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The Syrian Conflict as a Necropolitical Space in Faia Younan's *Lī Bilādī*

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Abstract

This study examines the representation of necropolitical space in the Syrian conflict as manifested in the Syrian poetry segment of Lī Bilādī, a multimedia poetic performance popularized through Faia Younan's YouTube channel. Employing Achille Mbembe's necropolitics framework, this study analyzes how the poetry represents the Syrian conflict as a space in which human bodies are continuously positioned in vulnerability and permanent proximity to death. Through qualitative textual analysis, three key manifestations of necropolitics are identified: war as an irrational mechanism of death, the destruction of social space and human relations, and the dehumanization of the human body. The findings reinforce previous scholarship on Syrian literature as a representation of civilian suffering, while expanding the study of necropolitics within contemporary Arab diasporic poetry that exists in multimedia and digital forms, where literature constructs collective memory and transnational experiences of conflict.

Keywords: *Arabic Poetry; Faia Younan; Necropolitics; Achille Mbembe; Syrian Conflict*

مستخلص

تتناول هذه الدراسة تمثيل الفضاء النكروسياسي في الصراع السوري، كما يتجلى في مقطع الشعر السوري من عرض لي بلادي، وهو عرض شعري متعدد الوسائط اشتُهر عبر قناة فايا يونان على يوتيوب. وباستخدام الإطار النظري للنكروسياسة لأشيل مبيمبي، تحلل هذه الدراسة كيف يُمثِّل الشعرُ الصراعَ السوري بوصفه فضاءً تُوضع فيه الأجساد البشرية باستمرار في حالة من الهشاشة والقرب الدائم من الموت. ومن خلال التحليل النصي النوعي، جرى تحديد ثلاثة مظاهر رئيسية للنكروسياسة، هي: الحرب بوصفها آليةً للموت تفتقر إلى العقلانية، وتدمير الفضاء الاجتماعي والعلاقات الإنسانية، وتجريد الجسد البشري من إنسانيته. وتُعزز نتائج هذه الدراسة الأبحاث السابقة التي تناولت الأدب السوري بوصفه تمثيلاً لمعاناة المدنيين، فضلاً عن توسيع نطاق دراسة النكروسياسة في شعر الشتات العربي المعاصر الذي يتجلى في أشكال متعددة الوسائط والفضاء الرقمي، حيث يُشيِّد الأدبُ الذاكرةَ الجماعية والتجارب العابرة للحدود الوطنية في سياقات الصراع.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الشعر العربي؛ فايا يونان؛ النكروسياسة؛ أشيل مبيمبي؛ الصراع السوري

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INTRODUCTION

Conflicts in the Middle East have become one of the geopolitical issues that continuously attract international attention. The region is widely recognized for its abundant natural resources and highly strategic geographical position.[1] However, these advantages have also turned the Middle East into a prolonged arena of political, economic, and military contestation. Various forms of conflict, including power struggles, foreign intervention, regional rivalries, and ideological tensions, have contributed to persistent instability across many countries in the region.[2] This situation has been further intensified by the involvement of international actors that position the Middle East as a space for global political and economic competition. As a result, the ongoing conflicts have affected not only national security and political stability but have also generated prolonged humanitarian crises. In this context, civilians frequently become the most vulnerable group, experiencing the loss of living space, displacement, poverty, trauma, and death caused by war and armed violence.[3]

One of the most complex conflicts in the Middle East has occurred in Syria since 2011. The conflict initially emerged from public protests against the government of President Bashar al-Assad, which later escalated into a multidimensional war involving the Syrian government, armed opposition groups, extremist organizations, and the intervention of various regional and international actors such as Russia, Iran, Turkey, and the United States.[4] The involvement of multiple actors transformed the Syrian conflict from an internal political struggle into a prolonged arena of geopolitical contestation. Throughout its development, civilians became the most severely affected group due to armed attacks, bombardments of residential areas, mass displacement,

[1]Rakan Alyamani, Yasir Ahmed Solangi, and Cosimo Magazzino, 'Evaluating The Driving Factors and Performance of OPEC Member Countries in Transitioning to Renewable Energy Towards Climate Change Mitigation', *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 487.October 2024 (2025), 144640 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2024.144640>.

