NECROPOLITICS AND MODERNITY: UNVEILING THE 'EMPIRE'S DIRTY WORK' IN *HEART OF DARKNESS*, *A PASSAGE TO INDIA* AND *BURMESE DAYS*

NEKROPOLİTİKA VE MODERNİTE: 'İMPARATORLUĞUN KİRLİ İŞLERİNİ' HEART OF DARKNESS, A PASSAGE TO INDIA *VE* BURMESE DAYS *ARACILIĞIYLA DEŞİFRE ETMEK*

İsmail KAYGISIZ
Arş. Gör., Munzur Üniversitesi, Batı Dilleri ve Edebiyatları Bölümü, İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Ana Bilim Dalı, ismailkaygisiz@munzur.edu.tr

Ayşegül DEMİR
Dr. Öğr. Üyesi, Munzur Üniversitesi, Batı Dilleri ve Edebiyatları Bölümü, İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Ana Bilim Dalı, ademir@munzur.edu.tr

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Abstract

This article examines the complex interplay between modernity, colonialism, and necropolitics as represented in Heart of Darkness by Joseph Conrad, A Passage to India by E.M. Forster, and Burmese Days by George Orwell. These modernist texts not only critique the dehumanization and systemic extermination justified by colonial ideologies but also highlight the ways in which colonial power uses necropolitical strategies to govern life and death. By integrating Achille Mbembe's concept of necropolitics with Michel Foucault's theory of biopower, this analysis elucidates the racial and sovereign dynamics that both underpin and challenge colonial regimes. The paper contextualizes the relationship between modernism and colonial history, highlighting how modernist narratives reflect a crisis in the colonial agenda and embody Enlightenment ideals that have shaped the socio-political landscape of empires. These narratives offer a critical view of the dichotomy between the colonizer and the colonized, emphasizing the fractured and uncertain epistemological underpinnings of imperial logic. The examination of Conrad, Forster, and Orwell focuses on the ethical and psychological turmoil from colonial dominance, probing how colonialism justifies violence and subjugation. The study reveals how colonial powers exert necropolitical control, deciding who lives and who dies—a control that extends beyond physical dominance to the psychological colonization of minds, perpetuating colonial hegemony. Ultimately, this paper shows how modernist texts critique colonial necropolitics and expose the racial prejudices and biopolitical strategies essential for maintaining colonial regimes. These texts provide profound insights into the lasting impacts of colonialism on contemporary understandings of race, sovereignty, and resistance.

Öz

Bu makale Joseph Conrad'ın Heart of Darkness (Karanlığın Yüreği), E.M. Forster'ın A Passage to India (Hindistana Bir Geçit) ve George Orwell'ın Burmese Days (Burma Günleri) adlı eserlerinde temsil edildiği şekliyle modernite, sömürgecilik ve nekropolitika arasındaki karmaşık ilişkiyi incelemektedir. Bu modernist metinler yalnızca sömürgeci ideolojilerin meşrulaştırdığı insanlıktan çıkarma ve sistematik imhayı eleştirmekle kalmıyor, aynı zamanda sömürgeci iktidarın yaşamı ve ölümü yönetmek için nekropolitik stratejileri kullanma biçimlerini de vurguluyor. Achille Mbembe'nin nekropolitika kavramını ve Michel Foucault'nun biyo-iktidar teorisini birleştirerek, bu çalışma, sömürge rejimlerinin temelini oluşturan ve bu rejimlere meydan okuyan ırksal ve egemen dinamikleri ortaya koymaktadır. Çalışma, modernizm ile sömürgecilik tarihi arasındaki ilişkiyi ele alarak, modernist anlatıların sömürgeci gündeme duyulan inanç krizini nasıl yansıttığını ve imparatorlukların sosyo-politik yapısını şekillendiren Aydınlanma ideallerini nasıl öne çıkardığını tartışır. Bu anlatılar, emperyal mantığın parçalanmış ve belirsiz epistemolojik temellerini vurgulayarak, sömürgeci ve sömürgeleştirilen arasındaki ikileme eleştirel bir bakış açısı sunuyor. Conrad, Forster ve Orwell'in incelenmesi, sömürgeciliğin şiddeti ve boyun eğdirmeyi nasıl meşrulaştırdığını araştırarak, sömürgeci hâkimiyetten kaynaklanan etik ve psikolojik kargaşaya odaklanmaktadır. Çalışma, sömürgeci güçlerin kimin yaşayıp kimin öleceğine karar vererek nasıl nekropolitik kontrol uyguladıklarını ortaya koymaktadır; bu kontrol, fiziksel hâkimiyetin ötesine geçerek zihinlerin psikolojik olarak sömürgeleştirilmesine kadar uzanmakta ve sömürgeci hegemonyayı sürdürmektedir. Sonuç olarak bu makale, modernist metinlerin sömürgeci nekropolitikayı nasıl sorguladığını ve sömürge rejimlerini sürdürmek için gerekli olan ırksal önyargıları ve biyopolitik stratejileri nasıl ifşa ettiğini göstermektedir. Bu metinler, sömürgeciliğin ırk, egemenlik ve direnişe dair çağdaş anlayışlar üzerindeki kalıcı etkilerine dair derin kavrayışlar sağlamaktadır.

Introduction

To fully grasp the essence of modernism, one must recognize its intricate entanglement with the history of colonialism. Gasiorek highlights that modernism's profound engagement with colonial history is manifest in its fractured forms, which often mirror a crisis of belief in the colonialist agenda (2015, p. 21). The emergence of modernity ushers in a range of interpretations that reflect the significant societal shifts catalysed by these historical events. Colonialism, particularly its European variant that took root in the sixteenth century, is fundamental to understanding modernity. This form of colonialism is deeply intertwined with the Enlightenment ideals of progress and civilization, advocating a dichotomous view that categorizes the 'other' within non-European spaces[1], shaping the socio-political landscape of the Empire. The English literary scene is not one exempt from the socio-politics of the Empire as Gasiorek suggests about English modernism, noting that "it is certainly true that uneasiness about colonialism and the rhetoric that sought to justify it features prominently in modernist writing and informs its explorations of European civilisation and history" (2015, p. 21). It is from this perspective that modernist fiction in Britain critically examines imperial logic and the colonial treatment of native populations.

