NECROPOLITICAL KASHMIR:
MEDIATING DECOLONIZATION THROUGH POSTcolonial LITERATURE
AND POSTHUMAN KNOWLEDGE

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A thesis submitted to the
Graduate School-Camden
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

In partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the degree of Master of Arts in English
Graduate Program in M.A. English

Written under the direction of
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Camden, New Jersey

May 2021
THESIS ABSTRACT

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within the English literary canon. Herein, my polemic against neocolonialism is twofold: (a) against state violence and necropolitics such as the militarized siege of Kashmir by the Indian state; (b) against canonization's epistemic violence that leaves pertinent postcolonial works like *Munnu* stranded on the periphery of the English canon. This thesis is a humble attempt to redress these issues by elucidating that writers like Mirza Waheed and Malik Sajad from Kashmir are heralding a new generation of Anglophone Indian writers by expanding the oeuvre of postcolonial writing as exemplified by the works of Salman Rushdie and Arundhati Roy. The novelty of such contemporary works as *The Collaborator* and *Munnu* is their blend of bold political voice that tackles postcolonial issues like border disputes and state-sponsored violence, alongside subtly depicting the vicissitudes of post-independence India.
Preface

Significance of Postcolonial Literature in Neocolonial Times

The past few decades have witnessed a decline in literary courses on postcolonialism in universities across the globe and especially in the USA. This flux (a midlife crisis, if you will) suggests that postcolonial theory’s novelty, historicity, and perhaps even its political acuity could use a shot in the arm. Notwithstanding, its potential in terms of critiquing neo-colonialism, neoliberalism, galloping imperialism of countries like the US, and jingoistic nationalism (ex. Hinduvata in India) remains untapped. The project of postcolonial studies remains unfinished as attested by the popularity of courses like global theory, diaspora studies, South-east Asian studies, and the emergence of Northeast Indian studies: all these courses are evidently an offshoot or divergence from postcolonial studies. In accounting for this shift, some scholars have questioned the utility of postcolonialism in a seemingly ever more globalized world. This inquiry has produced anti-colonial scholarship that is truly interdisciplinary and expands the oeuvre of postcolonial studies, as exemplified by the varied essays in the anthology: Postcolonial studies and beyond. This anthology paved the way for scholars to read beyond the staple writers including Salman Rushdie, Arundhati Roy, and other writers who have been pivotal in situating Indian writing in English on the Anglophone-global cultural market. Going forward, where do we look to extend the frontiers of postcolonial scholarship: beyond the English canon, beyond prominent national literary traditions, and beyond bestselling works?

Situating New Anglophone Kashmiri Literature Within the Postcolonial Canon
The need for the hour is to look at geopolitical regions that are amid decolonization and to bring to the forefront those literary traditions that have been pushed into subalternity by the canonization of their literary counterparts. The emergence of critical Kashmir studies in recent decades seems befitting of the invitation to go beyond and to reorient postcolonial studies focus towards examining the collateral of decolonization that has manifested itself in forms of cultural and political crisis at the end of peripheries. The surge in the publication of Anglophone novels by Kashmiri writers and the growing translation of vernacular Kashmiri works into English has increased the accessibility of these texts to a wider audience and scholars across the globe. This uptake in literary production and critical scholarship includes the following works. Of Gardens and Graves (Duke University Press, 2017), by Suvir Kaul, a meticulous study of the Kashmir conflict that blends postcolonial critique, poetry, and photography to puncture the Indian state narrative about Kashmir. Curfewed Night (Penguin 2008), by Basharat Peer, is one of the earliest anglophone works from a Kashmiri writer who initiated an international dialogue about the warzone. The Collaborator (Penguin Books, 2011), by Mirza Waheed, a novel whose focal point is Kashmir’s border region during the 1900s, when India and Pakistan staged a theatre of war through skirmishes that killed innocent Kashmiris. Malik Sajad’s Munnu: A Boy from Kashmir, is a beautifully drawn coming-of-age graphic novel. As the second graphic novel (after Kashmir Pending) about Kashmir, Munnu illuminates the human and non-human cost of political conflict, through a young boy’s childhood. The upsurge in critical Kashmir scholarship, undertaken by scholars like Suvir Kaul (Kaul 2017) and Ather Zia (Zia 2019) amongst others, has enabled postcolonial scholars to address a
crucial lacuna in postcolonial studies in the context of India: Indian writing in English that postcolonial scholarship has popularized thus far is not entirely representative of India. In fact, the current scholarship on regions like Kashmir - little that there is - has failed to address the post-colonial problems in this region that has been the epicenter of decolonization. In the current political climate after the right-wing Bhartiya Janata Party—infamous for its radical Hindu nationalist positions –ascended to power in 2014, literature from Kashmir has been systematically marginalized because of its political advocacy that problematizes the secular narrative of India as a nation-state by unveiling the specter of an imperial polity. For instance, how do we account for the draconian Armed Forces Special Powers Act that operates in a post-colony? Furthermore, Kashmir literature is at best read as an appendage, rather than an integral section within the body of postcolonial Indian literature. This thesis intends to expand the gamut of anticolonial scholarship, by taking stock of the cultural and political consequences of the (ongoing) decolonization in India through the lens of postcolonial theory, posthuman knowledge, and human rights discourse.
For

The People of Kashmir

And

My Parents

Harsh & Timmi
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Introduction: Necropolitical Kashmir

In the wake of decolonization, war (in the figure of conquest and occupation, of terror and counterinsurgency) has become the sacrament of our times, at this, the turn of the twenty-first century.

— Achille Mbembe, *Necropolitics*

What did I know of the ways of the world? There was a full-scale armed movement underway somewhere, everywhere, and things like this must be happening everywhere. There were people dying everywhere, getting massacred in every town and village, there were people being picked up and thrown into dark jails in unknown parts, there were dungeons in the city where hundreds of young men were kept in heavy chains and from where many never emerged alive, there were thousands who had disappeared, leaving behind women with photographs and perennial waiting, there were multitudes of dead bodies on the roads, in hospital beds, in fresh martyrs’ graveyards and scattered casually on the snow of mindless borders. So, what was a little village exodus in comparison to all that?

— Mirza Waheed, *The Collaborator*

Only nature, draped in darkness, seems to offer the consolation you would usually seek from those tungsten lights, the glass tables, the forks and knives, the fine concrete and steel and the interaction with programmed mannequins. However, that consolation comes with a condition: don’t say “Kashmir”. Don’t say Kashmir”. Don’t talk about your word. “Kashmir” will pull you back to the hotel lobby, to graveyards, sorrow, and morbidity. It’s not worth thinking back further in time.

— Malik Sajad, *Munnu*

In the 21st century, as another chapter of decolonization unfolds in a seemingly ever globalized world, new forms of political, economic, and cultural oppressions emerge. In postcolonial critique, Michel Foucault’s rubrics of biopower and governability have, thus far, proved useful in accounting for how the imperial sovereign state colonized the biological domain of life to exert its control. For
Foucault, biopower is the political means through which nation-states govern their subjects “to ensure, sustain, and multiply life, to put this life in order” (Foucault 138). Foucault defines biopower’s limits, wherein the sovereign decides which of its subject lives and which dies. However, political control and sovereignty in the contemporary era have far exceeded the limits of biopower. Once a fecund rubric, biopower fails to fully account for the excess of militarization, surveillance, and instrumentalization of death in current times. The ubiquitous war on terror, which amplified after 9/11 in countries like the U.S., and the state’s obsessive desire for its enemy’s death, are symptomatic of how modern-day sovereignty propagates the economy of war by instrumentalizing death. Achille Mbembe’s seminal work *Necropolitics* makes a crucial intervention in postcolonial studies - by concatenating postcolonial theory, race studies, and political discourse - to problematize how modern sovereign states subdue life to death either for imperial agendas or to legitimize state sovereignty. In Mbembe’s analysis, nation-state sovereignty’s ultimate expression of power has exceeded biopolitics to wage war against its enemy, often including its own people. In the contemporary post-war era (that heralded decolonization), sovereignty has taken many faces, such as counterinsurgency, counterterrorism, drone strikes, and jihad on terror, but its body is the same: necropolitics.