[2]Mitsuhisa Fukutomi, 'Oil Or Geopolitical Issues?: Quantitative Rethinking of Political Instability in The Middle East and North Africa', *GeoJournal*, 89.2 (2024), 1–17 <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10708-024-11045-2>.

[3]Hashmat Ullah Khan, 'An Analytical Investigation of Consequences of Terrorism in the Middle East', *Journal of Economic Criminology*, 4.April (2024), 100067 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeconc.2024.100067>.

[4]Kim Hua Tan and Alirupendi Perudin, 'The "Geopolitical" Factor in the Syrian Civil War: A Corpus-Based Thematic Analysis', *SAGE Open*, 9.2 (2019) <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244019856729>.

food crises, and the destruction of public facilities such as hospitals and schools.[5] These conditions turned civilian living spaces into sites of fear, loss, and uncertainty. Therefore, the Syrian conflict is widely regarded as one of the greatest humanitarian tragedies in contemporary Middle Eastern history because civilians have continuously become the primary victims of systematic violence.

These phenomena can be understood through the concept of necropolitics proposed by Achille Mbembe. Mbembe argues that modern power functions not only to regulate life, as emphasized in the concept of biopolitics, but also to determine who is allowed to live and who may be left to die.[6] Within the framework of necropolitics, death is systematically produced through war, occupation, the destruction of living spaces, restrictions on access to necessities, and the creation of conditions marked by uncertainty and insecurity. Power operates by transforming human bodies and civilian living spaces into objects of control, placing certain individuals and communities in conditions described as "living dead." [7] Recent studies have demonstrated that necropolitical practices emerge within contexts such as armed conflict, colonialism, refugee crises, and state violence against vulnerable populations.[8,9,10] In the context of the Syrian conflict, these practices are reflected in the bombardment of civilian areas, the destruction of public facilities, forced displacement, starvation, and the continuous violence experienced by civilians. Such conditions place Syrian society in a constant state of vulnerability and proximity to death. Therefore, the Syrian conflict can be understood as a necropolitical space in which power operates through the systematic production of suffering, fear, and death.[11]

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[5] Keith A. Grant and Bernd Kaussler, 'The Battle of Aleppo: External Patrons and The Victimization of Civilians in Civil War', *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, 31.1 (2020), 1–33 <https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2020.1672959>.

[6]Maharanny Setiawan Poetri, 'Gembala Manusia Dalam Naskah Film The Island: Nekropolitik Mbembe', *Jurnal Onoma: Pendidikan, Bahasa, Dan Sastra*, 10.4 (2024), 4213–18 <https://doi.org/10.30605/onoma.v10i4.4156>.

[7]*Achille Mbembe, Necro-Politics, Duke University Press (London: Duke University Press, 2019).*

[8] Giovanna Astolfo and Harriet Allsopp, 'The Colonial Face of "Housing" Refugees: The Construction of The Racialised Subject Within a Necropolitical Infrastructure', *Housing Studies*, 40.9 (2025), 1871–94 <https://doi.org/10.1080/02673037.2024.2373992>.

[9]Lucy Mayblin, Mustafa Wake, and Mohsen Kazemi, 'Necropolitics and the Slow Violence of the Everyday: Asylum Seeker Welfare in the Postcolonial Present', *Sociology*, 54.1 (2020), 107–23 <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038519862124>.

[10]Samantha O'Donnell, 'Living Death at the Intersection of Necropower and Disciplinary Power: A Qualitative Exploration of Racialised and Detained Groups in Australia', *Critical Criminology*, 30.2 (2022), 285–304 <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10612-022-09623-2>.

[11] Arjun Ram, 'Peace-in-Arrears: Sacrifice, Memory, and Order in Sophocles' *Antigone* and Komunyakaa's "Facing It"', *Advances in Literary Study*, 13.04 (2025), 181–90 <https://doi.org/10.4236/als.2025.134014>.