Among the notable literary figures engaging with these themes are Joseph Conrad, E.M. Forster, and George Orwell. Conrad, a controversial figure[2] in modernist studies, often prompts discussions cantered on his status as a genuinely modernist writer. Despite the controversy, many scholars, particularly those like Hampson, consider him a pivotal modernist writer, particularly citing *Heart of Darkness* as the "paradigmatic 'modernist' novel" (Hampson, 2009, p. 297). This classification is supported by its profound exploration of modernist themes such as indeterminacy, epistemological uncertainties, spatial form, and mythic logic (Hampson, 2009, p. 297). Forster, in *A Passage to India*, presents a nuanced view of ethnic others, which has been both lauded for its liberal sensitivity and critiqued for its simplicity (Murray, 2009, p. 167). Forster's work maintains an "angular relation to modernism" reflecting his distinct positioning within the cultural context of the country (Das, 2009, p. 346). Orwell, more often recognized for his political writings,

1 Sarah Upstone's *Spatial Politics in the Postcolonial Novel* looks into the issue in detail.

2 For instance, in his *The Modernist Papers*, Fredric Jameson briefly touches upon the flaws of Conrad's modernism, raising questions whether we can really attribute modernism to Conrad, arguing that in contrast to modernism's promise of making it new and its emphasis on originality and novelty, he "explicitly draws on more archaic storytelling forms" (2007, p. 152).

critiqued modernism as "a worship of the meaningless" (‘IW’ 228) and considered any focus on subject matter as "a lapse of taste," though his and his contemporaries' works often merged political engagement with modernist artistic techniques (qtd in Gasiorek, 2015, p. 435).

In *Heart of Darkness* (1899), *A Passage to India* (1924) and *Burmese Days* (1934), the narratives critically examine how colonial ideology and power justify violence against indigenous populations, normalizing such acts as a reinforcement of colonial dominance. These texts delve into the damaging psychological impact on colonized societies, revealing how colonial ideologies lead to the internalization of inferiority among the colonized. This internalization not only transforms acts of violence into symbols of the colonizers' sovereignty but also paradoxically garners support from the colonized, who come to accept and sometimes even endorse such violence as a legitimate exercise of authority. This narrative serves to expose a deep-seated layer of complicity where the oppressed may internalize and perpetuate the colonizer's justification for power and violence, thus highlighting the complex dynamics of colonial oppression and the psychological entanglement it engenders within the colonized communities.

This paper will explore and analyse *Heart of Darkness, A Passage to India*, and *Burmese Days* as texts that delve into the necropolitics based on racism, which organizes social hierarchies within the colonies and justifies punitive practices. These novels serve as modernist responses that explore the implications of biopower and necropolitics in the context of colonial domination, particularly focusing on the 'colonization of the mind'.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In his seminal work “Necropolitics,” Achille Mbembe defines necropolitics as the situation in which “the ultimate expression of sovereignty resides, to a large degree, in the power and the capacity to dictate who may live and who must die” (2003, p. 11). This definition underscores the sovereign's absolute power over life and death, which Mbembe identifies as a core attribute of sovereignty itself. He elaborates that to exercise sovereignty is to control mortality and to frame life as a manifestation of power (Mbembe, 2003, p. 12). Michel Foucault’s perspective complements this view, positing that the right of sovereignty is most apparent when it imposes death, the most overt display of the sovereign's absolute power (Foucault, 2003, p. 248).

This notion of sovereignty leads us to perceive it as embodying the power to punish and discipline, using death as a means to control populations. The sovereign, imbued with hubris, thus asserts dominance over others. To strengthen this argument, Mbembe quotes Bataille, defining sovereignty as “the strength to violate the prohibition against killing” (qtd in Mbembe, 2003, p. 11). He succinctly defines this as predominantly “the right to kill”—not strictly a function of state power—and elaborates on its constant association with “exception, emergency [in which the sovereign is not subject to a legal questioning such as curfews, the state of exception], and a fictionalized notion of the enemy” (Mbembe, 2003, p. 16).

Foucault explains the transformation of handling the bodies and people as individuals following which the sovereign turns to the massification of them, as follows:

> [A]fter a first seizure of power over the body in an individualizing mode, we have a second seizure of power that is not individualizing but, if you like, massifying, that is directed not at man-as-body but at man-as-species. After the anatomo-politics of the human body established in the course of the eighteenth century, we have, at the end of that century, the emergence of something that is no longer an anatomo-politics of the human body, but what I would call a "biopolitics" of the human race (Foucault, 2003, pp. 242-243).

Reflecting on Foucault's exploration, biopolitics emerges as a transformation from the individualized treatment of bodies to a broader regulatory framework that targets populations at the species level. This shift from anatomo-politics to biopolitics marks a significant evolution in governance, where power extends beyond controlling individual bodies to orchestrating the life processes of entire populations through biopower. In essence, this transformation encapsulates the essence of "biosovereign", where the sovereign power extends to the biological existence of its subjects, governing who may live and who must die (Lazzarato, 2002, p. 114).

