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Original Research Article

Necropolitical sovereignty and the construction of death-worlds: A conceptual metaphor analysis of *Evidence of a Genocide* by Zulfiqar Ghose

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Abstract: Genocide literature often relies on figurative and symbolic language to represent experiences that exceed ordinary forms of expression. In poetic discourse, violence is not always communicated through direct description; rather, it emerges through environmental imagery, silence, bodily suffering, and metaphoric structures that reflect fear, destruction, and social collapse. Drawing upon the cognitive approach developed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, the study highlights how abstract experiences related to trauma, suffering, and destruction are communicated through bodily and environmental imagery. Simultaneously, the necropolitical framework proposed by Achille Mbembe provides an understanding of how sovereign power functions through the regulation of life and death, reducing certain populations to conditions of disposability and social abandonment. Using a qualitative textual analysis method, selected metaphorical expressions from the poem are interpreted through conceptual mappings between source and target domains. The findings indicate that metaphors such as "the slowing stream", "the heavy air filled with the stench of death", "the eerie calm", and "the faceless unnamed victims" symbolize the erosion of communal vitality, psychological suffocation, enforced silence, and the loss of identity under genocidal violence. These metaphorical structures further reveal a necropolitical environment in which mortality becomes normalized, and human existence is subjected to systematic degradation. The study concludes that Ghose's poetic language functions as a powerful literary testimony by transforming sensory and environmental imagery into evidence of structural violence and collective trauma.

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1. Introduction

Literature dealing with genocide and political violence often relies on symbolic and figurative language to communicate experiences that exceed ordinary modes of representation. Poetry, in particular, evokes violence not only through direct description but through atmospheric imagery, metaphorical structures, and suggestive silences. In Evidence of a Genocide, Zulfiqar Ghose presents a disturbing landscape where death, anonymity, and silence shape the environment.

The poem does not simply recount violent events; rather, it constructs a world in which the atmosphere itself becomes a witness to destruction. Images of heavy air, faceless bodies, unnatural calmness, and environmental decay evoke a condition where life is systematically reduced to vulnerability and exposure to death.

This research looks at poetic images using the idea of necropolitics, which was first discussed by Achille Mbembe in 2003. He said that some governments get power by controlling who lives and dies. Mbembe believes that many modern governments create areas where people are left to die slowly and face constant violence. These areas are like zones of death, where people are not given the help they need to survive. The government's power is shown by how it decides who gets to live and who has to die. This is a very cruel way of ruling, where people's lives are not valued. Mbembe's idea of necropolitics helps us understand how some governments use death and violence to keep their power.

While necropolitics explains the political structure of such violence, Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) provides a framework for understanding how these conditions are linguistically constructed. According to CMT, metaphors structure human thought by mapping abstract concepts onto concrete bodily experiences. By combining these frameworks, the study examines how Ghose’s poem metaphorically constructs necropolitical realities and how poetic language transforms environmental and bodily imagery into evidence of organized violence.

1.2 Background of the Study

The representation of genocide in literature has attracted scholarly attention across disciplines including memory studies, political philosophy, and cultural criticism. Scholars have examined how literary texts portray the social and political consequences of mass violence. However, comparatively little research has focused on how metaphor structures the conceptual understanding of genocide within poetic language. Conceptual Metaphor Theory, introduced by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), argues that metaphor is not merely a stylistic device but a fundamental cognitive mechanism through which humans understand abstract concepts. Experiences such as fear, violence, and destruction are often conceptualized through metaphors derived from physical sensations and environmental conditions.

Meanwhile, Achille Mbembe's theory of necropolitics extends the discussion of political power by emphasizing the role of death in the exercise of sovereignty. Mbembe (2003) suggests that contemporary political systems create spaces where individuals exist under constant exposure to violence and systematic destruction. Despite the relevance of these theories, Ghose's poem has rarely been examined through the combined perspective of cognitive metaphor analysis and necropolitical theory. This research therefore situates the poem within these theoretical traditions to explore how poetic language constructs the experience of necropolitical violence.

1.3 Significance of the study

This study holds significance both academically and socially. Literature from a scholarly point of view helps to understand poetry better by bringing together two important ideas: Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Necropolitics. The first one, Conceptual Metaphor Theory, shows how metaphors shape thoughts and understanding of the world. On the other hand, Necropolitics reveals how power works through death and violence. By combining these two ideas, a more detailed and interdisciplinary way of analyzing literature is achieved. This approach helps to see things from different angles and understand the deeper meanings in poetry. It is like having a new tool to study literature, one that can help uncover new insights and perspectives.

This research also helps to understand how the use of these words can change the way people think about violence and genocide. It looks at how metaphors or comparisons describe things that are hard to understand, like the pain and fear that people feel during these events. By using everyday images to talk about these abstract ideas, there is a better understanding of how people process and communicate experiences of trauma, fear, and death.