Mbembe describes necropolitics as the political process of producing “death-worlds”, where vast populations are subjugated to tyrannical and militarized forms of state control, thus conferring upon people the status of “living-dead” (Mbembe 39). Conjoining Foucault’s concept of biopolitics with Franz Fanon's work on decolonization, Mbembe theorizes necropolitics as the political manufacturing of death on a large scale through the fetishization of war and the state’s obsession with the annihilation of its enemy. Mbembe situates his polemic against necropolitics and
economization of death through a survey of colonial history and imperialism that conceived the wretched of the earth (to use Fanon’s phrase). For Mbembe, the colony in general and the plantation slavery, in particular, were the breeding grounds of necropolitics and its oppressive discourses that legitimized colonial authority and the rule of the “White” race. In *Necropolitics*, Mbembe posits that dehumanizing and pathologizing racial identity was a common colonial practice deployed by the imperialists to assert their dominance over the native people, and this ill-practice like the empire has an afterlife in the spectral figure of necropolitics.

The prevailing theme of contemporary geopolitics is thanatopolitics— a politics of death— witnessed in several necropolitical locales in the Global South: Kashmir and Palestine in Asia, Nigeria’s Boko Haram insurgency (started in 2009), and Mali War in Africa (started in 2012), to name a few war zones from an expansive litany. The contested epithets “global” of the Global south and “post” of postcolonial are invoked to tell the story of post-colonial times wherein nation-states are posited as the democratic nodes of global polity and a telos of decolonization. However, before we accept globalization and postcoloniality as our epoch's grand narratives, a perusal of such a claim is imperative. Mbembe’s lucid analysis of the notion of sovereignty— vis-à-vis the subjugation of life to death by democracies— exposes war as the praxis of present-day politics. Mbembe’s work addresses residual imperialism, racism, and institutionalization of war amongst various pressing issues that get “swept under the rug” even within postcolonial studies (Mbembe 16). If necropolitics - in tandem with biopolitics - is the modus operandi of modern democracy, have we truly arrived at post-colonial times?
Postcolonial Critique and the Modalities of Necropolitical Literature

Following Mbembe’s analysis, I contend that nation-state’s ubiquity in contemporary geopolitics should not be conflated with global postcoloniality. Not all nation-states operate on the same and equal axis of liberal democracy. Instead, nation-state sovereignty is a spectrum of biopolitical and necropolitical configurations that is not devoid of imperialism and racism. Mbembe’s work is efficacious since it accounts for this neo-colonialism and systemic racism in post-colonial times.

In Mbembe’s footsteps, this thesis suggests that the need of the hour is to potentiate a postcolonial critique that confronts sovereignty’s “absolute power of negative” and addresses the collaterals of decolonization (Mbembe 67). Literature from epicenters of decolonization (like Kashmir in India) that limns militarization, insurgency, trauma, death, and survival in a warzone is the vanguard of such necropolitical literature. Necropolitical literature does not just portray death and terror. More importantly, it is the cultural site where resistance is mobilized, and possibilities of life are imagined in the face of necro-power. Necropolitical literature is both a mirror of its production and an excursion into life and living beyond death and terror- that is, the logic of necropolitical literature is akin to the looking-glass logic. Overall, this thesis accentuates postcolonial literature’s resistance to necropolitics, in addition to arguing that literature encapsulates its necropolitical milieu. To that end, I propose that the postcolonial critique in literary studies should pay heed to necropolitical literature if it is to serve its political purpose in present times. The present-day postcolonial literary critique would be best directed towards a “necro-turn” after the “cultural turn” and “linguistics turn.”

Despite the generative possibilities of deploying a necropolitical framework to analyze postcolonial literature, its uptake in literary studies remains slender. Since the
publication of *Necropolitics* in 2011, the rubric of necropolitics has rarely been augmented in literary studies. Only a handful of scholars have deployed necropolitics as a rubric to analyze literature from war zones (mostly in the context of African literature), thus leaving an available framework lacking. This thesis paves the way for a “necro-turn” in postcolonial literary studies by treading this unchartered territory. While a full-fledged literary theory of necropolitics remains outside its scope, this thesis draws the broad contours of such a framework. Subsequently, it deploys this framework to read literature from Kashmir in Southeast Asia. In doing so, the thesis expands the necropolitical framework as an existing political theory to a multi-disciplinary rubric for analyzing postcolonial literature.

This thesis will interrogate the dark side, or what Mbembe calls the “nocturnal body”, of the world’s largest democracy - India - as it pertains to the Kashmir conflict. By making its claim through a necropolitical literary analysis of Mirza Waheed’s novel: *The Collaborator*, and Malik Sajad’s graphic novel: *Munnu*, the thesis traces how the nation-state's waxing (India) and the waning of the empire (British colonialism) cast its imperial shadow on Kashmir. Furthermore, I perform a necropolitical reading of the two works to argue that the experiences with death and necropolitics underwent by the novel’s narrators mold their resistive sensibilities. Specifically, the narrator’s disillusionment with the “relation of enmity” and the “logic of martyrdom” (concepts that I will explicate later) lead them to the politics of vulnerability as a decolonized modality of being with the Other.

More broadly, this thesis propounds that a critical engagement with necropolitical literature requires a theoretical approach that blends aesthetics, politics, and ethics to grasp the literary scope of works like *The Collaborator* [hereafter T.C.] and *Munnu*. The approach to necropolitical literature that I propose privileges textual
resistance without victimizing or romanticizing the survival struggle of the people inhabiting necropolitical zones. In other words, my approach to necropolitical literature does not solely focus on how such literary narratives enact the trauma of people subjected to the political terror of hegemonic states. Instead, I suggest that to appreciate the modalities of necropolitical literature, attention to its unique narrative structures and thematic becomes consequential for identifying how it engenders resistance to necropolitics in the cultural and public sphere. The preponderance of death, war, terror, and trauma in necropolitical literature coexists with survival, everyday living, and resistance to the state’s political oppression. This contrastive thematic of necropolitical literature enables an ethically sound and agentive representation of the traumatized people whose freedom is thwarted by the necropolitical state. In this thesis, I perform a necropolitical reading of T.C. and *Munnu* to argue that the novel’s narrative represents the politics of death in Kashmir, and it engenders resistance to its necropolitical milieu by imagining non-violent ways of survival and resistance to necropolitics.

**Plan of work**

In this introduction, I have argued via Mbembe that modern-day nation-state sovereignty operates in post-colonies and conflict zones like Kashmir as a concatenation of biopolitics and necropolitics. For instance, India’s militarized control in Kashmir and human rights violations bypass democratic consequences because of the draconian Armed Forces Special Power Acts (AFSPA). AFSPA was first enacted in 1942 in colonial India by British administrators to punish and punitively suppress the freedom movement called the Quit India movement. Unfortunately, AFSPA in postcolonial India continues to suppress Kashmiri voices of self-sovereignty by grave
violations of human rights. AFSPA provides the Indian army judicial immunity and protection against trial for killing innocent people on mere suspicion of being a “terrorist”. Mbembe’s comment about the absurdity of peace as a state of war in a colony is befitting to describe the paradoxical persistence of a pro-colony law like AFSPA in a post-colonial nation like India. Mbembe states: “A fact remains…in modern philosophical thought…the colony represents the site where sovereignty consists fundamentally in the exercise of a power outside the law (ab legibus solutus) and where “peace” is more likely to take on the face of a war without end.” (Mbembe 23)

Chapter 1 provides a historical snapshot of the Kashmir conflict against which T.C.’s and Munnu’s narrative unfolds. In Chapter 2, I perform a necropolitical reading of Mirza Waheed’s: The Collaborator (Penguin 2011) to argue that the novel’s narrative depicts thanatopolitics (politics of death) alongside biopolitics in Kashmir to imagine non-violent ways of survival and resistance to state-sponsored violence and oppression. First, the chapter performs a reading of T.C. that foregrounds the novel’s narrative resistance to necropolitics. I conjoin Judith Butler’s theory of vulnerability with Achille Mbembe’s concept of the relation of enmity to focus on the abject moments in T.C. My reading proffers that abjection in T.C. proves pivotal in shaping its narrator’s sensibilities whose irresolution towards martyrdom and survival posits ways for mobilizing resistance to necropolitics. In contrasting the novel’s narrative against the dominant state narrative, I propound that abjection becomes a site of negation of necropolitics and renegotiation for political sovereignty of the colonialized subject (Kashmiris) whose freedom is fraught by the hegemonic postcolonial state (India). The closing section of Ch 2 posits T.C. against the dominant state narrative whose suppression (or rather abjection, as I theorize) of
Kashmir’s struggle for Azadi - freedom- pushes the subaltern voice of Kashmiri resistance into a political void.