Patrick Wolfe's insights further illuminate this shift, arguing that territoriality and elimination are core features of settler colonialism. He notes, "[e]limination should be seen as an organizing principle of settler-colonial society rather than a one-off occurrence. This logic encompasses more than the summary liquidation of Indigenous people. In common with genocide, as Raphaël Lemkin characterized it, settler colonialism has both negative and positive dimensions" (Wolfe, 2016, p. 11). Wolfe also highlights how race resolved the contradictions of liberal-democratic

ideologies inherent in colonialism, noting, "[r]ace provided an expedient resolution to the logical affront that colonialism presented to liberal-democratic ideology (2016, p. 11). As incubators and developers of modernity, Australian settlers would be in the vanguard of a number of democratic movements, including those for women's suffrage and trades-union rights. At the same time, they would dispossess and maltreat Aborigines with all the ruthlessness of settlers elsewhere" (Wolfe, 2016, p. 14). Elizabeth A. Povinelli examines the impact of modern sovereignty and necropolitical practices on Indigenous peoples, highlighting how these structures of power dictate life and death within colonized societies. She states, "[m]odern forms of sovereignty do not simply control territory but extend their reach into the very bodies of Indigenous peoples, marking them as subjects to be governed or eliminated" (Povinelli, 2021, p. 57).

Mbembe sheds light onto the operations of biopower, exerted "through dividing people into those who must live and those who must die" (2003, p. 16). This distinction "[operates] on the basis of a split between the living and the dead" and "such a power defines itself in relation to a biological field—which it takes control of and vests itself in (2003, p. 16). Moreover, this biopower in question takes the power to kill or let live as a duty of protection in the level of discourse, to the extent that it employs a discriminative discourse and creates binaries amongst the masses. As in the nineteenth century biology, these binaries find grounds on the concept of race (Foucault, 2003, p. 256).

Using race as a vantage point, biopower —also extendable to the concept of 'biosovereign' based on theories of sovereignty—exercises control over masses by killing, often displaying the dead bodies of certain racial groups, and clearly comes to get the opportunity to get rid of the guilt associated with such acts of power. Foucault discusses how, under these conditions, biopower effectively 'normalizes' societal structures, embedding and justifying its mechanisms through the division and hierarchical classification of races[3]. The predominant group within a society, as delineated and influenced by sovereign power, perceives their norms and lifestyles as the standard due to societal segmentation. This division, often demarcated along racial lines, normalizes their existence in contrast to 'the other' or alternate racial

[3] In that sense, in terms of uneven power relations, it is not far-fetched to contend that the sovereign creates a certain dichotomy to exercise its power. If that takes place in an allegedly democratic sphere, it can be analysed through a study of populism. Francisco Panizza and Ernesto Laclau present the reader how power is structured through the dichotomy of 'us' and 'them.' See *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy*.

groups. According to Foucault, this form of discrimination, which he terms as racism, is crucial as it creates the “precondition that makes killing possible” (Foucault, 2003, p. 256).

Subsequently, biopower operates through the systematic application of racism, enforcing and perpetuating societal divisions based on racial hierarchies:

> What in fact is racism? It is primarily a way of introducing a break into the domain of life that is under power's control: the break between what must live and what must die. The appearance within the biological continuum of the human race of races, the distinction among races, the hierarchy of races, the fact that certain races are described as good and that others, in contrast, are described as inferior (Foucault, 2003, p. 254).

Foucault defines racism as a method of segregating people into categories and subcategories, thereby enabling biopower to perpetuate its control. He presents this stratification as analogous to a hierarchy, reminiscent of societal structures observed in European humanism and various oppressive regimes such as Nazi and Soviet camps. This system ranks races, ostensibly creating a pyramid where certain groups are deemed superior, justifying lethal actions under the guise of maintaining order and supremacy. This conceptual framework posits that race becomes a critical lever for biopower, sanctioning violence and subjugation by categorizing human beings into a "biological type caesura," which essentially supports the perpetuation of power by determining who should live and who must die based on racial distinctions (Foucault, 2003, p. 254). The main claim here is that using race, biopower justifies itself for killing, with one race superior and the other inferior.

Foucault expands on the notion that the maintenance of power necessitates to kill for the sovereign so that it stratifies and controls the society and makes itself credible. This transformation imbues the sovereign with what Foucault terms ‘necropower.’ He articulates, “[r]acism justifies the death-function in the economy of biopower by appealing to the principle that the death of others makes one biologically stronger insofar as one is a member of a race or a population” (2003, p. 258). Racism, therefore, serves as a way of justification for the empowerment of biopower and it comes into being by means of biological basis, i.e., the discourse of the Nazis’ superiority to other races is enough to justify the killings of those whom they despise, and in order to do so, they use biology and biological experiments. By doing so, the biopower can “regulate the distribution of death and [. . .] make possible the

murderous functions of the state" (Mbembe, 2003, p. 17). At the other end of this dichotomy, there is also the discourse of purification, which aims to eliminate the 'other' to cleanse the society.

As for the aim of this paper, just as Foucault does, we can relate the issue of racism to colonialism. In the colonial project, the 'white man's burden[4]' urges him to take 'civilization' to overseas, to the black man who is in 'all ways inferior' to him, as the colonial discourse advises. According to Foucault racism is deeply entwined with the mechanisms of colonization, often manifesting as genocidal acts justified through biopower:

> Racism first develops with colonization, or in other words, with colonizing genocide. If you are functioning in the biopower mode, how can you justify the need to kill people, to kill populations, and to kill civilizations? By using the themes of evolutionism, by appealing to a racism (Foucault, 2003, p. 257).

