travel along the national highway in Kashmir. This event took place following a contentious ban on civilian movement that was enforced on specific days to ensure the safety of service convoys. This militarized branding of the body as an indication of state endorsement serves as yet another illustration of how the condition of living dead operates on individuals. It acts as a reminder of the symbolic denial of the *other* as a subject, obliterating its significance. This represents a type of violence inherent in fear that strips bodies of their meaning, and it is at this juncture where symbolic and physical violence converge and manifest as reality. Nonetheless, Showkat's disfigurement and the oppressed status imposed upon him by Indian soldiers not only compel him to convey his subjugated identity but also devastate his entire shop and grocery business. The text refers: "they shattered the glass jars filled with spices and threw out biscuit packets and gunny bags of beans and rice on the road" (p. 60). In the narrative "The Stone Thrower," a young boy attending school was fatally struck by forces while returning home from school. His body vividly represented the regimes of practices and political normalization programs, as well as strategies of surveillance manifested through limitations on movement, positioning, observation, and time. Amir's body embodies the concept:

> His skull was split. Blood and brain matter had trickled out on to his face. His satchel was flung on the tarmac, in the middle of the road. The smoke shell was by his feet amidst the notebooks and pencils that had spilled out of the satchel. A plume of acrid smoke rose from it (p. 116).

For the colonizer, these pitiable, menacing, and perilous subjects are deemed responsible for the disruption of domination and the self-governance of the state. The regulatory mechanisms of the police, military, and diplomatic services operate solely for the annihilation of specific forms of life. Thus, the functions of biopolitics, in conjunction with necropolitics, highlight microphysical Caesura to determine what is permitted to live and what is condemned to die (254). Amir's incident also exemplifies visual necropolitics, which astonishes the viewer and transports them into a state of awe from which they cannot escape. Mohsin's mother is unable to endure the sight and weeps: “Amir’s face was splotched with blood, his eyes clogged. Red flesh hung loosely from his forehead” (p. 93). This pulverization of body conveys state monopoly of violence on their political subjects. In the oppressive and still air of Kashmir, Kashmiris cannot breathe without the permission of hegemon who thinks the only source of power is to take the life of enemies. The logic of enmity normalizes all actions whatever it is demolition, bulldozing or sabotage of human bodies.

Freud's views are more in line with Hobbes's notion of homo homini lupus, indicating that humans behave like wolves towards one another. He argues that the predominant historical account of humanity reflects the self-domestication of this wolfish instinct. Freud exhibits a significant ambivalence concerning this self-domestication. He expresses: "We are shaped by the long process of the development of civilization, to which we owe the best of what we have become, as well as a good part of what we suffer from" (Freud, 1933a, p. 214; 1933b, p. 25). The cost of progress in civilization is a widespread feeling of discontent (Unbehagen). Consequently, in our attempts to avoid the horrors of violence, we face a psychological discomfort that can be interpreted as a type of self-inflicted violence (Benvenuto, 2024). Freud examines the deadly nature of war and discovers that the brutal conflict not only brings forth violence but also jouissance. The pleasure experienced by a soldier when taking the life of the innocent is immense, and he sustains: “The soldier babbled merrily as he looked at the little corpses…He tied the bodies together by making a knot around their legs. He slung the bodies over his shoulders, holding on the other end of the wire. I will skin them and roast them” (p. 54). Due to the presence of bunkers, tanks, machine guns, check posts, barbed wires, sieges, curfews, killings, disappearances, cages, prisons, and numerous other factors that have transformed Kashmiris into pale, fragile embodiments of despair, writers articulate their anguish through vivid descriptions. This situation arises from India's desire to undermine the autonomy of Kashmiris, imposing its own authority and control rather than allowing the Kashmiri people the opportunity to govern themselves. The narrator also illustrates the concept of invisible war worms that instill grief and distrust within the stomachs and livers of Kashmiris.