This study is important because it looks at big issues like dehumanization, power, and violence that affect many people. It uses literary texts to show how some groups of people are treated unfairly and experience violence in real life. This makes the research useful not just for literature, but also for areas like cultural studies, politics, and understanding society. By exploring these issues, there is a better understanding of how literature reflects the world and how it can help address problems like marginalization and violence. This study can also help us think about how power works in society and how it can lead to violence against certain groups of people. Overall, the research is significant because it sheds light on important social issues and shows how literature can be a powerful tool for understanding and addressing them.

1.4 Statement of the problem

Most of the research on genocide has been about how people remember it, what survivors say about it, and how it affects people. These studies have helped to understand how genocide makes people feel and the moral issues around it. But not as much attention has been paid to how genocide is described in a poetic way, especially using metaphors and vivid descriptions. This is an important area to explore because it can help to understand how language shapes

thoughts about genocide and its impact on people. By looking at how poets and writers use language to describe genocide, a deeper understanding of this complex and sensitive topic is gained.

Achille Mbembe's idea of necropolitics is really important in understanding how power works in today's world. The theory states that those in charge use control over life and death to keep people in line. Mbembe talks about "death-worlds" places where people are left to suffer, face violence, and slowly die. But even though this idea is used a lot in studying politics and culture, it is not often used to look at poetry, especially with regard to writing about genocide. It is interesting to think about how poets show the horrors of genocide in their work, and how Mbembe's ideas can help to understand these poems better. By looking at poetry through the lens of necropolitics, it is revealed that the brutal ways that power is used to destroy certain groups of people. This can help to understand the impact of genocide on individuals and communities, and how it is often used as a tool of control and oppression.

1.5 Research questions

a) What types of metaphors have been employed in the poem Evidence of Genocide?
b) How do these metaphors construct and represent the necro-political death worlds within the poem?

1.6 Research Objectives

a) To identify the different types of conceptual metaphors employed in Evidence of Genocide.
b) To examine how these metaphors construct and represent the necro-political death worlds in the poem.

1.7 Delimitations of the study

This study offers an in-depth analysis; it is naturally shaped by several specific boundaries. Most notably, the scope is centered on a single poem, "Evidence of a Genocide." While this piece serves as a powerful case study, focusing on just one work means the findings shouldn't be broadly applied to all forms of literature or even other types of poetry. I have focused specifically on key metaphors within the text rather than attempting to decode every linguistic layer. Consequently, I have not ventured deeply into other formal elements like the poem's structural rhythm, overall tone, or symbolic imagery, all of which are vital but remain outside the primary focus of this particular project.

The theoretical lens is also quite specific, relying primarily on Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Necropolitics. By sticking to these two frameworks, I have intentionally bypassed other relevant perspectives like trauma or postcolonial theory, which might have offered different interpretations. Furthermore, the work is strictly text-based and theoretical. It does not rely on

empirical data or external field research, such as reader surveys, meaning the conclusions are rooted in qualitative interpretation.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

This approach carries certain inherent limitations. Because the analysis is qualitative, it possesses a level of subjectivity; even with a systematic framework in place, different readers might pull different meanings from the same metaphors. By narrowing the focus to such a specific set of tools and a single text, the analysis isn't meant to be an exhaustive look at the poem, but rather a targeted exploration of how these specific theories interact with the text.

2. Literature review

Literary scholarship has increasingly examined the mechanics of state power, particularly regarding how dominant authorities deploy violence and mortality as instruments of social control. Drawing upon Achille Mbembe's theoretical framework of necropolitics, Santos and Rocha (2025) analyzed these dynamics within dystopian fiction, focusing specifically on Margaret Atwood's The Testaments (2019). The authors demonstrated that sovereign authorities consolidate power by inflicting violence and manufacturing "death-worlds" subjugated spaces where marginalized populations are systematically dehumanized, stripped of legal rights, and subjected to the absolute caprice of the state. Within these environments, the sovereign exercises total hegemony over life and death, leveraging this control to erase historical knowledge and manipulate collective memory.

Through this framework, Santos and Rocha (2025) illustrated the capacity of literature to expose the latent mechanisms of systemic oppression and violence, establishing a robust precedent for applying political philosophy to contemporary literary analysis. Their findings indicate that the power to regulate mortality extends beyond overt physical violence; it fundamentally encompasses the institutionalization of fear and psychological submission. By deciding who lives and who dies, the state successfully recalibrates public perceptions of reality.

Ultimately, the conceptualization of "death-worlds" underscores how modern states engineer pervasive, subtle, yet highly potent systems of control that deeply fracture human existence. By examining these literary representations, scholars can better comprehend how real-world power is maintained and, critically, how it may be resisted. Santos and Rocha (2025) provide a crucial intervention at the intersection of sovereign power and literary representation, offering a nuanced critique of structural violence that underscores the ongoing need for critical vigilance in power analysis.