Historical instances of colonialism, racism, and discrimination are plentiful, manifesting as declarations of war against perceived 'barbarians' or defences of the nation against the 'impure' or 'infidels.' From the early nineteenth century onward, colonialism adopted a framework based on racial distinctions, supported by a biological perspective that emerged from the Enlightenment's focus on rationality and scientific inquiry. Consequently, early anthropology focused intensely on racial differences and their implications, using these as benchmarks to develop its approach to studying various peoples. This focus on racial categorization differentiated it from the broader and more invasive strategies of biopower. Ania Loomba's discussion on anthropology and colonialism, as she cites from Theodor Waitz's *Introduction to Anthropology* (1863), demonstrates how the discipline historically supported racial hierarchies:

> If there be various species of mankind, there must be a natural aristocracy among them, a dominant white species as opposed to the lower races who by their origin are destined to serve the nobility of mankind, and may be tamed, trained, and used like domestic animals, or . . . fattened or used for physiological or other experiments without any compunction. To endeavour to lead them to a higher morality and

[4] The term 'white man's burden' originates from Rudyard Kipling's 1899 poem of the same name, which discusses the idea of the burden felt by colonial powers to rule over other nations, which they deemed less civilized. The language used in the poem does reflect a perceived superiority of the colonizer over the colonized.

> intellectual development would be as foolish as to expect that lime trees would, by cultivation, bear peaches, or the monkey would learn to speak by training. Wherever the lower races prove useless for the service of the white man, they must be abandoned to their savage state, it being their fate and natural destination. All wars of extermination, whenever the lower species are in the way of the white man, are fully justifiable (qtd in Loomba, 2005, p. 102).

As is explicitly revealed in this quotation from nineteenth century anthropology, the main argument is that in the cause of the White, the lives of the 'lower' races do not matter at all; what makes this acceptable for the hegemonic and colonizing society is that they are lower-inferior to them. One of the crucial points is the justification of 'extermination' and killing of them via dehumanizing and commodification of the Black. As a result, the white biopower will not be subject to a legal interrogation as to the death of the native since it is already that power which dictates law and ventures on to protect the 'superior' race against the threat of the 'inferior' at the same time. Biopower's impact on the division of races is laid bare by Ian F. Haney Lopez as well:

> [T]he law serves not only to reflect but to solidify social prejudice, making law a prime instrument in the construction and reinforcement of racial subordination. Judges and legislators, in their role as arbiters and violent creators of the social order, continue to concentrate and magnify the power of race. Race suffuses all bodies of law . . . no body of law exists untainted by the powerful astringent of race in our society (1996, p. 965).

Backed up by science and law, biopower operates in such a way that it encompasses every point in the biopolitical society and justifies itself in racist terms based on social, scientific, legal terms, making the sovereign acceptable for the sustainability of its system of systematic killing and division; it is the system in which killing for power / power for killing / necropower is situated on the cover of a coffin of the White in which the Black is imprisoned to death, due to the discriminative, racist, murderous power all together, which is also confirmed by Hannah Arendt putting forward that "the politics of race is ultimately linked to the politics of death" (Mbembe, 2003, p. 17). In other words, biopolitics based on race is based on politics of killing, *id est,* necropolitics.

NECROPOLITICAL PRACTICES IN COLONIAL NARRATIVES

The concept of necropower, as explored by Mbembe, offers a profound lens through which to analyse colonial narratives. In *Heart of Darkness, A Passage to India,* and *Burmese Days* the capacity of colonialism to dictate who matters and who is disposable is vividly illustrated. This echoes Mbembe's assertion that colonial occupation is fundamentally about the appropriation and domination of physical and geographical spaces, creating a division between life and death that is enforced through racial hierarchies (Mbembe, 2021, p. 73).

In Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, the African continent is portrayed starkly, embodying themes of otherness and savagery that align closely with Achille Mbembe's concept of necropower. Mbembe describes necropower as the capacity of colonialism to dictate who matters and who is disposable, a theme vividly illustrated in the novel's depiction of African territories and their inhabitants (2003, p. 24). These regions are presented almost outside the recognized realm of humanity, echoing a profound narrative of dehumanization. Within the colonial narratives, the divergence of social and military structures from Western ideals that emphasize rationality, often fuels a discourse that rationalizes the exploitation of those deemed 'other.' This divergence is portrayed as almost 'unearthly', thereby contributing to the justification for colonial dominance and exploitation: "They howled and leaped, and spun, and made horrid faces; but what thrilled you was just the thought of their humanity—like yours—the thought of your remote kinship with this wild and passionate uproar" (Conrad, 2007, p. 43). In Conrad's narrative, Marlow, the protagonist, closely observes the behaviour of the natives, to such an extent that he questions their humanity. Within the same narrative breath, he positions himself, a European, in stark contrast, addressing a "you" who seems far removed from what he describes as the "night of first ages" (Conrad, 2007, p. 43). This characterizes the native as akin to a "prehistoric man" enveloped in a "black and incomprehensible frenzy," whose methods and expressions remain indecipherable and mysterious (Conrad, 2007, p. 43). This perspective serves to further the colonial agenda by casting the natives in a role that justifies their subjugation and exploitation under the guise of bringing civilization.

The physical and symbolic segregation of the natives, described vividly with emaciated bodies bound in chains, "I could see every rib, the joints of their limbs like knots in a rope; each had an iron collar on his neck, and all were connected together with a chain" (Conrad, 2007, p. 18), symbolizes their reduction to mere objects within

the colonial gaze. This portrayal effaces individual identities, reducing the subjects to mere aggregations of body parts—described as “bare,” with “streams of naked human beings,” and “glaring eyes” (2007, p. 70). This emphasis on fragmented body parts objectifies these individuals, reducing them to “vague forms of man,” a reflection of the dehumanizing gaze inherent in colonialism (2007, p. 70). Hume argues that this represents a wider strategy in colonial discourse aimed at dismantling the natives' political and subjective identities—a tactic employed to legitimize the colonial endeavour on racial and political grounds (Hume, 2009, p. 70). Such methods of depiction serve to bolster colonial supremacy by stripping the colonized of a coherent identity or voice.