In Ch 3, I perform a posthuman reading of Malik Sajad's *Munnu: A boy from Kashmir*. *Munu* exemplifies aesthetic experimentation for its use of the predominantly modernist graphic narrative form, which is imbued with local Kashmiri art style to illustrate a Künstlerroman (artist’s novel) set against the Kashmir conflict. By illustrating Kashmiri people as *hanguls* (an endangered deer species) and state actors as humans, Sajad ironically portraits how the necropolitical state dehumanizes Kashmiri identity to make dissent deathworthy. I argue that the visual vantage point of *hanguls* serves as the prism of animalistic subjectivity for the readers to experience the protagonist Munnu's necropolitical milieu. Taking my cue from Joseph Slaughter's seminal work, *Human Rights*, I suggest that as a postcolonial Bildungsroman, *Munnu* performs human rights work by establishing a humanistic social vision. More importantly, I propound that *Munnu* partakes in a posthuman polemic of human exceptionalism by critiquing the oppressive discourses about racialized human others and the non-human subject world in which the human (and human rights) is precariously emplaced. By attending to the repressed animal in the humanistic discourse, *Munnu* expands the human rights graphic narrative's aesthetic and ethical concerns beyond the human to include the posthuman.
Chapter One: A Brief History of Kashmir Conflict

This chapter provides an abridged version of Kashmir conflict's history borrowed from Suvir Kaul’s essay: My Paradise is Burning. This brief historical account furnishes the background against which T.C.’s narrative unfolds, and it contextualizes the geopolitical conditions that led to the current moment of armed conflict in Kashmir. My aim here is not to historicize the Kashmir conflict, but to indicate that, post-1947, there exist contested histories and cultural narratives of the Kashmir conflict. Kaul’s historicization of the Kashmir conflict pushes back against the nationalist and ahistorical accounts of how the region became a cradle of necropolitics. Kaul’s historiography accounts for the contingencies and interrelated history of colonialism, anticolonialism, and nationalism that shaped the Kashmir conflict and continues to shape the Indian state’s necropolitics.

The Collaborator’s focal point is the “forgotten last village [Nowgam] before the border” of India and Pakistan, which through the novel’s narrative becomes an epicenter of an armed conflict (Waheed 176). This proxy-war that consumes Nowgan can be traced back to 1947 when the British colonial rulers partitioned India into newly formed sovereign states: Republic of India and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. During the Partition, Kashmir's erstwhile princely state chose not to capitulate its sovereignty to either India or Pakistan. Kashmir was thus left out of the cartography of both nations. Both countries agreed to decide the fate of Kashmir through U.N. intervention by carrying out a plebiscite, which, unfortunately, was never conducted, thus pushing the political status of Kashmir into limbo. Since the onset of decolonization in Southeast Asia in 1947 up till the present -day, India and Pakistan have scrambled to gain complete sovereignty over Kashmir.
In 1947, when the Pathan tribe of northwestern Pakistan (with the help of Pakistan's state) attempted to annex Kashmir’s erstwhile kingdom, its ruler Hari Singh sought help from the government of India to prevent Kashmir’s annexation. India decided to help, on the condition that Kashmir acceded to India. This was the first time that, at the behest of Kashmir’s sovereign, Indian armed forces militarized the zone, and Kashmir was officially declared a conflict zone. From 1947 to 1989, India managed to rule Kashmir through a series of proxy regimes that, in collaboration with the Indian state, governed the region through a political configuration of biopolitics and necropolitics.

In 1989, a new regional political party representing Kashmiri political opinion for sovereignty and self-determination gained traction. The new party, the Muslim United Front (MUF), threatened to change the status quo of the region by electorally coming to power. However, a massive rigging transpired in the state election, leaving Kashmiri youth disillusioned with the façade of electoral politics. What followed was an armed insurgency wherein Kashmiri youth began to cross the border into Pakistan to train as militants and rebels in arms against the Indian state. In response, India conducted a massive counterinsurgency operation that crushed the dissenting militancy and killed thousands of innocent people, making Kashmir the most militarized zone in the world. Within this historical context, a necropolitical history, the narrative of T.C. unfolds, focusing on the interim period between the 1980s to 1993. Since then, the Indian state’s necropolitics in Kashmir has operated as a concatenation of biopower, militarized control, and siege.
Chapter Two:

Mediating Necropolitical Kashmir: Death, Survival, and Resistance in Mirza Waheed’s: *The Collaborator*

The Collaborator: Narrative of Death and Survival in Kashmir

Having outlined the historical context in which T.C.’s narrative unfolds in the introduction; this chapter will now interpret the novel by deploying the necropolitical framework that I sketched at the beginning of the thesis. Furthermore, I will use Judith Butler’s theory of vulnerability to argue that T.C.’s representation of the Kashmir conflict does not privilege either martyrdom or survival as a means of resistance to necropolitics. Instead, T.C. problematizes the notion of sovereignty by juxtaposing the two types of relationalities - enmity and vulnerability - that coexist in Kashmir. More specifically, I will analyze how T.C.’s portrayal of necopolitical Kashmir, told from the POV of its eponymous narrator, is entrenched with abjection/abject moments. In her influential work, *Powers of Horror*, Julia Kristeva defined abject as an intense psychological experience, like encountering a human corpse, that cannot be encompassed, much less expressed within the available linguistics and symbolic framework (Kristeva 2). Conceptualizing abject within the psychoanalytic tradition, Kristeva suggests that the abject is a psychic experience that is not integrated into the individual self; rather the abject is always repressed or cast off to maintain the mirage of individuated selfhood. Kristeva’s theory of abjection exemplifies the finitude of language where during an intense psychological experience the semiotic boundaries between the subject and the object breakdown. The abject moment delinks the subject’s mental state with the semiotic order, thus rendering signification of meaning and intersubjective communication impossible.
Critical race theorists and feminist scholars, like Derick Scott and Judith Butler, have used the idea of abjection for political ends by theorizing ways of resistance towards social exclusion and oppressive sovereignty of the hegemonic state. Conjoining Butler’s estimations on the politics of vulnerability with Mbembe’s theory of necropolitics allows us to understand how India abjects Kashmir's struggle for independence through its necropolitics. My analysis of the novel will focus on the abject moments, peppered throughout the narrative, that prove pivotal in shaping the narrator’s sensibilities, whose irresolution towards martyrdom and survival provides alternate modalities for mobilizing resistance to necropolitics.

To demonstrate the portrayal of necropolitics in T.C., my argument has two parts. First, I will analyze how T.C. represents the necropolitical project of the Indian state in Kashmir. This necropolitics, when viewed through the lens of Mbembe’s concept of the “relation of enmity” problematizes the post-colonial status of India and its claim to be the world’s largest democracy. Second, I will focus on how T.C. dramatizes what Mbembe refers to as the conflicting “logic of martyrdom” and “logic of survival” through its narrator’s dilemma to be (rebel and become a martyr) or not to be (survive in necropolitical Kashmir). First, let me lay down my theoretical tool kit and explain how I deploy the two relational concepts of enmity and vulnerability while performing a necropolitical reading of T.C.