The application of necropolitical theory to poetic structures is further explored by Sharma (2024), who examines how sovereign power is articulated through the "politics of death" in dramatic monologues. Analyzing the works of Robert Browning, Sharma demonstrates that

necropower is not limited to state-level governance but can manifest in domestic and gendered spheres, where a sovereign narrator exercises absolute control over the life and body of the "Other." This study highlights how poetic language, staged through the lens of necropolitics, reveals a "life-scarring power dynamic," where the subjugated subject is reduced to a state of vulnerability before being silenced. Sharma's (2024) research is significant for its emphasis on "necropoetics," suggesting that the poem itself becomes a site where the dynamics of annihilation and the management of death are meticulously mapped and performed through the narrator's perspective.

The regional application of necropolitics and the role of poetry as a form of cultural resistance are further explored by Ali et al. (2025), who examine how Pashto poetic expressions respond to the "war on terror" in the Pashtun belt. Drawing on Mbembe's theoretical framework, the authors argue that both state and non-state actors have transformed local lands into "death-worlds" characterized by surveillance, militarization, and the systematic distribution of death. However, Ali et al. (2025) shift the focus toward "non-war subjectivities," suggesting that folk poetry such as tapa and kakari ghare functions as a counter-discourse that asserts a "politics of life." By documenting collective memory and embodied resistance, this study demonstrates that poetry does not merely reflect necropolitical violence but actively defies it by constructing inclusive futures and preserving cultural agency. This research is particularly significant for its localized analysis of how literary forms in Pakistan provide a site for negotiating survival and resistance within zones of perpetual conflict.

The intersection of sovereign power and the displacement of bodies in modern conflict zones is a central theme in the work of Ullah and Kanwal (2026), who apply Mbembe's necropolitical framework to refugee narratives. Analyzing A Land of Permanent Goodbyes, the authors examine how the Syrian civil war functions as a "death-world" where the state and non-state actors exercise absolute control over who may live and who must die. The study highlights that necropolitical sovereignty is exerted not only through direct violence but also through the systematic creation of zones of abandonment, where refugees are reduced to "bare life" as they navigate both physical and bureaucratic borders. Ullah and Kanwal (2026) argue that these narratives recontextualize the refugee experience as a site of necropolitical struggle, emphasizing that the management of death and survival is used as a tool for political subjugation. This research provides a crucial theoretical bridge for understanding how literature documents the structural and atmospheric violence inherent in the systematic displacement of populations.

The link between a country's failure after being colonized and its citizens being forced to leave their homes is something that Suárez-Rodríguez looked into in 2022. He used a special way of thinking called necropolitics to understand the book We Need New Names. What he found was that in some countries that used to be colonies, some people are treated like they don't belong - they're like strangers in their own country. This happens because they're pushed to the side socially and physically. Using Mbembe's ideas, Suárez-Rodríguez showed how the government uses its power to make these people feel like they're not really alive - like they're just existing,

but not really part of society. They're there in person, but they don't count as citizens. This study is important because it looks at how books show us "death-worlds" that aren't just places where wars are happening, but also places where people are struggling to survive because they don't have what they need. By focusing on the people who are treated like strangers, Suárez-Rodríguez gives us a crucial perspective on how stories can show us the slow and hidden violence that makes life not matter within a country's borders.

The power of poetry to document and resist violence is something that's been looked at closely by Al-Adayleh and Al-Momani. They studied Palestinian poetry that was written after the attacks in October 2023, and used a postcolonial framework to understand how poets talk about the struggle for national identity in a time of extreme conflict. What they found is that poetry is a way for people to bear witness to suffering and to turn that suffering into a form of resistance against being erased. By looking at new and emerging poetic voices, especially in digital forms, Al-Adayleh and Al-Momani showed how poetry can be used to reclaim stories of self and place in areas that are under siege and experiencing state-sponsored violence. This research is important because it shows that even in its most basic and non-traditional forms, poetry is still a powerful tool for understanding the psychological and physical effects of genocide and displacement. It's a way for people to map out their experiences and emotions, and to create a record of what's happening to them. This can be especially important in situations where people are being silenced or erased, and where their stories are not being told. Poetry can be a way for people to take back control of their narratives, and to make sure that their voices are heard.

The idea that some human lives are disposable is a disturbing reality in today's world. A study by Sangma in 2026 looks at this issue through the lens of necropolitics, using the book Sea Prayer as an example. The author builds on the work of Mbembe, who talks about "death-worlds" - places like war zones and refugee camps where people's lives are seen as worthless and they're constantly at risk of being hurt or killed. Sangma argues that in today's world, necropolitics is all about not caring about the suffering of people who have been forced to leave their homes, and seeing their lives as just "collateral damage" in the pursuit of power and money. The study highlights how stories about exile and nostalgia can be a powerful critique of a world that treats certain people as disposable, leaving them vulnerable and abandoned. This research is important because it shows how literature can document the ways in which people are reduced to mere survival, and how it can help us understand how homes can become places of neglect and abandonment. By looking at how poetry and stories portray these issues, we can gain a deeper understanding of the ways in which human lives are being devalued and discarded.