Building on this objectification, the spatial division within the colonies, as highlighted by Frantz Fanon, serves as a method of necropower by enforcing a physical and metaphorical division of space. Fanon describes colonial occupation as first and foremost a division of space into compartments, premised on the principle of “reciprocal exclusivity” (Mbembe, 2003, p. 26). This spatial segregation enables necropower to precisely target its interventions and exert control without jeopardizing its own stability. Conrad’s narrative reflects this division as he portrays the African landscape as a "crouching village", essentially a place on its knees, starved and subdued, starkly juxtaposed against the autonomous spaces occupied by the colonizers (Mbembe, 2003, p. 26). According to Mbembe, “[c]olonial occupation is fundamentally about the appropriation, demarcation, and domination of physical and geographical spaces, inscribing upon the land a new set of social and spatial relations” (2003, p. 25). This dynamic is evident in *Heart of Darkness*, where the colonizers, despite their struggles with the unfamiliar territory, strive to maintain a segregated zone that remains distinct from that of the natives. Marlow describes this experience: “we were cut off from the comprehension of our surroundings; we glided past like phantoms, wondering and secretly appalled, as sane men would be before an enthusiastic outbreak in a madhouse” (Conrad, 2007, pp. 43-44). He further employs infernal imagery to delineate the colonized space as “some Inferno,” inhabited by “big flies [that] buzzed fiendishly,” presenting it as a “shackled form of a conquered monster,” whereas, in Europe, it remains “a thing monstrous and free” reminiscent of “the earliest beginnings of the World” (Conrad, 2007, p. 19, 22, 44, 41).

This spatial strategy enables the exercise of necropower, where sovereignty is manifested in the capacity to define who matters and who does not, who is disposable and who is not. The colonized space, therefore, becomes a zone where, as Agamben would describe the native lives as *homo sacer*, "who may be killed but not sacrificed," a life stripped of rights and exposed to an unconditional threat of death (Hume, 2009, p. 69; Agamben, 1998, p. 183). In this context, the "biosovereign" authority of the colonial regime becomes apparent, as it governs the biological existence of the colonized through mechanisms of life and death, further entrenching racial and spatial hierarchies (Mbembe, 2003, pp. 23-24). The most explicit symbol of necropower in Conrad's narrative is Mr. Kurtz, who embodies the unchecked power and authority of the colonizer over life and death. His control over the natives, who view him as a god-like figure, and the gruesome imagery of severed heads under his window, starkly illustrate the brutal consequences of colonial domination, where the native's life is so devalued that their death becomes a non-event in the legal and moral senses of the colonial world. Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* offers a chilling exploration of the mechanisms of racism and necropower within the colonial enterprise, depicting a world where the dehumanization of the 'other' serves as a justification for atrocities committed in the name of civilization. The novel not only critiques these colonial practices but also reflects on the psychological and moral decay inherent in the colonizers themselves, who are corrupted by the power they wield. This narrative serves as a powerful reminder of the dark legacies of colonialism, where human lives are caught in a devastating interplay of power, race, and disposability.

In *A Passage to India*, E.M. Forster reveals racism as an insurmountable barrier to friendship between the English and the Indians. From the outset, we witness the racial divide, as evident in a conversation among Indian men in Chapter II about the possibility of befriending the English. Mahmoud Ali's pessimism about this prospect, because of the prevailing racist attitudes, underscores the systemic nature of such prejudices, which are deeply ingrained and institutionalized by the imperial project. The narrative articulates a profound critique of the imperial mindset through its characters. For instance, Hamidullah, who has experienced life in England, elucidates the indoctrination that compels the English to maintain racial hierarchies: "The red-nosed boy has again insulted me in court. I do not blame him. He was told that he ought to insult me" (Forster, 1989, p. 34). This dialogue reveals the depth of racial conditioning and the systemic nature of imperial oppression, suggesting that such behaviour is an imposed part of their colonial rule rather than stemming from

personal animosity. Moreover, the Indians' discussion about the English further highlights a totalizing view of the colonizers, illustrating how the imperial project shapes perceptions on both sides. Hamidullah's remarks, "They [the English] all become exactly the same – not worse, not better. I give any Englishman two years, be he Turton or Burton. It is only the difference of a letter. And I give any Englishwoman six months. All are exactly alike" (Forster, 1989, p. 34), encapsulate this stereotyping, which is reciprocated in colonial attitudes towards the Indians. The speaker expresses a cynical view of the British administrators and their wives in India, suggesting that any differences among them are superficial (merely "the difference of a letter"), and that ultimately, they all behave the same way towards Indians. James Fitzjames Stephen confirms the discriminative and pejorative tone of the English through his articulation of the imperial project as "absolute government, founded not on consent but on conquest . . . implying at every point the superiority of the conquering race" (qtd. in Dolin, 1994, p. 329). This assertion reflects the imperial project's intent to create a binary between the English and the Indians, maintaining the control over the latter. Forster further explores the implementation of necropower through spatial segregation, vividly depicting Mbembe's theory. In a key scene, Mr. Turton's party segregates Indian guests from the English, using physical space to manifest social hierarchies and underscore the 'otherness' of Indians. This segregation is not just physical but symbolic, enforcing a colonial superiority complex deeply embedded in the societal structures of Chandrapore, the fictional Indian city.

The racial dynamics in Chandrapore culminate dramatically at the courthouse, where Mrs. Turton's outburst, "You're weak, weak, weak, weak. Why, they ought to crawl from here to the caves on their hands and knees whenever an Englishwoman's in sight, they oughtn't to be spoken to, they ought to be spat at, they ought to be ground into the dust, we've been far too kind with our Bridge Parties and the rest" (Forster, 1989, p. 220), epitomizes the dehumanizing rhetoric of necropolitics. This moment exposes the brutal honesty of colonial attitudes towards Indians, who are perceived not as human beings but as subjects to be controlled and oppressed. This English hatred towards the Indian, as represented by Mrs. Turton, exemplifies the colonial mindset. Forster mentions his encounter with a similar woman in India in his 'reflections on India':

> The lady who said to me eight years ago, 'Never forget that you're superior to every native in India except the Rajas, and they're on an equality,' is now a silent, if not extinct species. But she has lived her life, and she has done her work (qtd. in Meyers, 1971, p. 330).