T.C.’s narrative contrasts the two types of relations, enmity, and vulnerability, as modes of being with the Other that inform how the post-colonial Indian state relates to Kashmir and governs its “subjects.” The former (relation of enmity) is a toxic and oppressive modality of interrelation that is based on hierarchal and racial boundaries such that the imperial state conceives the cultural and racial Other as a threat to the state’s racial unity. The latter (relation of vulnerability) is a decolonized
and affective mode of affiliation that does not assert the difference between the Self and the Other; rather, it views subjecthood as co-constitutive of the Other. The vulnerability model of kinship, as theorized by Butler - also emergent in T.C.’s narrative arc- marks a radical break from the colonial view of political relation. While the colonial state relates to its Other by racializing (and even animalizing) the subject for imperialist projects, the vulnerability model enables affective affiliations that afford democratic participation of all citizens in a postcolonial state. T.C. portrays the sovereign relationship between the Indian state and Kashmir as that of enmity, sustained by the excess of violence, terror, and necropolitics. However, the narrative closure in T.C. replaces the narrator’s worldview of enmity, from becoming an agent of necropolitical violence to recognizing vulnerability as an alternative way of mobilizing resistance to necropolitics.

I will begin my analysis by drawing the broad contours of T.C.’s narrative arc and explicating how the novel limns India's sovereignty over Kashmir as a relationship of enmity. T.C. is a quasi-realist novel that depicts the necropolitical project of India in Kashmir as it began in the early 1990s. The novel is divided into three parts: now and then (present and past), then (past), and now (present). The first part of the narrative vacillates between past and present to weave together the story of the narrator who was forced to become “the collaborator” with the hegemonic state, and how the fear of the necropolitical state has led people to abandon Nowgam or join the insurgency. The second part of the novel narrates how India’s sovereignty over Kashmir is a configuration of biopolitics and necropolitics that makes death a quotidian occurrence in the village of Nowgam. The last section of the novel delineates the enmity between the collaborator and the Indian army captain Kadian to
illustrate how the narrator ultimately resists the state’s necropolitics by emerging as an agentive post-colonial subject.

At the outset, we meet the nineteen-year-old narrator, summoned by the army captain Kadian, who makes the narrator a job offer that he cannot refuse. The alcoholic and bloodthirsty, Kadian forces the narrator to become “the collaborator” with the Indian army, which entails going down the valley of death - the line of control between Indian and Pakistan - and collecting I.D.s, weapons, and other paraphernalia of human corpses that are scattered all over this border region. These are the dead bodies of Kashmiri youth who were gunned down by the Indian army to prevent them from crossing the border into Pakistan. The I.D.s that the narrator collects are used by the Indian army for P.R. purposes when the army issues press reports about the killing of “suspected” militants. In the first few pages of the book, the narrator remarks “there are millions of you [armed soldiers] here, one Indian soldier to every six civilians, you could bury every single one of us alive in due course of time” (Waheed 10). This oppressive sovereignty of the Indian state that turns Nowgam into a “militarized wilderness” forces the villagers to either cross the border, join the insurgency, or flee Kashmir altogether. Thus, in the opening chapter, when we meet the narrator, his childhood friends Hussain, Ashfaq, Gul, and Mohammed, have crossed the border to become militants, with the narrator unbeknownst to his friend’s plans of rebellion. All the other families, who once called Nowgam their home, are left traumatized by the excess of violence, torture, and death, forcing them to flee from the village. In summary, the novel depicts India’s coercive control over Kashmir through the lens of necropolitics.

T.C.’s narrative depicts the human collateral of the Kashmir conflict and foregrounds the absurdity of warmongering that the two mega-states - India and
Pakistan - promulgate to maintain their sovereignty in the region. Kadian’s inhumane attitude towards the death of innocent Kashmiris underscores the necropolitics of the Indian state. During one of the “ominous” exchanges with the collaborator, Kadian complains that he “does not get to pull the trigger [himself] anymore” (Waheed 5). Kadian says that the corpses of innocent Kashmiris mean nothing to him, except for being “dead meat and that’s how I prefer them.” Kadian continues: “they [Kashmiri youth] keep sneaking in and we keep shooting their guts out of them at first sight” (Waheed 3). Kadian’s murderous impulse epitomizes how the Indian state has instrumentalized war as a means to exercise its sovereignty in Kashmir.

Furthermore, several of Kadian’s comments on the killing of people reveal a gross economy of war perpetrated by the Indian state. The corpses of Kashmiri youth are viewed as a yield and killing of people becomes a precision-driven objective. For Kadian, there is no collateral of war where innocent people are killed; rather, he views killing “as a business” of the state to maintain its sovereignty. In the following comment, Kadian describes the army’s killing of Kashmiri youth in a grossly fetishized and corporate manner. Kadian says:

> from time to time, we have these inquiries and cases against our men for violations of fucking human rights, et cetera. Bloody fucking civilians – really, they just don’t get it sometimes. You know, a lot of the time, it’s just some procedural error, some silly, logistical, technical mistake, some simple human fucking error, in short. These things happen during operations, we have to meet our objectives, and we go about it purely as a business; it’s a task, a fucking job. (Waheed 265, emphasis mine)
Later in the novel, when the narrator questions Kadian about his unnecessary killings, Kadian responds by asserting the necropolitical attitude of the Indian state towards Kashmir. Kadian frames the killing of the Kashmiri youth attempting to cross the border into Pakistan as “a slap in the Pakistani’s fucking face.” Kadian continues that the state’s killing of Kashmiris:

is fucking simple, it’s like a game - I show them what happens to the boys they send across… it’s my way of telling them, look, here are the wretched remains of your proxy soldiers… here lie the dreams of your motherfucking ISI weaves – and it’s not as if I do this on my own. It must have approval right from the top fucking brass in Delhi. It’s our bloody answer to their fucking devious ways… here’s your fucking jihad in a hideous head, look at it and squirm. (Waheed 293)

The above passage highlights how in the proxy war between two mega states - India and Pakistan- the real price is the Kashmir people's human life. This attitude of enmity that Kadian expresses towards Kashmiri youth is symptomatic of how the Indian state justifies its necropolitical agenda in Kashmir. The praxis of war as governance suppresses Kashmir’s political voice in the public sphere, thus forcing people to take up arms. The hegemonic Indian state nefariously pushes Kashmiris political identity into a void with brute force and terror. Mbembe’s concept of the relation of enmity is useful here to account for how T.C. portrays the relationship of India and Kashmir as that of enmity, where the state fosters an economy of death under the garb of counterterrorism.

To discuss the Indian state’s instrumentalization of death for political ends, I will now turn to Mbembe’s concept of the relation of enmity. That Kashmir is governed as a colony becomes apparent in the novel through Kadian’s attitude, who is
the spokesperson of the Indian state. Mbembe describes the relation of enmity as an imperial form of control and “the most original feature of the [mega-state’s] terror formation in the colony by concatenating biopower, the state of exception, and the state of siege” (Mbembe 76). According to Mbembe, in a necropolitical zone (like Kashmir) sovereignty operates as a state of siege, allowing the nation-states to exert their control over a region and make war the modus operandi of governance. Mbembe writes, “In such instances, power (which is not necessarily state power) continuously refers and appeals to the exception, emergency, and a fictionalized notion of the enemy” (Mbembe 70). Mbembe’s observation of the state’s fictionalization of the enemy is reflected in T.C., where the state does not trust its citizens. Indeed, this fictionalization and fetishization of the enemy’s death are characteristic of the relation of enmity between the Indian state and Kashmiri militants. This relationship of enmity that underpins the state’s necropolitics is also reflected in insurgent’s functioning who are non-state actors, but necropolitical entities, nonetheless. One such militant group, Harkat-Ul-Ansar (HUA) that operates in Kashmir, is represented by Waheed in T.C. In the novel, both the Indian state and militants deploy terror as a political act of laying claims to their sovereignty. In doing so, both necropolitical entities mirror each other. This mimetic schema of necropolitics can be understood by juxtaposing two instances of terror from the novel. In the following instances, both the army and the militants undertake punitive and disciplinary action against the Kashmiri population.