The term Kashmiri Necropolis signifies the extent to which the living beings in Kashmir are subjected to destruction and death. They stand as defenseless and vulnerable victims, mutilated, tortured, and ultimately killed by state actors to promote horrorism and contemporary mass violence. Shirieen's song of Rasoolmir: "I tremble I will fall dead; my hope has fled" (p. 65) is completely expressing sense of loss and grief in her life. Furthermore, it is unfeasible to reclaim the humanity that has been warped and taken away by Racism in today's age of conflict and fear. Mbembe (2019) argues that the creation of distinctions among individuals has become a fundamental aspect of modernity. This encompasses two elements: material interests and a reluctance to coexist with those who are unfamiliar and different, which fosters the narrative of race. In the necropolis of Kashmir, racial and ethnic divisions lead to chaos, exclusion, brutalization, and degradation. Homo sacer's primary focus is on the fragility of the human body, the violence that can sever the body into parts, and its resulting negation of the human subject. In the narratives of "The Cowherd" and "The Boss's Account," this violence can reduce the human body to mere flesh devoid of meaning. Sushmita Chatterjee and Banu Subramaniam further contend that in contemporary politics, "meat" or flesh serves as a signifier or fetish with various interpretations and acts as "a fierce conduit for biopolitics" (Meat: A Transnational Analysis 2), encompassing "configurations of political economy, identity, and technologies of power" (Chatterjee & Subramaniam 2). Chatterjee also observes that "politics is entangled within a curious body maze" (97) and the human body:

> cements politics through an imaginative 'meat,' which through perfect synchronization, within itself, is able to ensure stability and life… A body composed of meat, and of functioning or productive meat, is given the recognition of life and it/they become political actors. (p.107)

However, there are individuals within the state imaginary who exist solely as "meat" without any representation or rights (Chatterjee 107). Rather's later narratives focus on the corporeal aspect of the human subject in Kashmir, who may potentially become sustenance for another life form, or the "impure" lower-caste community that seeks "impure" flesh as their food source. These narratives highlight the eventual disintegration of this "social ontology," where a human body can find meaning through sociality (using Butler's terminology). Chatterjee posits that the essence of a social ontology is rooted in flesh "the manner in which meat is conceptualized shapes its social ontology" (107). Consequently, towards the conclusion, Rather's anthology reevaluates the concept of violence as horrorism within a broader framework, wherein the space, setting, and both human and non-human subjects are all interconnected within this

context. One of the essential questions raised by Homo Sacer concerns the methods of resisting violence and mortality in a state of exception. What measures should be implemented when individuals are reduced to their most fundamental existence, subjected to the sovereign's authority over life and death? This question has become particularly relevant in the context of concentration camps. The 'thanatopolitics' of the Nazi regime effectively reduced Jews and other prisoners to mere remnants of life, lacking the vitality required for self-care, let alone for political mobilization. Violence plays a significant role in shaping nostalgia as an emotion. As Naqvi (2007) articulates, the legitimacy of nostalgia is rooted in a notably violent spectrum of epistemological and institutional histories. Rosaldo argues that colonial agents often display a sense of nostalgia for the cultures they have colonized, reminiscing about them as they existed at the time of their initial encounters (p.107). He highlights that this longing is paradoxical, as these agents yearn for the very ways of life they have intentionally altered or destroyed. Thus, nostalgia can be interpreted as a mourning for what has been transformed, a sentiment frequently observed in imperial contexts (p.108). The protagonist asserts: “I felt terrible thinking about the past” (p. 155). Nevertheless, the harshness of Kashmiri life and the brutal control exerted by occupying forces contrast sharply with their abnormal existence. Agamben’s (1998) silent form of resistance is evident in the protagonist’s suffering and torment during prison torture:

> Major S whipped me viciously with his belt until my limbs swelled and my skin turned red and blue. I screamed in agony. Such was the magnitude of my pain the city was crying with me. The lake swelled, and the hills shattered to mounds of ash. I did not lose consciousness. I felt my pain (p.8).