In this context, literary works function not only as mediums that represent reality, but also as forms of interpretation and criticism toward the structures of violence operating within society. This perspective is consistent with the view of Alan Swingewood and Diana Laurenson, who argue that literature reflects human life, including social structures, conflicts, and cultural dynamics within society.[12] Through its narrative and aesthetic dimensions, literature is capable of presenting human experiences that are often absent or insufficiently represented in formal historical records and political discourse. Literary works also provide a critical space for examining power relations that produce suffering, marginalization, and the destruction of human life. From a necropolitical perspective, it becomes an important medium for revealing how power operates through the production of death, the creation of fear, and the destruction of civilian life.

One of the contemporary Arabic literatures that represents the human tragedy in the Middle East is *Li Bilādī*, a multimedia poetic performance popularized by Faia Younan through the YouTube platform.[13] The work combines poetry, music, and visual narration to portray destruction, displacement, loss, and collective grief experienced by people in several Arab countries, particularly Syria. Through its poetic and visual representation, the work depicts the experiences of civilians living amid war and prolonged violence. These representations demonstrate how conflict produces not only physical death, but also conditions of life marked by trauma, fear, and continuous suffering. Within the framework of necropolitics, such conditions illustrate how civilians are positioned in circumstances of living on the threshold of death due to systematic violence.[14] Therefore, *Lī Bilādī* functions as a humanitarian critique of forms of power that place civilians as the primary victims of war and armed conflict.

Several previous studies have examined the Syrian conflict in Arabic literature from various perspectives. Alatrash and Alsamad argue that Syrian literature plays an important role in representing the humanitarian experiences of civilians affected by war and alienation.[15] Taleghani asserts that prison literature within the tradition of Arabic literature reveals how the Syrian regime operates through mechanisms of dehumanization, political imprisonment, torture, and the destruction of human relations.[16] Through the perspective of literary psychology, Fauziyah and Waningyun emphasize the emergence of moral dilemmas experienced by survivors as a result of

[12]*Alan Swingewood and Diana Laurenson, The Sociology of Literature (Paladin, 1972).*

[13] Younan, faia, et al. 'To Our Countries لبلادي', *Channel Faia Younan*, 2014 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4GO52i0xui8&list=RD4GO52i0xui8&start_radio=1>.

[14]*Mbembe, Necro-Politics.*

[15]Ghada Alatrash and Najat Abed Alsamad, 'On Understanding Syrian Diasporic Identities through a Selection of Syrian Literary Works', *Journal of Contemporary Issues in Education*, 15.2 (2020), 3–22 <https://doi.org/10.20355/jcie29373>.

[16]R. Shareah Taleghani, 'Vulnerability and Recognition in Syrian Prison Literature', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 49.1 (2017), 91–109 <https://doi.org/10.1017/S002074381600115X>.

pressure and trauma caused by the Syrian war.[17] Zuhirawati further argues that Syrian literary works not only portray the realities of war but also expose the brutality of the regime of Bashar al-Assad.[18] Through an analysis of the film The Swimmers, Ni'mah finds that Syrian civilians are forced to leave their homeland and struggle to survive amid war and uncertainty.[19]

Meanwhile, necropolitical studies from literary perspectives have also been widely conducted. Yebra and Revilla argue that the novel *The Corpse Washer* successfully represents necropolitical conditions through the destruction of bodies, spaces, and the lives of Iraqi civilians caused by war and Western occupation.[20] Suarez-Rodriguez, through an analysis of the novel *We Need New Names*, reveals that the failure of decolonization can be understood as a form of necropolitics occurring in Zimbabwe.[21] Through their analysis of the novel The Stand, Poetri and Salam contend that pandemic narratives function as catalysts for necropolitical governance, in which sovereignty operates through control over life and death by utilizing fear to maintain domination.[22] Furthermore, Da Costa emphasizes that acts of misgendering against trans women of color are not merely forms of identity-based discrimination, but also manifestations of necropolitics that place individuals in conditions described as "living dead."[23] Beyond literary studies, necropolitical approaches have also been applied to the Syrian refugee crisis. Munawar and Khan, for instance, analyze Syrian refugee experiences through Achille Mbembe's concept of necropolitics by demonstrating how war, border securitization, and international indifference reduce

[17] Umi Ma'rifatul Fauziyah and Prissilia Prahesta Waningyun, 'Dilema Kewajiban Dan Kemanusiaan Dalam Konflik Suriah: Perkembangan Moral Tokoh Salamah Dalam Novel As Long As The Lemon Trees Grow Karya Zoulfa Katouh Perspektif Lawrence Kohlberg', *Jurnal Bastra*, 11.2 (2026), 894–906 <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.36709/bastra.v11i2.2646>.