Before juxtaposing the terror activities of the insurgents HUA and the Indian army, I will first explicate how such necropolitical entities deploy terror and torture to exert their paternalistic control over the Kashmir region. Specifically, I will analyze that through torture and terror the militancy creates an alternate punitive system that undermines the dominant state law. The rogue legal code of militants does not abide
by the state’s terms and conditions, but it legitimizes itself as a code of alternate
jurisdiction in punishing the Kashmiri population. The presence of competing militant
justice and state justice, in turn, fosters necropolitics to create a culture of distrust and
fear in Kashmir. This distrust and culture of fear are represented in various instances
in the novel. For example, T.C. shows that according to the Indian army’s mandate,
no Kashmiri citizen is allowed to go about their daily business, without possessing an
I.D. with them all the time. The narrator critiques this panopticon like surveillance, by
commenting that “you simply don’t exist in [Kashmir] if you don’t have an I.D. card
on you…everyone… has to carry an I.D. card, even the militants, even the dead”
(Waheed 14). This culture of distrust is reflected in how the Indian army ceaselessly
patrols the civilians; however, this surveillance is not an act of protecting the
civilians. Instead, surveillance in a necropolitical state, like Kashmir, becomes a game
of suspecting and killing civilians through a culture of distrust. As the narrator points
out, “the army people, the protectors of the land, have decided that there is only one
way of dealing with the boys: catch and kill” (Waheed 7). The Indian army’s
gamification approach to catch and kill also involves other necropolitical
technologies: curfews and torture.

If surveillance has resulted in the breakdown of trust in Kashmir’s social
fabric, the ultimate breakdown of trust has resulted from the torturous acts of the army
and the militancy. Torture, the most perverse mode of afflicting pain on other bodies,
results in the breakdown of the ontic category of Human for both the parties involved
in torture. In the act of torture, the perpetrator gains absolute sovereignty over the
victim and treats the torture-victim not as a human subject whose body is to be
respected, but as the Other (non-human object) that deserves pain and coercion for
betraying the necropolitical actors. T.C. describes one such horrifying instance of
torture. The militant group brutally punishes the guide who is responsible for taking Kashmiri youth across the border into Pakistan. The guide, Rahman Khatana – a young Kashmiri boy who makes a living by helping people cross the border - gets punished by the militants. The militants suspect that Rahman betrayed them and revealed their whereabouts to the army. Waheed describes the torture incident in the most horrifying way, where the militants not only tortured Rahman by beating him, but violence takes spectacular form. In an act of torture, the militants mutilate Rahman’s father’s ear and dismember his mother’s tongue while Rahman is made to witness this terror at gunpoint. During the torture, one of the militants announces Rahman's punishment as justice being delivered for a crime that need not be proved. For necropolitical actors, mere suspicion suffices the reason for the torture of the suspected individual. During the torture, one of the militants says to Rahman, “you should never be trusted, you’re all swine, all the same, you have no loyalties, Kabhi India Kabhi Pakistan, all for the money hain” (Waheed 207)? This rogue jurisdiction that punishes citizens outside state law speaks to the workings of necropolitics, where loyalty to the state or militancy is not earned, but it is forced upon people through fear and coercion.

The above torture incident perpetrated by the militants bears a stark resemblance to the torture acts of the Indian army that the novel represents. Both instances of torture revel in excess and the spectacular display of violence. At the end of the second part of T.C., the novel exposes the Indian army’s violation of human rights in Kashmir. The Indian army kills suspected sympathizers of the insurgents and tortures their families. In one of the instances, the Indian army decides to interrogate Farooq, a Nowgam resident whose brother is suspected to have become a militant. As part of their interrogation, the army tortures Farooq for three weeks, after which he is
returned to his village, traumatized and wounded. Upon Farooq’s return from the torture camp, the narrator comments that “tortured, [Farooq] became a tourist site” (Waheed 186). This comment suggests how the excess violence that Farooq’s body is subjected to has become signified by the wounds covering his torso. Through torture, Farooq’s wounded body is rendered a site of violence and a living spectacle of terror that Nowgam must witness. The staging of this theatre of violence orchestrated by the Indian army does not end with Farooq’s first experience of torture which rendered him living-dead. Instead, the Indian army takes Farooq into custody for the second time; however, this time terror takes a gruesome signification. The wounded Farooq is once again subjected to violence, only this time Farooq will not return alive. The narrator grimly observes: “Farooq’s head was hurled over the fence, into the front garden of his house…. Farooq’s bloated and headless body [was found] lying near a narrow stream running down from the mountain” (Waheed 196). Through such a spectacular display of violence, the Indian state coerces Kashmiri dissent into silence and terrorizes the people into capitulating their sovereignty to India. Terror becomes quotidian, and death is instrumentalized to foster a culture of fear, lest other inhabitants of Nowgam who dare rebel should remember Farooq.

Like the militants, the army does not require a constitutional nod from the judiciary to conduct its terror operation; rather, it operates as a sovereign and an extension of the necropolitical state. The anxious state projects its trepidations on the Kashmiri citizens who, regardless of their political loyalties, are labeled “threats” and “potential terrorists.” In doing so, the state appeals to paralegal apparatuses for eradicating the threat to its sovereignty. The state's appeal to the judicial system is particularly problematic in the case of the draconian Armed Forces Special Power Act (AFSPA) that operates in Kashmir and provides legal immunity to army personnel in
Kashmir against being trialed for killing innocent citizens. More importantly, AFSPA functions as a legal apparatus for the army to exert India’s imperial control over Kashmir. By asserting the status of Kashmir as a colony, India uses AFSPA to make Kashmir a state of exception and a form of siege where “savages” and “terrorists” need to be coerced into submission to the mega-state. T.C. does not explicitly refer to AFSPA when describing the Indian army’s ceaseless killing of Kashmiri people, but the spectral presence of AFSPA haunts the narrative. The brutal killing of Farooq by the army initiates the exodus of inhabitants of Nowgam, who in fear for their life escape the terror and necropolitics of India in Kashmir.

**Survival and Resistance to Necropolitics**

So far, this chapter has performed a reading of T.C. to argue that the novel portrays India’s control over Kashmir as necropolitics. The novel’s representation of the Kashmir conflict posits the Indian state as an empire that rules Kashmir as its colony, thus problematizing India’s postcolonial status. In performing a necropolitical reading of T.C., I argued, by way of Mbembe, that the relation of enmity is the colonial modality of being with the Other that underscores how the Indian state relates to Kashmir. However, T.C.’s narrative not only represents necropolitical Kashmir but through its narrator’s complex ethical-political dilemmas (to be or not to be), the novel imagines a non-violent way of resistance to necropolitics. In other words, through several abject moments in the narrative, the novel contrasts the relation of enmity with the relation of vulnerability to expose the impasse in the narrator’s psyche. During this state of abjection, the narrator is led to renegotiate his subject position by overcoming the oppressive ontologies - like necropolitics - imposed upon him. It is in such abject moments that agency emerges, and possibilities of resistance
are imagined. The rest of this essay will argue that the abject moments peppered throughout the narrative act as fault lines of necropolitics. The narrator’s abject position is renegotiated, and his agency as a post-colonial subject is restored. In doing so, I will first explain the two contrasting ways of cultural resistance that the novel imagines: the logic of martyrdom and agentive survival. Following this, I delineate a key instance in the narrative where the narrator disavows his plans of becoming a martyred militant. Instead, the narrator’s survival in Kashmir forces him to imagine non-violent possibilities of resistance to necropolitics.