The Narrator elucidates that the remnants of suffering persist on Kashmiri bodies as a result of the occupation and dominance exerted by Indian forces in the valley. Consequently, self-isolation inherently acts as a mode of resistance, as the apprehension of state-sanctioned violence no longer affects its victims. What importance does the power over life and death possess when an individual has abandoned the will to live? Rather's narratives dismantle an anthropocentric universe; in this context, both human and non-human bodies are vulnerable to being killed, serving as a poignant reminder of the fragility of bodies subjected to such violence. Interestingly, the titular narrative of the anthology *The Night of Broken Glass*, which evokes the brutality of the Holocaust, encapsulates an inexpressible horror of violence. As the narrative unfolds, one is reminded of the historical Kristallnacht violence and massacre through the events depicted in Bijbyor. Gulam searches for his missing son, who was shot among the

numerous youths of the town, and enters the mosque that was ravaged by soldiers, with all its windows, lights, and chandeliers "smashed to smithereens" to create "a spectacle of destruction" (p. 215). The parallels drawn between the Kristallnacht violence of 1938 and the desecrated places of worship in Kashmir, along with the killings of Kashmiri youth in 1993, establish a profound register of pain that intersects memory in a distinctive manner within this story. It recreates a similar mnemonic effect, seeking solidarity and highlighting the everyday nature of violence that the people endure in their daily lives. This concluding story in the collection also embodies the concept of horrorism, where death is no longer the sole source of dread. Rather, the destruction, the disappearance of the bodies of the murdered Kashmiri boys, the horror of rape, and the bloated, disfigured body of Jamshid's lover Rosy, frame the narrative of violence. Gulam, in his quest for his son's lifeless body, comes to the realization that even his son's body will be denied to him "Although most of the other bodies were found and buried, only Jamshid's body was not found on the highway outside the camp" (p. 213).

Gulam's pursuit of his son's body represents an additional extreme of horrorism, which is not content with mere killing; by denying burial, it strips the body of dignity in death and perpetuates the horror of violence over the family indefinitely. Jamshid's ontological dignity is denied, and thus, the reclamation of his body becomes inconsequential. Jamshid's demise is not the central theme here. He has already been erased by this type of violence. The Bijbyor massacre illustrated in the narrative also fails to honor the deceased youths in remembrance of their lives. Their murders by the state represent devalued bodies, where Gulam only discovers their unidentifiable mass of shoes piled on the road, and "As long as Gulam lived, he would guard them and polish them religiously" (p.213). On one hand, this represents a form of violence that is "an offence against the material body" (O'Brien 2) of humanity; on the other hand, Gulam's act of safeguarding the shoes of the deceased, the final signifier of human existence, transforms into a moment of quiet defiance against this dreadful violence. Gulam also reflects on the horrific incident of Rosy's brutal rape by Army Major S in the presence of her mother, Hasim. Rosy is not merely killed after the assault; her body is "bludgeoned to death" as if she had been beaten severely with a saucepan (p. 216). Gulam's own recollection of shoe polish smeared across his face and forced into his mouth by the same Major S is recounted as "an act of pure misanthropy and sadism that defied comprehension and nearly drove Gulam insane" (Rather 213). These violent acts degrade the human individual to a sub-human level, stripping them of their dignity and inflicting violence upon the body in a manner that dismantles all human codes of meaning and comprehension.

4. The Ontology of Human Subject

In contemporary contexts, the experience of living in Kashmir has evolved, as it depersonalizes and undermines the human subject's sense of identity. For example, in the narrative "Souvenir," there is a poignant moment when Tariq is requested to present his identification to the military while visiting the shrine to feed pigeons. Subsequently, he is seized by the soldiers and compelled to utilize their firearm to shoot the very pigeons he intended to nourish. This instance of macabre humor, driven by the soldiers' caprice, accentuates the horror of the situation, where the act of *playing* with the gun culminates in the demise of the pigeons, which represent Tariq's fleeting moments of normalcy and comfort, now marred by horrific violence perpetrated through his own actions. As Tariq mindlessly pulls the trigger, resulting in the death of two pigeons, this gruesome episode compels him to seek something that would provide him with "assurance" (p. 74), prompting him to glance towards the shrine nearby. However, his searching gaze yields no solace. In a subsequent interconnected tale, "The Miscreant," Tariq is once again apprehended, this time by the army, and the sole memory that lingers is that of the "wide open eyes" of the deceased pigeons, which continue to haunt and traumatize him. The pervasive violence that Tariq endures diminishes his sense of self to a realm of profound vulnerability, where death is not the only source of dread. Homi Bhabha recently articulated that the "postcolonial predicament is in extremis" as we navigate the "era of vulnerability" (267). Narratives such as Tariq's serve as a poignant reminder of this 'extremis' and offer a glimpse into the precariousness of self, underscoring the condition of living death as described by Mbembe. This existential dilemma within the *necropolis* of Kashmir also delineates ontological horror (Ruthellen & Lieblich, Amy et al 2006).