Jeffrey Meyers creates an analogy between India and Aziz, the Turtons and other colonizers, and Britain:

> The trial of Aziz is a political allegory on this theme. Adela's accusation of Aziz is also Britain's accusation of India – that she is poor, ward, dirty, disorganized, uncivilized, promiscuous, uncontrollable, violent – in short, that she needs imperialism. His innocence is equivalent to India's right to freedom, which is symbolized by Aziz's formation from subservient and passive before the trial to independent and nationalistic after it (Meyers, 1971, p. 337).

Therefore, the trial is that of the racial relations between the English and the Indians, foreshadowing the righteousness of the latter, with Forster foreseeing the future. Forster juxtaposes these dynamics with personal interactions that suggest possibilities for understanding and connection in relationships such as those between Fielding, Aziz, and the English women, Mrs. Moore and Adela Quested. Fielding's informal approach contrasts sharply with the formal, racialized interactions typical of the colonial administrators. His behaviour signals a potential for cross-cultural friendship and understanding, challenging the entrenched racial policies of the British in India. In contrast, the Indian people are portrayed as mostly informal and sincere, unlike the formalness and rationality emphasized by the English. The racial boundaries come close to being scattered by Fielding and Aziz, both of whom approach each other intimately. Fielding invites Aziz and Godbole as individuals, with Adela and Mrs Moore present on seemingly equal grounds. Fielding does not make the former two feel like aliens in his place. Aziz is relieved by Fielding's informal attitude.

When Ronny comes to take the women to the polo match, he expresses his discontent with Fielding for leaving Miss Quested with the Indians alone. However, the incident when Rony and Adela come across the Nawab Bahadur echoes a little sense of disillusionment in Rony since the Nawab Bahadur comes to them "with hospitable intent [. . .] [has] a new car, and wishes to place it at their disposal" (Forster, 1989, p. 101). Ronny feels ashamed "of his curtness to Aziz and Godbole" (1989, pp. 101-102). Here, Forster shows a belief in the individualistic approach amongst people, which is important for the Indian people who prefer sincerity in the novel, as seen when Mrs Bhattacharya's husband immediately accepts Adela's visit. Additionally, Fielding not staying on the English side of the lawn at the same party is proof of his closeness to the Indian understanding more than his other countrymen. His individualistic approach provides both sides with the opportunity to create a

successful interaction: 'Forster believes that colonial problems are primarily the result of personal misunderstanding and mutual incomprehension. He believes the personal relationship is most important to the Oriental, and that the individual must succeed as an individual or he has failed" (Meyers, 1971, pp. 334-335). That is why the narrative attributes much importance to interpersonal relationships, laying bare the negative effects of the derogatory discourse and mindset.

Finally, Forster's narrative extends the concept of necropower beyond physical death to encompass a broader spectrum of social and political death—exclusion, marginalization, and the denial of personhood, which Foucault describes as "the fact of exposing someone to death, increasing the risk of death for some people, or, quite simply, political death, expulsion, rejection, and so on" (Foucault, 2003, p. 256). This is exemplified in the segregated spaces of the Bridge party and the courthouse, where Indians are systematically othered and diminished. Thus, *A Passage to India* not only critiques the explicit forms of racial discrimination but also the subtler, insidious ways in which imperial power is maintained through social and spatial divisions, reflecting a complex interplay of personal and political forces in the colonial context.

In George Orwell's *Burmese Days*, the narrative explores the dynamics of colonial rule in Burma, highlighting the pervasive racism and necropolitical strategies employed by the British Empire. Orwell critiques the dehumanization and systemic oppression that characterize the colonial experience, reflecting the necropolitical framework described by Achille Mbembe. Biopower through racism is embedded at the heart of the colonial project, and in *Burmese Days* it is presented through the colonization of the mind of the colonized as binaries—the inferior and the superior. The novel contends that the perceived and internalized inferiority of the colonized and the superiority of the colonizer, along with the alienation of the colonized from one another and their own culture, are central themes that underline the impact of colonization on Burmese society.

From the onset, the issue of the inferiority of the colonized is emphasized by both sides. The minds of the colonized have seemingly been set according to the colonizer's assertion of power and hegemony. The colonial project's spokesperson, Ellis, voices this:

> It's all very well, but I stick to what I said. No natives in this Club! It's by constantly giving way over small things like that that we've ruined the Empire. The country's only rotten with sedition because we've been too soft with them. The only possible policy is to treat 'em like the dirt

> they are. This is a critical moment, and we want every bit of prestige we can get. We've got to hang together and say, "WE ARE THE MASTERS, and you beggars-" Ellis pressed his small thumb down as though flattening a grub- "you beggars keep your place!" (Orwell, 2001, p. 29).

This quotation vividly illustrates how the native people of Burma are perceived by the British living there, reflected in the semantic field of "dirt," "rotten," and "beggars," alongside the authoritative "WE ARE THE MASTERS" (Orwell, 2001, p. 29). Ellis draws a clear-cut division between the colonizer and the colonized, via a strict hierarchy placing the former in a higher position and the latter in a slave position. This perception fits the description of the colonized as 'child-like,' 'lazy,' and 'needy,' while the British set out to 'save' them with their 'philanthropist' project.