[18] Zuhirawati Zuhirawati, 'Sastra Dan Konflik Sosial Pasca Arab Spring Pemerintahan Bashar Assad Dalam Novel Amal Fī Sūriā (Telaah Sosiologi Sastra)', *Al-Irfan*, 1.1 (2019), 69–93 <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.58223/al-irfan.v2i1.495>.

[19] Evayatun Ni'mah, 'Potret Perjalanan Pengungsi Suriah Menuju Jerman Dalam Film Netflix "The Swimmer"', *Majalah Ilmiah Tabuah*, 27.2 (2023), 80–94 <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.37108/tabuah.v27i2.1166>.

[20] José M. Yebra and Alfonso Revilla, 'Necropolitics in Sinan Antoon's The Corpse Washer', *NJES Nordic Journal of English Studies*, 21.1 (2022), 96–114 <https://doi.org/10.35360/njes.741>.

[21] Ángela Suárez-Rodríguez, 'Strangers and Necropolitics in NoViolet Bulawayo's We Need New Names', *International Journal of English Studies*, 22.2 (2022), 17–34 <https://doi.org/10.6018/ijes.508761>.

[22] Maharanny Setiawan Poetri and Aprinus Salam, 'King's the Stand: Dwelling Necropolitics in Pandemic's Legacy', *English Review: Journal of English Education*, 13.2 (2025), 691–700 <https://doi.org/10.25134/yn1s5g32>.

[23] Jade Crimson Rose Da Costa, 'Monstrous Awakenings: Queer Necropolitics in Vivek Shraya and Ness Lee's Death Threat', *Feminist Theory*, 24.4 (2023), 618–46 <https://doi.org/10.1177/14647001221085944>.

refugees into forms of "bare life" subjected to the politics of death.[24] Similarly, Sanders examines the necropolitics of refugee deaths along the Aegean borderland by focusing on governance practices surrounding migrant bodies, border control, and funerary management.[25] However, studies specifically examining the representation of the Syrian conflict in the musical poem *Lī Bilādī* through the perspective of necropolitics remain limited. In fact, the work portrays how war is represented through loss, destruction, fear, and the condition of civilians who continuously live under the threat of death.

Based on the discussion above, this study seeks to examine the representation of the Syrian conflict in the musical poem *Lī Bilādī* through the perspective of necropolitics proposed by Achille Mbembe. This research is important because it demonstrates how literary and artistic works represent forms of power that operate through the production of death and suffering within modern conflicts. Furthermore, this study is expected to contribute to the development of necropolitical studies in contemporary Arabic literature, particularly in relation to the representation of humanitarian conflicts in the Middle East.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative interpretive approach through textual analysis to examine the representation of the Syrian conflict as a necropolitical space in the poetic segment of *Li Bilādī*, a multimedia poetic performance performed by Faia Younan on YouTube.[26] The primary data consist of the Syrian poetic segment contained in *Li Bilādī*. The poetic text was manually transcribed from the official video uploaded on Faia Younan's YouTube channel. The Syrian segment was purposively selected because it explicitly represents war, civilian vulnerability, displacement, and social instability, making it particularly relevant to the necropolitical framework employed in this study.