The utility of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) is equally evident in studies that explore the language of violence and emotion. The methodological value of CMT is exemplified in the study by Silma and Sutami (2025), which explores how metaphorical expressions shape the global understanding of genocide. Drawing on the foundational theories of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, the authors analyze media discourse to identify how abstract experiences of

suffering and systemic destruction are mapped onto concrete source domains. The research identifies recurring metaphorical concepts such as "Genocide is Hell," "Genocide is a Natural Disaster," and "Genocide is a Machine," which serve to highlight the scale, intensity, and mechanical nature of state-led violence. By applying Critical Metaphor Analysis, Silma and Sutami (2025) demonstrate that these linguistic mappings are not merely stylistic choices but are cognitive tools used to direct global attention to humanitarian crises and frame the moral and physical gravity of war. This study provides a vital methodological precedent for analyzing how poetic or journalistic language constructs a "conceptual reality" of genocide, allowing readers to grasp the psychological and physical impact of organized destruction through familiar, sensory-based imagery.

The efficacy of CMT as a rigorous framework for literary analysis and education is further emphasized by Pham and Tran (2025). Through an empirical study of the poem "Waves," the authors illustrate that identifying conceptual mappings- specifically the projection of concrete source domains onto abstract emotional target domains- allows for deeper cognitive engagement with the text. Their research highlights how universal metaphorical concepts, such as "Love is a Journey," provide readers with the cognitive tools necessary to navigate complex poetic imagery and reconstruct the author's intended meaning. By moving beyond traditional stylistic analysis toward a cognitive approach, Pham and Tran (2025) argue that metaphor is rooted in human thought and is essential for interpreting how literature communicates experiences that are otherwise difficult to articulate. This study supports the interdisciplinary integration of cognitive linguistics into literary scholarship, validating the use of CMT to reveal the underlying conceptual structures of poems dealing with profound or traumatic themes.

Similarly, Khakipour and Amjad (2015) analyze Macbeth through a cognitive-metaphoric approach. The authors argue that conceptual metaphors are not merely linguistic ornaments but are fundamental to the cognitive architecture of drama, where abstract themes like ambition, guilt, and power are understood through concrete mappings. Their study highlights the "Cognitive Translation Hypothesis," suggesting that the effectiveness of a literary work depends on how successfully these conceptual mappings are preserved or adapted across different cultural and linguistic contexts. By identifying specific metaphorical clusters such as "Life is a Shadow" or "Life is a Walking Player," Khakipour and Amjad (2015) demonstrate that literary metaphors carry deep cognitive and cultural significance that transcends simple literal meaning. For the present research, this study underscores the importance of viewing metaphors as a bridge between the author's cognitive intent and the reader's cultural reception, providing a methodological basis for analyzing how universal experiences of trauma and power are encoded in specific poetic structures.

3. Research methodology

This section explains the procedure followed in conducting the research on the metaphors used in Zulfiqar Ghose's book Evidence of a Genocide. The chapter presents the overall approach of the study, the theories that guided the analysis, the method used for selecting the data, and

the steps followed to analyze it. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a clear picture of how the objectives of the study were addressed.

3.1 Research Nature

This study uses a qualitative approach to understand how metaphors create meaning in a piece of literature. It is based on Conceptual Metaphor Theory, which was developed by Lakoff and Johnson in 1980. This theory explains how people understand abstract ideas by connecting them to things experienced in everyday life. The researchers use this framework to identify and analyze the metaphors found in certain lines of the poem. Through this process, a deeper understanding is developed regarding how these metaphors create meaning in the text. The theory focuses on the way concrete things, such as objects or actions, are mapped onto abstract ideas, such as feelings or concepts. This mapping takes place between what is called the source domain and the target domain. In the context of this study, the metaphors in the poem are examined through this mapping process to create meaning.

The study also uses Achille Mbembe's theory of Necropolitics, which was introduced in 2003, to understand how these metaphors represent power structures, violence, and control over life and death. On the one hand, CMT provides a way to think about the metaphors used in the text, while on the other hand, necropolitics helps in understanding the broader political and ideological meanings behind these metaphors. By combining these two approaches, a better understanding of the metaphors can be achieved.

3.2 Research Design

This research employs qualitative textual analysis. The method involves close reading of selected metaphors in the poem in order to identify conceptual mappings between physical imagery and political violence. These metaphors are then interpreted through the framework of necropolitics to understand how the poem constructs representations of sovereign power and organized death.

3.3 Conceptual Framework

This research is guided by two complementary theoretical frameworks.

3.3.1 Necropolitics

The primary theoretical framework is Achille Mbembe's concept of necropolitics, which describes forms of sovereignty that operate through the control of mortality. According to Mbembe (2003), political authority increasingly manifests itself through the power to determine who may live and who must die.