In Necropolitics, Mbembe theorizes the concept of martyrdom as a way of resisting necropolitics. According to Mbembe, martyrdom is an embodied form of resistance that mimics the necropolitical state's spectacular violence. The subject of martyrdom chooses death over life to assert its sovereignty as a political subject. The logic of martyrdom is epitomized in the figure of the suicide bomber whose resistance in the act of killing themselves and their oppressor in a single act romanticizes death as the ultimate form of resistance. In such a form of spectacular and embodied resistance, all life prospect is made impossible, and death is multiplied by weaponizing the living-body itself. In the suicide bomber figure, there is no difference between the weapon and the person who wields it; rather, the body is made a ballistic weapon in the literal sense. Mbembe states that martyrdom achieves homicide, suicide, resistance, and self-destruction simultaneously. Thus, the logic of martyrdom presupposes the paradoxes of life in death to resist necropolitics. Mbembe’s query with martyrdom is that such resistance by deploying violence closes all the possibilities of life; the survival chances of the oppressed individual are further diminished. Put differently, in resisting necropolitics through martyrdom, the martyr becomes its own victim. By dramatizing its narrator's dilemma to choose between
martyrdom and survival, T.C. explores the following question: If martyrdom reifies necropolitics, what might be an alternative form of resistance?

Rather than holding a black and white opinion on the question of martyrdom, the narrator of T.C. has a complex relation to such an embodied form of resistance, which is dramatized in the novel’s narrative. While the narrator’s friends resist India’s necropolitics by crossing the border into Pakistan to train as militants, the narrator is left behind. The first chapter of the novel provides a glimpse of the narrator’s complex opinion on the question of martyrdom. The narrator says: “I didn’t show much interest, not initially at least…. in attaining heroism or martyrdom so soon in my life” (Waheed 17). The narrator initially finds it hard to believe that his friends, whom he knew so well, would take up arms and become militants. However, his opinion towards militancy gradually begins to change when his disbelief about his friends joining the insurgency fades and his alienation intensifies.

The seeds of martyrdom are sowed in the narrator’s psyche when his friend Hussain goes missing to become a militant. After Hussain’s disappearance, the narrator gets preoccupied with the dilemma: to be (become a martyred militant) or not to be (survive and suffer the pangs of necropolitics). Torn between this choice, the narrator begins to “agonize over the act on the desire to follow in Hussain’s footsteps, or whether to stay home, be the obedient boy, and not aggrieve Ma and Baba” (Waheed 68). The narrator’s refusal to accept Hussain’s martyrdom's possibility turns into a resolve to join the insurgency. The narrator believes that the refusal to accept Hussain’s martyrdom is better than assigning him to the unknown multitudes of missing Kashmiri youth. This alienation leads the narrator to hatch a plan of finding Rahman, the guide who helped Hussain and other Kashmiri youths cross the border into Pakistan. However, the narrator’s resolution of becoming militant falls apart
while crossing the border, where the narrator meets Hussain’s father, Khadim Hussain. The narrator’s unexpected encounter with Khadim Hussain is a key juncture in the novel’s narrative. It is during this encounter that the narrator disavows martyrdom’s logic and adopts vulnerability as his model of resistance to necropolitics.

During the encounter with Khadim Hussain, the narrator finds out that the reason behind Hussain’s disappearance was his father, who convinced Hussain to become an insurgent. Khadim views his son’s journey to martyrdom as a necessary sacrifice for Kashmir’s struggles for sovereignty. The narrator’s disbelief that Hussain’s father would pay “the ultimate price… by sacrificing his son” leaves the narrator disillusioned with martyrdom (Waheed 164). This revelation about the pivotal role that Hussain’s father played in his son’s gateway to militancy leaves the narrator in angst. Thus, he disavows his plan of becoming an insurgent. This incidence of the narrator being straddled at the border of India and Pakistan also works metaphorically. Readers are provided a glimpse into the narrator’s torn psyche: to become a martyr or stay alive. By dramatizing the narrator’s dilemma to be (become a martyred militant) or not to be (survive and resist necropolitics), T.C. represents alternate and conflicting modalities of resistance to necropolitics. Consequently, T.C. both engenders resistance to necropolitics and problematizes the categorical imperatives of resistance. In refusing to privilege martyrdom over survival, T.C. imagines non-violent possibilities of survival and resistance to necropolitics.

In TC, Mirza Waheed’s choice to tell the story of Kashmir conflict from the subaltern perspective of a youth who belongs to the former nomadic tribe of Gujjar people hybridizes many binaries (like Indian and Kashmiri, terrorist and victim, Hindu and Muslim) through which the Kashmir conflict is debated in the public and
cultural sphere. Furthermore, T.C.’s narrator's subaltern identity does not ascribe to the Indian state narrative, which villainizes Kashmir’s struggle for independence through anti-nationalist discourse and Islamophobic rhetoric of Kashmir’s jihad against India. T.C. exposes the border politics of India and Pakistan and depicts how the Indian state violently suppresses Kashmir’s movement for sovereignty as a threat to its nationhood. In his article "The Idea of a Borderless World," Mbembe critiques the border politics of nation-states for reifying the racialized politics of colonialism by entrapping bodies and cultural exchange through militarization and extreme surveillance. Mbembe conflates the present-day border politics of nation-states to building prisons where the paranoid state controls movements of bodies, capital, and culture in the name of security by fortifying the state from the racial other, who is often imagined as the state’s enemy: a terrorist. In the current moment of decolonization in India, there is an ironic role reversal where the postcolonial India that once fought for its independence from British colonialism has now become the colonizer that suppresses Kashmir’s struggle for freedom. The portrait that Waheed paints of Kashmir limns necropolitical Kashmir and mars India's claim to be the world’s largest democracy that rules Kashmir as its colony. In doing so, T.C. invites its readers to imagine how postcolonial state’s sovereignty might be reconceptualized in a democratic mold instead of authoritarian and necropolitical sovereignty.
Chapter Three: Posthuman Epiphanies in *Munnu: A boy from Kashmir*: Selective Anthropomorphism and Postcolonial Animalities

**Introduction: Posthuman Epiphanies in *Munnu***

In the penultimate chapter of Künstlerroman (artist’s novel): *Muunu*, which illustrates a semi-autobiographical coming-of-age story set against the Kashmir conflict, Sajad employs the literary device of epiphany to reveal his muse for anthropomorphizing Kashmiri people. Spread across two pages (333-334) and fourteen panels, Sajad is shown in a telephonic conversation with his publisher. We see Sajad asserting the choice of his graphic novella titled *Endangered Species* that focuses on the 2010 uprising in Kashmir against the Indian state. Sajad’s proposed work anthropomorphizes Kashmiri people as “Hangul humanoid to narrate the tale of Kashmir” (Sajad 333). Sajad’s description of his work is ekphrastic since *Munnu*, like *Endangered Species*, also portrays all dramatis personae as humans but selectively anthropomorphizes Kashmiri people as hangul humanoid. Hangul is the endangered red deer species native to Kashmir. In *Munnu*, Sajad’s selective anthropomorphizing of Kashmiri people is ironic: the human representation of the military-the guardians of the state sovereignty- is undercut by their inhumane acts and violations of the rights of those humans whom they purportedly serve to protect. The oppressed and violated Kashmiri subject, represented as the hybrid between human and animal (hangul humanoid), appears as a visual foil -the animal other to the human Indian.

Sajad’s anthropomorphizing of the Kashmiri people symbolically points to their animalized state. However, animals appear in *Munnu* not just as symbolic referents to the dehumanized state of humans. But animals are illustrated as “real” affective actors with their material presence shown in the panels. Animals are
illustrated as “companion species” (Harraway’s phrase; 2003) to humans in the trans-species panels of *Munnu.* Sajad’s bestiary features stray dogs (347), pecking birds (115), caged rats (114), quadruped Hangul deer (198). These ubiquitous beings in quotidian settings feature alongside mythical beasts, such as a life devouring dragon (199), and the unique bipedal hangul humanoid Kashmiri, whose existence is “endangered” by state violence.