Data collection was conducted through documentation and transcription techniques. After transcription, the poetic excerpts were classified according to thematic categories associated with necropolitical conditions, including social fragmentation, civilian precarity, displacement, humiliation, and social death. The classification process was conducted manually through repeated close reading in order to categorize recurring necropolitical themes and patterns of homeland representation within the poetic text.[27]

[24]*Maria Munawar, 'Recontextualizing Refugee Narratives : A Necropolitical Study of Abawi ' s a Land of Permanent Goodbyes Abstract :', 4.2 (2024), 91–101.*

[25]*Mija Sanders, 'DEATH ON THE AEGEAN BORDERLAND 1', 2.2 (2021), 59–91.*

[26]*Younan, faia.*

[27] Piotr Cap, 'Critical Discourse Analysis', *Methods in Pragmatics*, 7.July (2018), 425–51 <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110424928-017>.

The analysis was conducted in several stages. First, the poetic text was closely read to identify significant diction, symbolic expressions, and semantic structures associated with violence, suffering, displacement, and homeland representation. Second, these textual elements were interpreted within the framework of necropolitics to reveal how the poem represents necropolitical conditions experienced by civilians under prolonged conflict. Third, the poetic representations were contextualized using relevant historical and humanitarian documentation concerning the Syrian conflict in order to strengthen sociocultural interpretation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Construction of Necropolitical Space in the Syrian Conflict

The Syrian conflict since 2011 can be understood through the framework of necropolitics developed by Achille Mbembe to explain how modern power operates through the production of death. Departing from a critique of Michel Foucault's concept of biopolitics, Mbembe asserts that the highest form of sovereignty is not merely the capacity to govern life, but above all the capacity to determine who is permitted to live and who may be left to die.[28] Under such conditions, death becomes a political instrument employed to control populations through fear, vulnerability, and the destruction of living space, a condition Mbembe refers to as death-worlds, social spaces in which individuals are compelled to exist in circumstances resembling a living dead.[29]

The production of such necropolitical space was shaped through the transformation of the Syrian conflict from civilian demonstrations into a protracted multidimensional war. The conflict originated from protests in the city of Daraa in March 2011, following the arrest and torture of a group of teenagers by security forces for writing anti-government slogans on school walls.[30] The state's repressive response transformed civilian protest into an increasingly complex armed war, undergoing massive actor fragmentation through the involvement of the Assad regime, armed opposition groups, extremist organizations such as ISIS and Jabhat al-Nusra, and regional and global powers including Russia, Iran, Turkey, the United States, and the Gulf states.[31] As a consequence, the boundary between military and civilian territory became increasingly blurred, with violence spreading into the spaces of everyday civilian life. United Nations reports indicate that since 2012, densely populated areas such as

[28]Mark G.E. Kelly, *Foucault's 'History of Sexuality Volume I, The Will to Knowledge'*, *Foucault's 'History of Sexuality Volume I, The Will to Knowledge'*, 2013, I <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780748648917>.

[29]Mbembe, 'Necropolitics'.

[30]A Muchaddam Fahham, 'Mengkaji Konflik Suriah', *Aspirasi*, 5.1 (2014), 85–92.

[31]Fahham.

Damascus, Aleppo, Hama, Idlib, and Deir ez-Zor have been subjected to bombardments resulting in substantial civilian casualties.[32]

Within the necropolitical framework, power operates spatially by converting spaces of life into spaces of death. Vignal explains that the Syrian war introduced a process of the "unmaking of Syria", a systematic destruction of urban space and social life that rendered cities no longer functional as spaces of living, but as spaces of survival saturated with uncertainty and the threat of death.[33] The transformation of living space into spaces of death is further evident through the massive displacement of populations resulting from the protracted war. According to the latest UNHCR reports, the Syrian crisis remains one of the largest displacement crises in the world, with more than 13 million Syrians having experienced displacement, both as cross-border refugees and as internally displaced persons. [34] Mandić argues that displacement in the Syrian conflict cannot be understood merely as a consequence of war, but rather as a form of political violence that systematically produces vulnerable populations through the destruction of living space and permanent insecurity.[35]

Beyond generating mass displacement, the Syrian conflict has also produced social death through the collapse of societal structures. The destruction of families, prolonged psychological trauma, loss of livelihoods, and the disintegration of communities have deprived civilian populations of the social conditions that enable life to be lived with dignity. Recent scholarship by Wendy Pearlman demonstrates that the experiences of war and displacement among Syrian society have generated a collective trauma that not only devastates individuals psychologically but also severs the social bonds that previously sustained community identity. [36] Children are deprived of access to education and grow up in the midst of war, marked by pervasive uncertainty, while women face heightened vulnerability to sexual exploitation, human trafficking, and forced marriage as a result of economic pressures and social insecurity. In this context, violence no longer operates solely at the level of the physical body, but also dismantles the social and emotional dimensions of human existence. Necropolitics in the Syrian conflict, therefore, does not merely produce biological death but also destroys the social future of society through collective trauma, alienation, and the erosion of life's stability.