In the book, *Identity and Story: Creating Self in Narrative*, Ruthellen Josselson et al. explore how narratives and stories shape a specific framing of identity for individuals. They introduce the term "narrative identity" (p.4), which pertains to the selfhood that individuals construct through storytelling. Josselson et al. assert that the process of constructing selfhood through narrative also mirrors the external world and the formation of the everyday self within it. Rather's narratives illustrate both personal and collective dimensions of selfhood construction, ultimately highlighting the concept of "writing the self in social practice" (p.154). If storytelling and narrativizing contribute to the formation of a particular selfhood and subjectivity, these interconnected, often fragmented narratives also reveal the impact of violence on self-construction indicating that the subjects narrating these stories embody a condition of being the *living dead*. The precariousness of horror is a relentless state in which they find themselves. In articulating this idea of a *living dead* selfhood, which is immobilized in stasis, I do not contend that Rather confines Kashmiri

subjects to a narrative of horror by "writing this self" that appears devoid of agency amid the surrounding violence. Rather, my interpretation of the *living dead* in Rather's narratives signifies an expression of violence by a postcolonial nation at its periphery, which reduces Kashmiri subjects to a state of profound disfiguration of self and the automatization of their existence, neglecting their capacity for decision-making.

Rather's work is, therefore, significant as it offers a distinct modality for comprehending the violence in Kashmir. In a recent study titled *Violence in South Asia*, Anindya Purkayastha and colleagues contend that "the nature of contemporary violence in South Asia is characterized by the implosion of violence within nation-states, contrasting with the external origins of earlier forms and periods" (p. 8), which include the colonial era, Partition, and post-independence violence. Although their research, particularly Idreas Khandy's examination of violence in Kashmir, is crucial for emphasizing the causality and the necessity to reimagine the insurgency and violence associated with the Kashmiri people's movement for "azaadi," the state mechanisms of violence, torture, and their repercussions on daily life fall outside the scope of their analysis. Khandy describes state technologies of violence as "repression manifested through massacres and torture, alongside the alluring lights of neoliberal progress" (Khandy 204). My interpretation of Rather's narratives encourages us to refocus our attention on the Kashmiri people and the implications for selfhood and human dignity that are overshadowed by such violence. Works and narratives like Rather's provide an alternative perspective on state violence, illustrating its effects on the formation of Kashmiri life in everyday contexts.

Kanwal's examination of the works of Rather and Waheed reveals not only the violence inflicted by the state on the Kashmiri identity but also illustrates how the subject's "dismembered condition nullifies them as humans and civilians" (Kanwal 15). Kanwal's article effectively contextualizes the Kashmiri body within the framework of contemporary state-sponsored violence. This article concurs with Kanwal's argument while also exploring a distinct perspective through the lens of horrorism present in the text. It posits that the social and relational capacities of individuals are profoundly altered within this horrific matrix of violence, effectively transforming them into a state of living death. The human body, the subject, and their connections with nature, other individuals, and their environment undergo significant changes in this extreme Frozeness. For instance, let us reflect on a moment from the previously mentioned story "Souvenir," where Tariq and his companion Mohsin are apprehended by Force 10 and taken to the "camp" where they endure torture. The narrative concludes ominously with Tariq singing and repeating a haunting melody that he composes, featuring the refrain, "Bring me back my moment/Bring me back my pair of pigeons" (p.124). The story, with its intricate narrative structure, portrays characters who appear and disappear, all illustrating a state of stasis, a