3.3.2 Conceptual Metaphor Theory

The secondary analytical framework is Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). This theory explains how metaphorical structures translate abstract experiences into concrete bodily or environmental imagery.

The two theoretical frameworks are used together to analyze the metaphors and their political meanings in Zulfiqar Ghose's Evidence of a Genocide. Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) is used to identify and examine how the poem connects concrete images and experiences with abstract ideas such as violence, death, destruction, and suffering. It helps explain the source and target domains of the selected metaphors and shows how they construct meaning.

Mbembe's theory of necropolitics is then used to interpret the political significance of these metaphorical representations. It helps examine how the poem represents power over life and death, organized violence, the disposability of human life, and the conditions that produce death-worlds.

The two frameworks therefore complement each other. CMT explains how the metaphors construct meaning, while necropolitics explains the political and social significance of that meaning. Their combined use allows the study to move from identifying metaphorical mappings to understanding how these metaphors represent political violence, destruction, and necropolitical death-worlds.

3.4 Data collection

The data for this study is collected from a primary literary source, namely Evidence of a Genocide by Zulfiqar Ghose. The poem serves as the main text for analysis, as it contains rich metaphorical expressions related to themes of violence, death, and dehumanization.

In the analysis of a poem, the focus is not simply on reading the text from beginning to end. Instead, specific lines that strongly reflect the themes of the study are selected. These lines usually contain metaphors that help explain complex ideas and emotions. The selected lines discuss important themes related to the research, such as suffering, loss of identity, fear, and death. By focusing on these lines, a deeper understanding of the poem's meanings and messages can be achieved.

3.5 Data analysis

The data analysis in this study is conducted through a systematic qualitative textual analysis, guided by the principles of Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Necropolitics. The process involves several structured steps to ensure clarity and consistency.

First, the selected poem is read carefully multiple times to identify metaphorical expressions relevant to the themes of violence, death, and dehumanization. This close reading helps in recognizing patterns and recurring imagery within the text.

To better understand the metaphors that have been identified, they are examined through the lens of Conceptual Metaphor Theory, which was introduced by Lakoff and Johnson in 1980. This involves breaking down each metaphor into two main parts: the source domain, which is a concrete idea that we can relate to, and the target domain, which is the abstract concept that the metaphor is trying to represent. To make sure everyone is on the same page, dictionary definitions from reputable sources such as the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary and the Merriam-Webster Dictionary are used to define the literal meanings of important words. This step is crucial because it ensures that the connections between ideas are based on a clear understanding of the language being used. In this way, the analysis provides deeper insight into how metaphors function and what they mean.

Next, conceptual mapping is applied, which is a process in which the features of one idea, or domain, are transferred to another. This helps in understanding how abstract feelings such as fear, trauma, and loss are connected to real, physical experiences. Through this process, it becomes possible to observe how these feelings are organized and structured in the human mind.

The same ideas are then examined through the perspective of Necropolitics, which was introduced by Mbembe in 2003. At this stage, the analysis focuses on how these ideas reflect power, control, and the treatment of certain groups as less than human. The study also examines how these ideas normalize death and violence. In this way, the analysis moves beyond the words themselves and explores the broader beliefs and ideologies behind them. This approach also demonstrates how language shapes thoughts and attitudes and how it may be used to justify certain actions or policies.

Finally, the findings are organized and presented in a structured manner in the analysis chapter. Each metaphor is discussed individually, following a consistent format that includes the metaphorical line, source domain, target domain, conceptual explanation, and necropolitical interpretation.

This step-by-step analytical procedure ensures that the study remains systematic, theoretically grounded, and methodologically rigorous.

3.6 Research paradigm

This study is grounded in interpretivism, a paradigm that seeks to understand how individuals derive meaning from their experiences. This approach is particularly effective for literary analysis, as it facilitates an exploration of how stories and texts construct meaning, rather than

merely seeking to establish empirical facts. By adopting this framework, a deeper understanding of how language is utilized to construct a worldview can be achieved.

Within this paradigm, meaning is not fixed but is instead constructed through the interaction between the text and the reader. In this study, metaphorical expressions in Evidence of a Genocide by Zulfikar Ghose are interpreted as cognitive and ideological structures that shape the understanding of violence and the human experience.

3.8 Ethical considerations

Since this research focuses exclusively on the analysis of existing texts and does not involve human participants, traditional ethical concerns regarding subjects are not applicable. To maintain academic integrity, all sources are properly referenced to prevent plagiarism. Given the sensitive nature of topics such as genocide and violence, the analysis is conducted with the necessary academic rigor, respect, and scholarly sensitivity.