The doctor's perception of his fellow natives further echoes this understanding. When we first see him, he salutes Flory and says, "Ah, my dear friend, how I have been pining for some cultured conversation!" implicitly expressing that the natives lack the culture and understanding of an Englishman (Orwell, 2001, p. 34). Later in the same scene, he furthers the acquired 'inferiority' by mentioning how the English are the superior race, despite some who are not very polite:

> And consider how noble a type is the English gentleman! Their glorious loyalty to one another! The public school spirit! Even those of them whose manner is unfortunate—some Englishmen are arrogant, I concede—have the great, sterling qualities that we Orientals lack. Beneath their rough exterior, their hearts are of gold (Orwell, 2001, pp. 36-37).

Here, it is clear how the 'Orientals' see themselves, i.e., lacking the necessary qualities to be equals of a European. The doctor too has internalized that the Westerners determine the fate of the Easterners, openly supporting the colonial project as bringing them culture and civilization. The doctor's mindset and its national internalization are also confirmed by patriotic newspaper: "In these happy times, when we poor blacks are being uplifted by the mighty western civilization, with its manifold blessings such as the cinematograph, machine-guns, syphilis, etc." (Orwell, 2001, p. 6). This irony serves to critique the supposed benefits of colonial rule, juxtaposing elements of modernization with destructive forces introduced by the West, reinforcing the narrative of supposed benevolence concealing exploitation. Frantz Fanon articulates this binary by stating, "not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man," creating a binary between the

white and the black. The latter is expected to align with the former's civilization and dictation, cutting off ties with their own culture, epistemology, and temporality (Fanon, 2008, p. 83). The European Club in *Burmese Days* serves as a symbolic centre of colonial power and an embodiment of colonial solidarity, but it also reveals the interplay between colonialism and patriarchy. The club not only reinforces racial hierarchies but also gender hierarchies, as seen in the characters' interactions and the exclusion of native members. This dual operation of power makes it more pervasive and difficult to dismantle (Wimuttikosol, 2009, p. 20, 28).

Racism also manifests in terms of space. Spatial division is a method of necropower that allows for the control and normalization of society by delineating physical and social boundaries. Fanon describes the spatialization of colonial occupation vividly, highlighting the compartmentalization and reciprocal exclusivity that define colonial spaces (Mbembe, 2003, p. 26). In *Burmese Days*, the English Club serves as a symbol of this spatial segregation, where no native is allowed. This exclusivity acts as a microcosm of the Empire, reinforcing the British sense of superiority and maintaining distance from the natives. The Club is described as a "spiritual citadel, the seat of British power, the Nirvana for which native officials and millionaires' pain in vain" (Orwell, 2001, p. 14). Similarly, characters like Elizabeth run immediately to the club in instances of discomfort, illustrating the alienation and perceived superiority of the English over the colony (Orwell, 2001, p. 14). This segregation enables necropower to assert its authority without jeopardizing its own stability, maintaining a clear division between the colonizer and the colonized.

Necropower, as Fanon articulates, manifests itself distinctly within colonized spaces, where the native town is described as "a place of ill fame, peopled by men of evil repute," starved of resources and living in squalor (Mbembe, 2003, p. 26). This depiction highlights the dehumanization and disposability of the colonized, whose existence is reduced to "bare life," stripped of rights and exposed to an unconditional threat of death (Agamben, 1998, p. 183). In *Burmese Days*, the death of natives is often rendered insignificant, reflecting the colonial mindset that the colonized are lesser beings. For instance, Colonel Bodger's theory that "these bloody Nationalists should be boiled in oil" exemplifies the dehumanizing and punitive attitudes of the colonizers (Orwell, 2001, p. 69). Similarly, Ellis's blinding of a schoolboy with his cane demonstrates the violent enforcement of racial hierarchies, justified by the perception that all natives are the same, thereby perpetuating the massification and devaluation of the colonized.

Conclusion

Heart of Darkness, A Passage to India, and *Burmese Days* each provides a compelling critique of colonialism through the lens of necropolitics. Authors Joseph Conrad, E.M. Forster, and George Orwell craft narratives that expose the dehumanizing processes and systemic extermination justified by colonial ideologies. These novels highlight the racial dynamics, entrenched social hierarchies, and psychological tolls of colonial rule, illustrating how colonial authorities deploy necropolitical strategies to manipulate life and death. This analysis integrates Achille Mbembe's concept of necropolitics with Michel Foucault's notion of biopower to shed light on the racial and sovereign dynamics that both support and challenge colonial regimes. The texts critique not only the explicit forms of racial discrimination but also the more subtle and insidious methods by which imperial power perpetuates itself through social and spatial divisions.

As depicted in these works, necropower is manifested through racism and the segregation of people and spaces, legitimizing the slaughter and subjugation of native populations. This is executed through acts of killing, torture, the display of dismembered body parts, and the reduction of natives to slave or servants, entrenched of binaries, or the “Manichean opposition of the colonizer and the colonized” (Janmohamed, 1995, p. 20). These mechanisms create identities that are internalized by both the oppressors and the oppressed. Consequently, the enforced recognition from the Other essentially becomes a mirror for the European’s narcissistic self-recognition, as the native, deemed too degraded and inhuman to possess any real subjectivity, is merely a vessel for the negative attributes the European projects onto him (Janmohamed, 1995, p. 20). This dynamic illustrates the intertwined operation of necropower and biopower within the colonial racist framework.

These modernist novels scrutinize colonial practice in a manner distinct from their literary predecessors. Rather than endorsing colonization, they explore how colonies function, adopting a modernist perspective that portrays experiences as "critical, engaged, and participatory," necessitating the creation of counter public spheres to challenge the notion that a society devoid of oppositional voices is unsustainable (Gasiorek, 2015, p. xi). In this context, these novels contribute to the anatomy of movement at the discursive level (Özmakas, 2018, p. 60), providing insights into the modern mechanisms of colonial structures and governance, and drawing on the overtly coercive strategies of sovereignty.