frozen existence amidst a continuum of violence. The focus on "bringing my moment" back in Tariq's song serves as a poignant reminder of the disintegration of the subject's physical and bodily relationship with time. In a state of terror, Father and Mother were contemplating whether their son had perished, or if it was the prematurely aged half-mother of Mohsin in the narrative "The Stone Thrower," whose spouse Hamid vanished seventeen years prior, when she was just twenty-four years old (137). All of these elements serve as chilling reminders of a total disintegration of the human subject's connection with the routine societal and human actions that provide meaning and a sense of shared space. Populations inhabiting death worlds are not inherently devoid of life; however, they endure circumstances that effectively strip them of their social, political, and economic agency, rendering them akin to the 'dead.' Mbembe's notion of the 'living dead' emphasizes that power is wielded not solely through the domination of life, but also through the deliberate establishment of conditions that make existence precarious, vulnerable, and ultimately devoid of meaning.

Another narrative entitled "Summer of 2010" centers on the ailing baker Rahman, who gradually succumbs to the pervasive terror of boys being killed daily during the summer conflict of 2010 in Kashmir. The tale intertwines various timelines, reaching back to the 1990s when violence and militarization began to take root in Kashmir, as Rahman and his spouse Nagin witness the evolving circumstances surrounding them. The narrative recalls moments when local individuals were halted and struck by Indian soldiers due to the absence of a stamp on their "identity card" (Rather 99). A local physician remarks, "We live in a different time now. It is all the same . . . whether we live or die, what difference does it make?" (p. 99). Characters such as Tariq, Mohsin, the half-wives, Nagin, and Rahman embody the experience of life amidst violence that alters their identities and physical forms to a new state, one that dismantles all forms of social interaction, meaning, time, consciousness, and rest. Even sleep transforms into a source of fear rather than rejuvenation. Rahman, who continues to suffer from his enigmatic illness, confides in his wife Nagin. "I'm afraid of sleep…When I fall asleep, I feel I'm falling through darkness" (p. 101).

The issue of a *transformed time* or the connection with temporality is what I aim to highlight in these narratives and its association with the Kashmiri identity. The disasters triggered by violence result in the realm of the *unheimlich* or the unhomely, where the physical relationship of each character to time and all that is familiar undergoes a change. In "The Summer of 2010," Nagin's bond with both the ordinary and the spiritual evolves. The text refers: "A strange restlessness overcame here…contained an invisible demon of weight swelling inside her…But of late, as the curfew continued, it had begun to quaver.

The soothing, graceful notes were missing and the recital sounded cracked and raspy" (p. 108).

This *invisible demon of weight* represents the pervasive horrorism that infiltrates the minutiae of life, causing Kashmiri individuals to become the Other within a distorted time and space. The effects of violence on a person's relationship with temporality have been examined by anthropologist and physicist Eric J. Hanstad, who emphasizes the concept of tachypsychia, defined as the "distortion of perceived time that often accompanies violent or traumatic encounters" (p.72). He suggests that "the lens of violence (can be) a method of interpreting the subjectivity and relativity of time itself" (p.76). Additionally, he explores how "temporal malleability occurs" (p.76) in the context of violence. His reiteration of tachypsychia serves as a vital reminder of how the perception of time is transformed in the face of violence. In the aforementioned passage, Nagin's experience of the ordinary, which could provide potential solace through moments spent on the veranda listening to the azan prayers, transitions into one of anxiety, fear, and an *invisible demonic weight* pressing upon her. The sounds of prayer lose their "graceful notes" and fail to bring her peace amidst the escalating atmosphere of violence surrounding her.