[32]Fahham.

[33] Human Rights Council, 'General Assembly', *International Organization*, 4.4 (1950), 614–30 <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818300029453>.

[34]UNHCR, 'Syria Emergency', 2025 <https://www.unhcr.org/emergencies/syria-emergency> [accessed 6 June 2026].

[35]Danilo Mandić, *The Syrian Refugee Crisis: How Democracies and Autocracies Perpetrated Mass Displacement* (London: Routledge, 2023) <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003198680>.

[36]Wendy Pearlman, *The Home I Worked to Make: Voices from the New Syrian Diaspora* (new york: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2024).

The Manifestation of Necropolitics in *Lī Bilādī*

The necropolitical space of the Syrian conflict is not confined to social reality alone but is also manifested in diasporic literature as a form of testimony to the experience of war. The Syrian poetry segment in *Lī Bilādī* represents civilian experiences of destruction, displacement, and loss through imagery that manifests the condition of living within death-worlds, evident through the representation of war as an irrational mechanism of death, the destruction of social space, and the dehumanization of the human body.

1. War as an Irrational Mechanism of Death

The Syrian poetry segment in *Lī Bilādī* represents war as a mechanism of death that unfolds irrationally and transgresses the boundaries of human logic. This representation is evident through the phrase *Sūriyā, thalāthu sanawāt wa aktsar min ḥarbin majnūniyyatin anāniyyatin lā manṭiqiyyah* (Syria, more than three years in a war that is mad, selfish, and senseless). The phrase *thalāthu sanawāt wa aktsar* (more than three years) does not merely indicate the temporal duration of the conflict but also signals that the suffering endured by Syrian society transcends the boundaries of time itself. The word *aktsar* (more) reveals that the pain wrought by war cannot be measured solely through the counting of years, but must be understood through the ongoing social destruction and fear that persist without end. At the same time, the phrase provides a clear historical marker of the Syrian conflict, as the *Lī Bilādī* video was published in 2014, approximately three years after the outbreak of the Daraa demonstrations in 2011. Thus, the poetry does not speak of war in abstract terms, but rather refers to the concrete historical events that underlie the emergence of the necropolitical space in Syria.[37]

This historical context is significant, as the Syrian conflict initially emerged from a relatively localized social crisis, namely, the arrest and torture of many children in Daraa following the writing of anti-government slogans on school walls. However, the state's repressive response to these events ultimately transformed civilian protest into a protracted armed conflict. In this context, war is represented as something *majnūniyyah* (madness) and *lā manṭiqiyyah* (illogical) as the violence employed is no longer proportional to the source of the crisis that precipitated it. A crisis that could reasonably have been resolved through social and political means instead evolved into a space of mass death production. This condition reveals how the Syrian conflict was, from its very outset, constructed through a logic of power that maintains stability by means of violence, even when directed against civilian populations. From a necropolitical perspective, such a condition demonstrates that power operates

[37]Pearlman.

through the capacity to determine who is permitted to live and who may be sacrificed to sustain a particular political order.[38]