4. Analysis and discussion

> The stream too has changed since I was born; it no longer moves in a steady flow but slows to a trickle and almost stops (lines 1-3)

The metaphorical phrase “slows to a trickle and almost stops” can be interpreted through Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), which emphasizes how physical experiences shape abstract understanding. According to the Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, a “stream” is defined as “a small narrow river.” A stream is naturally associated with continuous movement and flow. The word “trickle” as defined by the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, means “to flow in a small, gentle stream”. Both words belong to the concrete domain of flowing water and natural motion. Here, the source domain is the movement of water in nature. Flowing water typically symbolizes vitality, continuity, and life. The target domain refers to the weakening of social, cultural, and communal vitality under genocide. Through conceptual mapping, the gradual slowing of a stream is transferred onto the gradual decline of collective life. The phrase “almost stops” intensifies the metaphor by suggesting near extinction. Just as a stream loses strength and becomes stagnant when reduced to a trickle, a community affected by violence experiences the erosion of its continuity and vitality. The metaphor therefore communicates decline, interruption, and the near collapse of life.

Mbembe’s theory emphasizes that necropolitics involves not only direct killing but also the creation of conditions in which life gradually deteriorates. The slowing stream metaphor corresponds to what can be understood as slow death the structural weakening of a population’s vitality. In necropolitical regimes, communities are exposed to deprivation, displacement and systematic instability. The near stoppage of the stream symbolizes the erosion of generational continuity and collective survival. It reflects how sovereign violence interrupts the natural flow of life. Rather than immediate extermination alone, necropower can operate through prolonged

exhaustion of social and cultural existence. The metaphor therefore aligns with Mbembe's argument that modern warfare reorganizes life around sustained exposure to death. In conflict-affected regions, displacement, infrastructure damage, and economic collapse disrupt agricultural and social systems. The metaphor represents slow structural death rather than sudden destruction. Families often migrate to urban centers or safer territories due to insecurity and economic breakdown. The idea of "slow death" aligns with necropolitical scholarship, which argues that domination may function through deprivation, unemployment, educational disruption, and prolonged instability rather than direct killing alone. Social change studies demonstrate how prolonged conflict contributes to intergenerational poverty and loss of traditional occupational structures.

Now the air is heavy with the stench of death (line 8)

The metaphorical expression "Now the air is heavy with the stench of death" can be analyzed through the framework of Conceptual Metaphor Theory as presented by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980). In this line, the source domain is concrete and physical: the word "heavy" refers to something that has great weight. According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, "heavy" means "having a lot of weight; difficult to lift or move." Similarly, the Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines "heavy" as "having great weight" or "hard to bear," which shows how the term can extend from physical weight to emotional burden. Within this metaphor, the physical property of weight (heaviness) forms the source domain, while the target domain is the abstract emotional and psychological impact of genocide. The conceptual mapping transfers the embodied experience of carrying physical weight onto the emotional burden experienced by survivors. The "heaviness" of the air is metaphorical; it represents the oppressive atmosphere created by death and destruction. The phrase "stench of death" intensifies this sensory imagery, suggesting that violence contaminates not only the social world but also the physical environment. Thus, the metaphor conveys not only physical decay but also emotional suffocation, showing how suffering is experienced as something tangible and overwhelming.

From the perspective of necropolitics, as theorized by Achille Mbembe (2003), this metaphor reflects what he calls the creation of "death-worlds" spaces in which populations are subjected to conditions of life that reduce them to a state of living death. In Necropolitics, Mbembe argues that sovereign power is ultimately expressed through the capacity to dictate who may live and who must die. The heaviness of the air symbolizes a space saturated with mortality, where death is no longer just a rare occurrence; it's now the dominant feeling that surrounds us, shaping our everyday lives. The "stench of death" suggests that violence has transformed the environment itself into a necropolitical zone. Air, which normally sustains life, becomes contaminated. This reflects Mbembe's argument that in modern forms of warfare and occupation, entire territories are reorganized around the management of death. The metaphor therefore aligns with necropolitical theory by illustrating how sovereign violence produces an environment where survival occurs under constant exposure to mortality. In regions marked by prolonged conflict, exposure to violence often produces what scholars describe as a normalized

atmosphere of fear. Military operations, insurgent attacks, and surveillance practices transform everyday spatial experience into a zone of insecurity. The metaphor of heavy air represents psychological suffocation caused by continuous militarization. Anthropological studies of conflict zones observe that violence disrupts social mobility, public gatherings, and traditional community structures. The "stench of death" symbolizes the presence of violence embedded in collective consciousness rather than confined to isolated events. This condition corresponds to the ideas of Achille Mbembe, who argues that necropolitics produces "death-worlds" where populations live under permanent exposure to mortality. The "heavy air" therefore signifies an environment in which fear and death shape daily life and social interaction.