"The Cowherd" particularly dissects this centering of the human subject and brings forth a merging of boundaries between human, non-human, and nature within the necrotopia of Kashmir. As Gulam gazes toward Rafiq's residence with smoke rising from the chimney, he envisions the "lavish dinner being prepared" (150) while hunger pangs torment his stomach as "a dog howls in the distance" (151) and a snow-laden branch snaps with a loud crack. The narrative's redefined focus on the body, nature, and flesh ultimately establishes a "corporeal relevance of every being" as Maurice Merleau-Ponty posits in his ontology of the flesh in *The Visible and the Invisible*. This tale skillfully suggests dynamic possibilities in various modes of "seeing" and the inquiry into "corporeal ontology" that dismantles hierarchies, and a specific centering of human subjectivity, where the emphasis is on "flesh that sustains an intracorporeal leveling" (McBlane 186). Angus A. J. McBlane examines Merleau-Ponty's ontology of the flesh and his focus on the body. He broadens the discourse towards the "corporeal ontology" of human existence which "is rooted in a material world of significant complexity, one upon which we rely for our ongoing survival" (Hayles qtd. in McBlane 187).

5. Conclusion

The anthology of narratives in *The Night of Broken Glass* offers an unyielding insight into how violence reshapes Kashmir and its inhabitants. These tales reveal the

politics surrounding death and the physical body, highlighting the precariousness to which these 'bodies' are subjected. By broadening the scope of biopolitics and necropolitics, this section examines violence and its effects on the ontological and corporeal significance of the human subject, as well as how it alters the human subject's connection with their environment in an extraordinary state of existence. The narratives illustrate that a Kashmiri life is not merely relegated to its most basic form of existence but is perpetually vulnerable to an ongoing state of exposure that transcends the mere fear of death. Horrorism penetrates the very essence of the human condition, where the human subject endures an unfathomable, ontological degree of vulnerability. Mbembe provides instances of contemporary environments influenced by necropower, such as Palestine, and elucidates that necropower creates 'death-worlds' where vast populations become the focus of sovereign authority aimed at erasing their existence and causing death. Everyday existence is perpetually subjected to a 'state of siege,' where land, water, and air are all dominated by a force that seeks to inflict maximum violence. He discusses both the covert and overt manifestations of necropolitics, asserting that 'daily life is militarized' by necropower, resulting in restricted movement and the incapacitation of local institutions, which culminates in a gradual demise, termed 'invisible killing' by Mbembe. This form of necropolitics transcends the biopolitical realm in its justification of violence and the 'right to kill' over extensive populations. It represents an exercise of sovereign power, where biopolitics and necropolitics intertwine uniquely to generate terror. This specific type of terror formation and state of siege is crucial to identify in the context of Kashmir, as illustrated in the chosen texts. The text refers: “Like poison, a pain slowly spread through my body. My head was throbbing and gradually going numb” (p. 42). The indigenous Kashmiri gathers in the "forbidden quarters," aspiring to dismantle the colonial regime and those accountable for this turmoil (p.31). As oppression intensifies, it becomes second nature for the native to formulate strategies to challenge the oppressor. This mentality encompasses not just individuals but the whole community. The author expresses that the rage and hostility felt by colonial subjects drive them to view the world through basic instincts. Ironically, a Kashmiri militant once interviewed by Schofield remarked, "They have no love for the Kashmiris, only for the land."(p. 78).

References

Agamben, Giorgio. Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life. California: Stanford University Press, 1998.

Agamben, Giorgio. State of Exception. Translated by Kevin Attel. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.

Afshana, Syeda. Backyard of Corpses: Narratives from Kashmir. New Delhi: Penguin India, 2013.

Bhabha, Homi, ed. Nation and Narration. London: Routledge, 1990. "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse." October 28

(1984): 125-33

Boym, Svetlana. The Future of Nostalgia. New York: Basic Books, 2002.

Bradatana, Costica. “A Light for the Future: On the Political Uses of a Dying Body.” Dissent Magazine. May 23, 2011. April 20, 2015.

Cavarero, Adriana. Horrorism: Naming Contemporary Violence. Columbia University Press, 2009.

Chatterjee, Sushmita & Subramaniam, Banu. Eds. Meat: A Transnational Analysis. Duke University Press, 2021.