This epiphanic sequence in the chapter curiously titled ‘Global Warming’, shows Sajad on a telephone line. Absent from the panel, we hear the publisher's voice in the dialogic space of the text box. Forcing his market logic upon Sajad to change the graphic novel title to "Kashmiri Intifada”, the publisher argues that using the terminology of the intifada will make the work more sellable and "easy for an international audience to understand your story of [Kashmir conflict]” (Sajad 334).

Intifada is the Arabic word for revolution popularized during the "Arab Spring and the intifada in Egypt, Cairo, and Palestine” (Sajad 334). The publisher's comment underscores a neoliberal logic of marketing the suffering of Kashmiri people to make rights available. Sajad believes that this demand of naming the work Kashmiri Intifada reduces the socio-historical contingencies of the Kashmir conflict by conflating it with the Arab Spring. To protect his endangered subject position as a Kashmiri artist, Sajad responds that Kashmir is not just another conflict and that the 2010 uprising in Kashmir is not the same as the Arab Spring. Sajad contends: "I am writing about an 8-year-old boy [who] wouldn't be aware of such a term as [intifada]...my story is about Kashmir ... [the world] should know Kashmir as it as, not through a generalizing lens” (Sajad 334). While critiquing the generalizing impulse of human rights (HR hereafter) discourse, Sajad argues that his chosen title "endangered species highlights those who've been robbed of their habitat... wrecked
by the army and deforestation " (Sajad 333). Sajad's artistic vision stands in stark contrast to his publisher's demand. The publisher's comment is informed by a neoliberal logic of making human rights available to Kashmiri people by selling suffering and buying rights. Sajad's notion of writing rights (to spin-off Righting Wrongs from Spivak’s title of her eponymous work) contrarily offers a nuanced take on the ethic of representing human rights violations.

As my gambit, I open with this scene since it serves as a shorthand to examine themes of animality and posthuman subjectivity in Munnu. Overall, I argue that in Munnu, Sajad instantiates a posthuman subjectivity to triangulate the discourses of the right of human, animal, and environmental violations in Kashmir. What follows is a reading of Munnu in which I examine Sajad’s aesthetic experimentation with witness poetics and his speculative rendition of the bildungsroman genre. My aim in this chapter is twofold. First, I demonstrate how Munnu partakes in the posthuman polemic of human exceptionalism by critiquing the oppressive discourses about racialized human others and exposing how state sovereignty operates in Kashmir as a concatenation of biopolitics and necropolitics. I focus on Munnu's depiction of state violence towards human and non-human subjects that makes Kashmir precarious. Second, I show how by attending to the repressed animal in the humanistic discourse, Munnu expands the human rights graphic narrative's aesthetic and ethical concerns beyond the human to include the posthuman. More broadly, my reading of Munnu explicates what post-humanizing rights discourses entail for the expansive knowledge field of human rights and literature, especially in the context of Kashmir.

**Death of the Liberal Human Subject/ Birth of Posthuman Subjectivity**
Before delving into my analysis, let me furnish an overview of posthumanism. Nayyar’s cogent definition is a good starting point to the expansive knowledge field of posthumanism. Nayyar defines critical posthumanism “as the radical decentring of the traditional sovereign, coherent, and autonomous human in order to demonstrate how is always already evolving with, constituted by and constitute of multiple life forms and machine” (Nayyar 2). Critical posthumanism challenges liberal humanism, which emerged from the European enlightenment and became the dominant theoretical and philosophical model of modern (roughly post-1600) western thought. In short, liberal humanism taxonomized humanity—especially in polar opposition to the animal. In liberal humanist tradition, the white male became the prototypical liberal human subject. At the risk of simplification and ignoring the paradoxes it embodied, liberal humanism combined rationalism, empiricism, and utilitarianism into a theoretical-philosophical model of humanity. Rationalism is a philosophical belief that posits that man's innate ability to reason (exemplified by Descartes’s Cogito) separates him from the animal. As a theoretical worldview, empiricism developed in the writings of Locke and Berkeley, who conceived the mind as a tabula rasa or a blank slate, thus refuting ideations of reason without sensory stimuli. A third of ism, utilitarianism is a doctrine that equates happiness with pleasure and prioritizes it as the ultimate way to organize a society. Together these isms coalesce into the metanarrative of liberal humanism, wherein man (notably gendered) becomes the master of history (history). The liberal humanist worldview is exemplified in Hegel’s “philosophy of negative “and a dialectical understanding of history. Achille Mbembe’s discussion on the Hegelian notion of human ‘becoming a subject’ by separating itself from the animal is worth citing here, as it frames how I conjoin the
rubric of necropolitics with posthuman thought. Mbembe writes that in Hegelian humanist worldview:

the human being thus truly becomes a subject—that is, separated from the animal—in the struggle and work through which death (understood as the violence of negativity) is confronted. Through this confrontation with death, the human being is cast into the incessant movement of history. Becoming a subject, therefore, supposes upholding the work of death. (Mbembe 90)

Even this limited and admittingly simplistic inventory of enlightenment thinkers suffices to show that Human (of humanism) was imagined as the other of Animal. Thinkers like Jacques Derrida have critiqued liberal humanism’s alterity towards the animal. In his essay “The Animal That Therefore I am”, Derrida traces how in humanism, the animal emerged as a scapegoat rhetorical figure to define humanity by its opposition. Many of Derrida’s critical observations about alterity towards the animal in humanism, debouched into animal/animality studies.

**Postcolonial Animalities: Munnu’s Selective Anthropomorphism and Bestiary**

By illustrating non-human and human actors organized in an animacy hierarchy (i.e., the relative valuation of species, as described by Chen 2012), Sajad demonstrates how disproportionate distribution of empathy and disregard towards life reifies in warzones such as Kashmir. The graphic representation of dying life forms foregrounds how the state colonizes the bio+ Zoe sphere to exert its sovereignty as necropolitics. This section focuses on animalities -symbolic and material illustration of animals- in *Munnu* and pays special attention to the chapter titled “footnotes”. I
examine Sajad's representation of material relations, affective bonds, and evolutionary ties, shared between humans and animals in a cohabitated ecosystem under threat by necropolitics. By merging concerns of postcolonial theory and the question of animals into a theoretical framework best described as postcolonial animalities, I align my reading with the works of scholars like Mel Chen (Chen 2012) and Neel Ahuja (2016). By combining postcolonial theory and animal studies, these scholars study the afterlife of colonialism in extant racism and necropolitics. Postcolonial animalities expose how violent epistemologies of oppression historically relegated non-white people as inhuman. The use of derogatory signifiers such as: “savages”, “wild”, and “uncivilized” were discursive practices that allow inhumane treatment towards indigenous people by colonial powers. Although clubbing such diverse scholars as Chen, and Ahuja runs some risk of generalization, their work aligns in redressing the negligence in animal studies towards the unequal treatment of people of color as in/ab-humans during colonial history and our current neo-colonial times. This emerging knowledge field of postcolonial animalities shows that the universal human subjecthood is not a given but a claim that, unfortunately, through identity discourses, gets divided across the across axes of race, class, and gender. By attending to animal representations in cultural texts beyond symbolism, postcolonial animalities also advocate for ethical treatments towards animals. Animals are considered as individual species rightfully present in the textual world as they are in the material world to which the text belongs. I find the recent publication of Postcolonial Animalities (Baishya 2020) especially germane for conceiving this portmanteau theoretical methodology. This work addresses the epistemic blind spot of liberal humanism that human subjects, regardless of racialized and gendered difference is same and equal.
The preface to animal studies eloquently points bias in liberal humanism inherited by animal studies:

animal studies sets off its conceptual probe from the disavowed supposition that all Homo Sapiens have uniform access to the category of humanity by discounting the violent conflation of non-white subjects with the “savagery” of animals during colonialism, the de jure chattel status of Black folks throughout enslavement, and the continuation of these conscription via countless other means in the aftermath of racial slavery and colonialism. (unpaginated)

By selectively anthropomorphizing Kashmiri people, Sajad limns how the necropolitical state animalizes Kashmiri identity. The state disenfranchises the Kashmiri subject’s claims of humaneness and frames dissent as killable. The state relies on discursive techniques like infra-humanization and demonization to frame Kashmiri people's claims of self-sovereignty as a threat to state security that is systematically purged. Sajad portrays a tragicomic instance in Munnu, where during his visit to Delhi to exhibit an art installation, he gets labeled as a terrorist for being an artist from Kashmir. Since Sajad’s artwork, which critiques the state’s demonization of Kashmiris as “terrorists” and “jihadists” through a rhetoric of Islamophobia occupies both the diegetic and the narrative space; its exposition follows to demonstrate how it accentuates the situation irony of the incidence in which Sajad gets labeled as terrorist.