The irrationality of war becomes increasingly apparent as various crisis narratives are exploited to legitimize violence and expand the necropolitical space. Under normal circumstances, crisis narratives ought to foster social solidarity and the protection of society. However, as demonstrated by the findings of Poetri and Salam, crisis narratives can instead be instrumentalized as catalysts for necropolitics through the production of fear, enabling power to extend its control over human life.[39] A similar condition is evident in the Syrian conflict, where narratives of security, sectarianism, and the "war on terrorism" have been deployed to justify military intervention and protracted violence. The Syrian government has consistently framed opposition groups as terrorist threats to state stability, while Russia has employed anti-terrorism narratives to legitimize its military intervention since 2015.[40] On the other side, the United States similarly employed the narrative of the war against ISIS as the basis for its military involvement in Syria. As a consequence, civilian populations remain continuously positioned in a state of vulnerability, as various political actors exploit the crisis as legitimation for sustaining violent operations. In this context, war is no longer waged with the aim of ending conflict, but rather to perpetuate conditions of crisis so that the mechanisms of power may continue to operate through the production of fear and death.

The representation of war as something "madness" and "illogical" is further connected to various forms of extreme violence that transgress the moral boundaries of modern warfare. Among the events that most starkly illustrate this condition is the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian conflict. Since 2012, numerous international reports have documented alleged chemical weapons use across several regions, including Homs, Aleppo, and Ghouta. The Ghouta attack in August 2013 alone claimed the lives of thousands of civilians, becoming one of the most prominent symbols of the brutality of the Syrian war.[41] The use of chemical weapons against civilian areas demonstrates that war no longer observes any ethical boundary regarding who must be protected. In this context, the representation of war in *Lī Bilādī* reinforces Zuhirawati's finding that Syrian literature extensively represents the brutality of conflict and the suffering of civilian populations as a consequence of war.[42] Yet the poetry does not merely present war as something brutal, but rather as a condition that has lost its human rationality altogether. War manifests as a destructive force that continues to advance without any clearly defined moral boundaries.

[38]Mbembe, 'Necropolitics'.

[39]Poetri and Salam.

[40]Aron Lund, 'Five Wars and a Funeral ':, 2026, 1–14.

[41]Mandić.

[42]Zuhirawati.

This condition illustrates how war in *Lī Bilādī* is represented as a permanent crisis that continuously reproduces fear and proximity to death. In this regard, the findings of this study intersect with the argument advanced by Suarez-Rodriguez, who contends that necropolitics operates through the normalization of crisis and the destruction of the continuity of life among postcolonial societies in Zimbabwe.[43] However, whereas in the Zimbabwean context necropolitics emerges through the failure of decolonization and socioeconomic crisis, in the Syrian conflict, this condition is manifested through a protracted war that sustains civilian populations within a space of permanent violence. Society not only lives amidst the threat of physical death, but also loses the certainty of life, the sense of security, and the capacity to envision a future beyond war. Thus, war in *Lī Bilādī* is not merely represented as armed conflict, but as a necropolitical mechanism that sustains civilian populations in a condition of living dead.

Ultimately, the representation of war as an irrational mechanism of death demonstrates that *Lī Bilādī* does not merely function as a reflection on the Syrian conflict but also as a critique of the system of power that perpetually sustains war and the suffering of civilian populations. This condition is consistent with the position of Alatrash and Alsamad, who argue that Syrian literature plays a significant role in representing the human experiences of civilian populations that are frequently marginalized by political and media narratives.[44] In *Lī Bilādī*, war is not represented as a "side effect" of political conflict, but rather as a system that actively produces fear, destruction, and death within the lives of Syrian society.

2. The Destruction of Social Space and Human Life

Beyond representing war as an irrational mechanism of death, the Syrian poetry segment in *Lī Bilādī* also manifests necropolitics through the destruction of social space and human life. This representation is evident in the phrase *dummirat fīhā an-nufūs wal-qulūb wal-'uqūl* (within it, souls, hearts, and minds are destroyed). The deployment of the words *an-nufūs* (souls), *al-qulūb* (hearts), and *al-'uqūl* (minds) demonstrates that war does not merely destroy the human body in a physical sense, but also devastates the emotional, psychological, and rational dimensions of civilian life. This destruction reveals that necropolitics operates not only through direct killing, but also through the annihilation of the social conditions that enable human beings to live with dignity. In this context, war transforms the everyday lives of society into a space of permanent fear that erodes psychological stability and the social bonds that sustain human existence.[45]

This representation is closely connected to the social reality of the Syrian conflict, which has produced mass death, collective trauma, and prolonged displacement.