Das, Veena. Life and Words: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary. University of California Press, 2007.

Davis, Colin. “Hauntology. Specters and Phantoms.” French Studies. Vol. LIX (3).

373–37, 2005.9.

Debrix, Francois. Global Powers of Horror: Security, Politics, and the Body in Pieces. Routledge, 2017.

De Certeau, Michel. The Practice of Everyday. University of California Press, 1988.

Diprose, Rosalyn. “Community of Bodies: From Modification to Violence.” Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies. Vol. 19(3), 2005. 381–392.

Foucault, Michel. The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction. New York: Random House, Inc., 1978.

Ghosh, A. (2023). Kashmir’s Necropolis. Lexington Books.

Josselson, Ruthellen & Lieblich, Amy et al. Eds. Identity and Story: Creating Self in Narrative. American Psychological Association, 2006.

Kabir, Ananya Jahanara. The Territory of Desire: Representing the Valley of Kashmir. University of Minnesota Press, 2009.

Kabir, Ananya Jahanara. "Partitions Alegropolitics." Partition Talk Series, Center of Diaspora Studies, Punjabi University & IIT Kharagpur, India. November 24, 2021.

Kanwal, Aroosa. "'No Bodies': Specter of an Unjust War in Kashmir." Interventions:

International Journal of Postcolonial Studies. March 28, 2021. Accessed November 7, 2021. 1–17.

Kaul, Nitasha. "Future Tense: Nitasha Kaul in Live Conversation with Amrita Ghosh." Malmö Feministik Festival. November 20, 2021. Malmö, Sweden. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UtZ2LxS4W_A.

Kaul, Suvir. "Kashmir: A Postcolony." Interview with Amrita Ghosh. August 21, 2020. Accessed January 2023. SASNET, Lund University, Sweden. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R311PqZzx6M.

Kaul, Suvir. "Diary of a Summer." Until My Freedom Has Come: The New Intifada in Kashmir. Ed. Sanjay Kak. New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2011. 17–28.

Kaul, Suvir. "To Walk Past the Threatening Gaze." Outlook Magazine. August 5, 2013. April 19, 2015.

Kaul, Suvir. Of Gardens and Graves: Kashmir, Poetry, Politics. Duke University Press, 2017.

Khan Khandy, Idrees. "Social Roots of Insurgency in Kashmir." Violence in South Asia. Eds. Aninsya Purakayastha et al. Routledge, 2020.

Mbembe, Achille. "Notes on the Postcolony." Journal of the International African Institute. Vol. 62(1), 1992. 3–37.

Mbembe, Achille. "Necropolitics." Public Culture. Vol.15(1), 2003. 11–40.

McBlane, Angus A.J. Corporeal Ontology: Merleau-Ponty, Flesh and PostHumanism. Dissertation. University of Cardiff, 2013.

McCarthy, Cameron. "Tools of Conviviality: Art in the Postcolonial Imagination." Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education. Oxford University Press. March 25, 2021. Accessed October 8, 2021.

Murray, Alex. Giorgio Agamben. New York: Routledge, 2010.

O'Brien, April. "Horrorism and Ontological Dignity: What Do Not Historical Signs Tell Us?" Present Tense. Vol. 7(1), 2018. 1–6.

O'Riley, Michael. "Postcolonial Haunting: Anxiety, Affect and the Situated Encounter." Postcolonial Text. Vol. 3(4), 2007. 1–15.

Rather, Feroz. The Night of Broken Glass. Harper Collins, 2019.

Schmitt, Carl. Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty. Translated by George Schwab. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.

Schofield, Victoria. Kashmir in the Crossfire. London: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 1996.

Schwartz, Margaret. "An Iconography of the Flesh: How Corpses Mean As Matter." Communication +1. Vol. 2(1), 2013. 1–16.

Scott, James C. Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Resistance. Yale University Press, 1985.

Toadvine, T. (2016). Maurice Merleau-Ponty.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/233212100_Community_of_Bodies_From_Modification_to_Violence.