Ultimately, these modernist literary responses reveal the intricate interplay of personal and political forces in the colonial milieu, serving as poignant reminders of the enduring legacies of colonialism.

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Summary

This article explores the intricate relationship between modernity, colonialism, and necropolitics as represented in three modernist texts: *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad, *A Passage to India* by E.M. Forster, and *Burmese Days* by George Orwell. These works critique the dehumanization and systemic extermination perpetuated by colonial ideologies, while also highlighting the use of necropolitical strategies to control life and death within colonial contexts. By integrating Achille Mbembe's concept of necropolitics with Michel Foucault's theory of biopower, this analysis sheds light on the racial and sovereign dynamics that both support and challenge colonial regimes. The study contextualizes the connection between modernism and colonial history, emphasizing how modernist narratives reflect a crisis in the colonial agenda and embody Enlightenment ideals that have influenced the socio-political landscape of empires.

The narratives examined in this article offer a critical perspective on the dichotomy between the colonizer and the colonized, underscoring the fractured and uncertain epistemological foundations of imperial logic. The works of Conrad, Forster, and Orwell are scrutinized for their exploration of the ethical and psychological turmoil resulting from colonial dominance, and for their investigation into how colonialism justifies violence and subjugation. This study reveals how colonial powers exert necropolitical control, determining who lives and who dies—a control that extends beyond mere physical dominance to the psychological colonization of minds, thereby perpetuating colonial hegemony. Ultimately, this paper demonstrates how modernist texts critique colonial necropolitics and expose the racial prejudices and biopolitical strategies essential for maintaining colonial regimes, providing deep insights into the enduring impacts of colonialism on contemporary understandings of race, sovereignty, and resistance.

In *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad presents the African continent as a stark embodiment of otherness and savagery, aligning with Mbembe's concept of necropower. The novel portrays African territories and their inhabitants as almost outside the recognized realm of humanity, dehumanizing them and justifying their exploitation. The physical and symbolic segregation of the natives, depicted through emaciated bodies bound in chains, symbolizes their reduction to mere objects within the colonial gaze. This portrayal effaces individual identities, reducing subjects to mere aggregations of body parts, which reflects the dehumanizing gaze inherent in colonialism. This strategy serves to legitimize colonial supremacy by stripping the colonized of coherent identity or voice. The spatial division within the colonies, highlighted by Frantz Fanon, serves as a method of necropower by enforcing a physical and metaphorical division of space. This dynamic is evident in *Heart of Darkness*, where the colonizers, despite their struggles with the unfamiliar territory, strive to maintain a segregated zone distinct from that of the natives.

Forster's *A Passage to India* reveals racism as an insurmountable barrier to friendship between the English and the Indians. From the outset, the narrative underscores the racial divide and systemic nature of imperial oppression. The characters' dialogues reveal the depth of racial conditioning and the imperial mindset that compels the English to maintain racial hierarchies. The novel further explores the implementation of necropower through spatial segregation, vividly depicting Mbembe's theory. Key scenes, such as Mr. Turton's segregated party, use physical space to manifest social hierarchies and underscore the 'otherness' of Indians. This segregation is not just physical but symbolic, enforcing a colonial superiority complex deeply embedded in the societal structures of Chandrapore. The narrative extends the concept of necropower beyond physical death to encompass social and political death—exclusion, marginalization, and the denial of personhood.

In Orwell's *Burmese Days*, the dynamics of colonial rule in Burma are examined, highlighting the pervasive racism and necropolitical strategies employed by the British Empire. Orwell critiques the dehumanization and systemic oppression that characterize the colonial experience, reflecting the necropolitical framework described by Mbembe. The novel presents biopower through racism as embedded at the heart of the colonial project, emphasizing the perceived and internalized inferiority of the colonized and the superiority of the colonizer. The narrative explores the issue of the inferiority of the colonized from both perspectives, showing how the minds of the colonized are shaped by the colonizer's assertion of power and hegemony. The European Club in *Burmese Days* serves as a symbolic centre of colonial power and an embodiment of colonial solidarity, reinforcing racial hierarchies and maintaining distance from the natives. This segregation enables necropower to assert its authority without jeopardizing its stability, maintaining a clear division between the colonizer and the colonized.

These modernist texts offer a compelling critique of colonialism through the lens of necropolitics. Conrad, Forster, and Orwell provide narratives that expose the dehumanizing and systemic extermination justified by colonial ideologies. They highlight the racial dynamics, social hierarchies, and psychological impacts of colonial rule, illustrating how colonial power uses necropolitical strategies to govern life and death. By integrating Mbembe's concept of necropolitics with Foucault's theory of biopower, this analysis elucidates the racial and sovereign dynamics that both underpin and challenge colonial regimes. The texts not only critique explicit forms of racial discrimination but also the subtler, insidious ways in which imperial power is maintained through social and spatial divisions. As clearly seen in these novels, necropower operates through racism and the division of people and space to justify the killings of native bodies and further the colonial project. This happens through killing, torturing, parading body parts, and keeping natives as slaves or servants by means of binaries, or the “Manichean opposition of the colonizer and the colonized.” These mechanisms create identities that are internalized by both sides.

Ultimately, these modernist responses reveal the complex interplay of personal and political forces in the colonial context, offering a powerful reminder of the dark legacies of colonialism. They portray the colonial praxis under scrutiny in a way different from their predecessors. Rather than justifying colonization, they speculate on the ways colonies act, embodying a modernist stance that creates a multitude of experiences. These novels contribute to the anatomy of movement at the discursive level, providing a modernist view to

see through the modern mechanisms of colonial structures and organizations, drawing on the overtly coercive strategies of sovereignty. These texts critique colonial necropolitics and expose the racial prejudices and biopolitical strategies essential for maintaining colonial regimes, offering profound insights into the lasting impacts of colonialism on contemporary understandings of race, sovereignty, and resistance.