A half-page display (on pg. 298) features Sajad’s art installation at “the habitat center… one of India’s most “vibrant cultural centers”. The artwork, satirically titled: “terrorism by peace” highlights the army’s punitive stance, not just towards violent
insurgents, but even towards pacifist Kashmiris, whose peaceful dissent is greeted with bullets and tear gas. As part of his installation, Sajad emplaces in-between the twisted and sharp curves of the barbed wire portraits of “around 50 innocent [Kashmiris] who were shot dead and over 700 [who] received bullet injuries when the army fired on unarmed protestors this summer [in 2010]” (Sajad 298). The twisted vines of barb wire intertwined with the haunting memories of the dead silenced by the noise of bullet rounds are brought to life by Sajad’s art, where the dead claim their freedom. Sajad’s installation is a political statement of mourning and remembering the lives of those individuals killed by the state. Remembrance then transforms into a political act of resistance or refusing to forget those killed by the army. The material and artistic choices of Sajad’s installation illuminates how the individual trauma of the 2010 uprising is situated within the shared cultural trauma of this tragic event. Individual portraits of Kashmiri people, killed during the 2010 uprising, are connected via a barbed wire, which symbolizes the shared precarity of life in Kashmir. By putting on display his traumatic memories of the event, Sajad utilizes material like that barbed wire that has taken a special place in the cultural-collective memories of Kashmiris whose daily lives are barb-wired and always surveilled.

By memory association, the barbed wire of the artwork also conjures an image of the barbed wired line of control of the Indian-Pakistan border in Kashmir, where shelling and killing have become everyday rituals of surveillance and protection. Living under the perennial gaze of panopticon surveillance and barbed wire, indeed, has become symbolic of now millions of human lives lost to preserve the sanctity of an arbitrary national border. That is to say that the barbed wire, as the art instalment shows, is a material embodiment of not just lost individual lives but a memento mori of the collective memory and trauma of the Kashmir conflict. The installation is both
a eulogistic apparatus and a materially discursive memorial that remembers the past of now dead Kashmiris. Sajad's memory of the event is mediated by the materiality of the barbed wire that literally acts as a border to separate the viewer from the dead subject of the artwork.

In *Munnu*, the animal does not appear as a means to an end of allegorizing humans. But the animals appear to be a meaningful way of probing ways of resistance to end the mutual degradation of the lives of humans and animals in war-torn Kashmir. The narratorial subject in *Munnu*, the hybridized Hangul humanoid, dismantles the tenuous human-animal (and nature-culture) distinction, which emerged from the enlightenment and serves as the epistemic edifice of the liberal human subject. Moreover, by problematizing human exceptionalism and speciesism of humanist subjectivity, Sajad posthumanizes the human subjectivity in the most enduring of Western humanism genre- bildungsroman. Critics like Slaughter have touted bildungsroman as integral to instating a universal vision of humanity and fostering a global culture of human rights. In his now seminal work *Human rights Inc*, Slaughter links the growth of human rights discourse with the popularity of postcolonial bildungsroman since both are “mutually enabling fictions that institutionalize and naturalize the terms of incorporation in (and exclusion from) an imagined community of readers holders” (Slaughter 35). In conjoining the project of imagining the human both in human rights and bildungsroman, Slaughter states: “both articulate a larger discourse of development that is imagined to be governed by natural laws and that is historically bound to the modern institutions and technis of state legitimacy” (Slaugther 56). Sajad’s anthropomorphizing of the Kashmiri subject exhibits an underlying posthuman ethic: it partakes in a posthuman polemic of human exceptionalism by critiquing the oppressive discourses about racialized human others.
and the non-human subject world in which human and human rights are precariously emplaced. By attending to the repressed animal in the humanistic discourse, Munnu expands the human rights graphic narrative's aesthetic and ethical concerns beyond the human to include the posthuman.

In the chapter titled "footnotes", Sajad illustrates the turbulent history of Kashmir from its mythological origin “when Kashmir became Kashmir” to 1993. In 1993, resistance groups against the occupation and militarization of Kashmir united and formed an umbrella party: the All Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC). APHC's aim was “to seek resolution either through a referendum with three options -India, Pakistan, Independence – or through a negotiated settlement that was based on the will of people” (Sajad 211). The 14-page long chapter has five full-page panels. The first two panels depict Hindu and Buddhist mythological accounts of Kashmir’s origin story. Stylistically, the panel art stands out for merging latticework, common in Kashmiri art, with the traditional use of panels and text boxes. The first full-page panel shows how thousands of years ago in a pre-human/pre-Anthropocene era, Kashmir was ruled and terrorized by a demon. The six-eyed demon is shown devouring the life of the hangul deer and leaving behind carcasses. Nestled within this full-page are two small panels. The first mini panel shows the great sage Kashyap Rishi creating a lake with divine intervention to kill the demon since it was indestructible in the water. The second mini panel shows the evolution of hangul deer as a quadruped animal to a bipedal Hangul humanoid with the text box reading: "the demon died, and Kashmir became Kashmir" (Sajad 198). This use of Darwinian metanarrative to mark the evolution of animal to human is salutary since it draws attention to the becoming of humans as a symbiotic phenomenon with its environment. This evolutionary movement in history marked by hangul's becoming
bipedal also performs the Freudian speculative narrative of the animal becoming human by adopting a culture and abandoning nature. Noting the split between nature and culture, Freud stated: "The fateful process of civilization would thus have set in with man’s adoption of an erect posture” (Freud 2010, 78). Through the visual depiction of stages in evolution from bipedal hangul to hangul humanoid, Sajad foregrounds how animals and humans are embedded in each other: the human is not the other of animal, but an animal of a different kind. This shift in thinking about the origin of human life is meant to orient the reader's attention to the mutual degradation of life in necropolitical Kashmir. Similar in style to the full-page left panel that depicts the Hindu myth of Kashmir's origin, the right page panel shows the Buddhist myth of Kashmir’s origin. In the next two pages, Sajad illustrates (on the left-hand panel) how Kashmir over the years became a "hub of trade and learning on the silk route" (Sajad 200). The right-hand panel shows how empires like Mughal, Afghans, and Sikhs plundered and fought wars to claim Kashmir as their lost paradise. In the remaining pages, Sajad provides key moments in Kashmir's modern history, beginning in 1846 with the British invasion to postcolonial times in 1947 when India became independent, and Kashmir became a conflicted zone between newly partitioned India and Pakistan. Sajad’s choice to show the origin story of Kashmir in myth and not a political conflict subverts the stereotypical representation of Kashmir as a zone of conflict. The panels are populous with non-human actors and force the reader to reimagine Kashmir beyond historicizing and representing the humanitarian crisis in Kashmir. In the chapter, myth blends with history, and animal life with humans.
Works Cited


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