But now, there is no sound to penetrate the eerie calm (line 19-20)

The expression "The eerie calm" can also be examined using Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), which explains how abstract emotional experiences are structured through concrete sensory domains. According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, the word "calm" means "not excited, nervous, or upset; quiet and peaceful." It generally conveys safety, stability, and emotional balance. However, the adjective "eerie" is defined by the Merriam-Webster Dictionary as "strange and frightening," particularly because of an unusual silence or stillness. In this example, the starting point is a situation where everything is calm and peaceful, like being in a quiet natural setting, which are observable physical conditions. The target domain refers to psychological tension and suppressed fear following violence. Through conceptual mapping, the physical silence of calmness is transferred onto the emotional atmosphere of a traumatized community. The addition of "eerie" modifies the positive meaning of calm and transforms it into something unsettling. The calm described in the line is therefore not peaceful but disturbing. It suggests a silence filled with hidden fear and unresolved trauma. The metaphor effectively conveys that just because it's quiet does not mean everything is okay; sometimes the silence can be a sign that something is still lurking, waiting to happen.

According to Mbembe (2003), necropower does not always operate through continuous visible violence. Instead, once the sovereign demonstrates its power to kill, fear becomes internalized. The "eerie calm" can be interpreted as a necropolitical condition in which silence is produced through terror. This calm reflects what Mbembe describes as domination maintained by the constant possibility of death. The quietness is not freedom from violence but evidence of its prior execution. In necropolitical spaces, populations remain alive, but they're always living on edge. So, the calm atmosphere is actually a sign of something more complex - it shows that things are being held together by a delicate balance of power, a society disciplined by the memory and anticipation of death. The metaphor captures how power extends beyond physical destruction into psychological control. The "eerie calm" reflects post-conflict silence observed in societies emerging from periods of intense violence. Although overt confrontation may decrease, social and cultural life does not immediately recover. Public expression, artistic performance, and political participation may remain restricted due to fear of renewed instability. The calm therefore represents enforced discipline rather than genuine peace. This

phenomenon is consistent with Mbembe's argument that necropower operates through the internalization of fear. People remain biologically alive yet psychologically constrained by the possibility of death. Research on militarized spaces suggests that surveillance and security measures produce behavioral self-regulation, where citizens avoid visibility or dissent.

> hear the soldiers' laughter and their shouts in jubilation at the death of someone whose names they never knew, or cared to know (line 22-24)

This line can also be examined through the lens of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), which explains how emotional and moral concepts are structured through familiar human experiences. According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, "laughter" refers to "the act or sound of laughing," usually expressing happiness or amusement. Similarly, the Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines "jubilation" as "a feeling of great happiness or triumph." Both words belong to the domain of positive emotional expression. In this metaphor, the source domain is human joy and celebration. Laughter and jubilation are concrete and observable expressions of happiness. The target domain, however, refers to the act of killing and destruction. Through conceptual mapping, positive emotional expressions are transferred onto the context of death. This creates a powerful inversion: instead of mourning death, the soldiers celebrate it. The metaphor highlights moral distortion by presenting killing as a cause for joy. The emotional language intensifies the horror of the scene, emphasizing the normalization of violence and the collapse of ethical boundaries.

Mbembe (2003) argues that the ultimate expression of sovereignty lies in the power to kill. In necropolitical contexts, violence often becomes a theatrical display of dominance. The soldiers' laughter and jubilation can be interpreted as the spectacle of sovereign power. The celebration of death transforms killing into a performance. It signals complete authority over life. According to Mbembe, such public displays reinforce hierarchy between those who exercise power and those whose lives are subject to elimination. The metaphor therefore reflects the normalization and even glorification of death within necropolitical structures. It reveals how killing is not just an act of war, but more like a show of power and control. The celebration of death reflects the transformation of violence into a spectacle of authority. In many conflict narratives, both state and non-state actors have been portrayed as displaying triumphal rhetoric after successful attacks or operations. Such public celebration challenges ethical norms that traditionally emphasize communal harmony and moral restraint. The metaphor illustrates what Mbembe describes as theatrical sovereignty, where power is demonstrated through visible domination over life and death.

> While the Victims perish, faceless and unnamed (line 28)

The metaphorical expression "Faceless and unnamed" can be analyzed through the framework of Conceptual Metaphor Theory as introduced by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980) in Metaphors We Live By. According to CMT, metaphors operate by transferring meaning from a concrete source domain to an abstract target domain. In this line, the source domain is based

on physical and social markers of identity. According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, the word “face” means “the front part of the head, where the eyes, nose and mouth are.” Beyond its physical definition, a face is closely associated with recognition and individuality. Similarly, the Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines “name” as “a word or phrase that constitutes the distinctive designation of a person.” A name functions as a linguistic marker of identity and social existence. Within this metaphor, the absence of face and name forms the source domain. Both are concrete identifiers that make a person visible and recognizable. The target domain, however, refers to the loss of individuality and identity in the context of genocide. The conceptual mapping transfers the physical removal of identifying features onto the abstract erasure of personal and social existence. When individuals are described as “faceless and unnamed,” they are stripped of recognition and reduced to anonymity. The metaphor thus emphasizes dehumanization and the transformation of unique individuals into unidentifiable victims.

In necropolitical terms, this metaphor directly corresponds to Mbembe's idea that certain populations are rendered disposable through processes of dehumanization. In Necropolitics (2003), Mbembe explains that modern sovereign power operates by classifying groups whose lives are considered unworthy of protection. When individuals are described as “faceless and unnamed,” they are stripped of political identity and reduced to anonymous bodies. Necropolitics functions by removing recognition. Without a face or name, a person loses social visibility and moral significance. This erasure makes mass killing administratively and psychologically easier. The metaphor therefore reflects the necropolitical logic in which identity is systematically removed so that death can occur without accountability. It reveals how genocide depends not only on physical violence but also on symbolic annihilation. The metaphor reflects the political and media representation of victims in conflict zones. Human rights reports frequently critique the tendency to report casualties as statistical data rather than as individuals with histories and identities. Identity loss and lack of personal recognition carry profound social trauma. Displacement, detention, and enforced disappearance contribute to symbolic erasure. Scholars studying conflict journalism argue that victims are often anonymized, which aligns with necropolitical logic: identity removal facilitates the administration of death. From a theoretical perspective, Mbembe explains that modern sovereign power operates by deciding whose lives are politically visible and whose are disposable.

5. Conclusion

This study examined the deep conceptual and political layers of Zulfiqar Ghose’s poem Evidence of a Genocide, looking past surface-level descriptions of violence to understand how literary art captures the lived reality of mass atrocity. Rather than treating political violence merely as a historical record of dates and body counts, this thesis demonstrated how Ghose’s verse captures the quiet, devastating impact of state-sanctioned terror on human consciousness and memory.

By drawing on Conceptual Metaphor Theory, the analysis revealed that genocide in Ghose's work extends far beyond immediate physical destruction. It manifests as a deeply felt psychological and sensory experience that alters how victims inhabit space and time. Atmospheric imagery such as "heavy air" and "slowing streams" does not function as mere decorative description; instead, these metaphors project the suffocating, immobilizing weight of trauma directly onto the natural environment. Through this mapping, the physical landscape itself absorbs the grief of the victims, turning silent environmental cues into tangible markers of suffering.

When viewed through Achille Mbembe's framework of Necropolitics, the poem offers an intimate, chilling glimpse into the creation of modern "death-worlds"—spaces where human beings are subjected to conditions that grant them the status of the living dead. Within these spheres, sovereign power operates not simply through physical execution, but through systematic dehumanization. Power is asserted by stripping individuals of their names, obscuring their faces, and denying them a voice in the public sphere. Ghose highlights this dynamic by emphasizing the text's "suggestive silences." Far from representing an absence of meaning or passive submission, these silences function as active, quiet evidence of the deliberate erasure that defines genocidal campaigns.

Ultimately, Ghose's verse serves as an enduring form of poetic testimony that reclaims human dignity in the face of absolute violence. By guiding readers through the uncomfortable, "eerie calm" that follows extreme destruction, the poem exposes the cold, structural forces that render human lives disposable to state apparatuses. Through this synthesis of cognitive metaphor and necropolitical critique, this research underscores the vital role of literature in preserving human memory, challenging oppressive power structures, and bearing witness to human suffering that conventional political histories often flatten or ignore.

6. Recommendations

This study provides a focused analysis of one significant poem; the intersection of cognitive linguistics and political philosophy offers several avenues for further academic inquiry. Through the lens of Necropolitics, this research demonstrates how Zulfiqar Ghose's poetry witnesses the creation of "death-worlds," where sovereign power is exercised not just by killing, but by stripping individuals of their names, faces, and voices. The "suggestive silences" within the poem do not indicate an absence of meaning; rather, they serve as powerful evidence of the erasure that defines genocidal violence. Ultimately, this study concludes that Ghose's poetic language acts as a vital form of testimony, allowing the reader to navigate the "eerie calm" of trauma and recognize the structural forces that render human life disposable. While this study provides a focused analysis of one significant poem at the intersection of cognitive linguistics and political philosophy, it offers several avenues for further academic inquiry under future recommendations.

To expand this framework, future researchers could engage in comparative necropoetics by comparing Ghose's work with other post-colonial poets from the South Asian diaspora to reveal broader patterns in how state-sponsored violence and trauma are conceptualized across the region. Additionally, scholars could explore digital and visual metaphors by studying how "evidence of genocide" is represented through visual metaphors and hashtags in contemporary online spaces compared to traditional poetic forms. Academic inquiry could also focus on the role of translation, using the "Cognitive Translation Hypothesis" to examine how conceptual metaphors of trauma are preserved or altered when regional resistance poems (like Pashto or Urdu) are translated into English. Finally, more specialized research is needed on silence as a literary device to investigate how authors use blank spaces and pauses to represent the "living dead," alongside developing interdisciplinary pedagogy that uses Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) to help students understand sensitive historical events and abstract political concepts like necropolitics through the study of poetry.

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