[43]Suárez-Rodríguez.

[44]Alatrash and Abed Alsamad.

[45]Mbembe, 'Necropolitics'.

Since 2011, the Syrian conflict has claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands of civilians and forced millions of others to abandon their homes as a result of aerial bombardment, territorial sieges, and armed violence.[46] Within the necropolitical framework, this condition demonstrates that civilian populations not only face the threat of biological death but also lose the living space that sustains their social identity. This is consistent with the findings of Munawar and Khan, who argue that war and displacement in the Syrian conflict produce a condition of bare life, in which refugees are maintained in a state of permanent vulnerability without any clear certainty of existence.[47] Thus, the destruction depicted in Lī Bilādī does not refer solely to physical structures, but also to the collapse of security, social stability, and the human attachment to one's own living space.

The destruction of social space is further rendered visible through the line *ḥarbun ikhtaraqat al-abwāba khilsatan fastawṭanat al-buyūta wa adhallat ahlahā* (a war that stealthily penetrated the doors, then settled within the homes and humiliated their inhabitants). The use of personification in this verse portrays war as an active entity that infiltrates the domestic space of civilian life. The words *al-abwāb* (doors) and *al-buyūt* (homes) represent spaces of protection, family, and the stability of everyday existence. Yet in the poetry, war "settles" within the home, stripping the domestic space of its function as a place of safety. From a necropolitical perspective, this condition demonstrates that violence is no longer confined to the battlefield, but has come to occupy the most personal space of human life. The home no longer stands as a symbol of security; instead, it is transformed into a space of permanent fear and vulnerability.[48]

This representation of the destruction of domestic space reinforces Taleghani's finding that violence in Syrian literature dismantles human relations and the social life of society.[49] However, in *Lī Bilādī*, such destruction is not confined to the space of political imprisonment as discussed by Taleghani, but extends further into the domestic space and the everyday lives of civilian populations. The destruction of the home in the poetry demonstrates that war has erased the boundary between safe space and conflict zone. This condition also intersects with the findings of Yebra and Revilla concerning the representation of necropolitics in *The Corpse Water*, which illustrates how war destroys the bodies and living spaces of Iraqi society.[50] In *Lī Bilādī*, this destruction is manifested through the imagery of a home that is no longer capable of

[46]Mandić.

[47]Munawar.

[48] Leïla Vignal, 'The Changing Borders and Borderlands of Syria in a Time of Conflict', *International Affairs*, 93.4 (2017), 809–27 <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iix113>.

[49]Taleghani.

[50]Yebra and Revilla.

protecting its inhabitants from the violence of war. Thus, necropolitics in the poetry operates through the destruction of the social spaces that sustain human survival.

The destruction of social life is further evident through the *line ḥarbun abkat jamīʿ ummahāt al-waṭan wa anhakat rijālahu* (a war that made all the mothers of the homeland weep and exhausted its men). This representation demonstrates that war does not merely produce physical death, but also generates a collective emotional trauma that dismantles family structures and the social bonds of society. The weeping of mothers represents the loss of family members and the destruction of emotional ties, while the exhaustion of men signifies the physical and psychological burden continuously borne by civilian populations as a consequence of protracted war. In this context, war no longer destroys individuals alone, but also erodes the social foundations that sustain communal life.

This condition is connected to the findings of Fauziyah and Waningyun, who emphasize the emergence of psychological trauma and moral dilemmas among survivors of the Syrian war.[51] However, *Lī Bilādī* demonstrates that such trauma is not experienced solely at the individual level but develops into a collective suffering that pervades the entire social structure of society. This further reinforces Niʼmah's analysis of the experiences of Syrian refugees in The Swimmers, in which war compels society to abandon their homes and live in prolonged uncertainty.[52] In *Lī Bilādī*, this condition is manifested not only through narratives of physical displacement but through emotional imagery of a society that simultaneously loses its home, family, and sense of security.

The destruction of social space in the poetry reaches its culmination through the phrase *ḥarb taḥlumu bi-nihāyah* (a war that dreams of an end). This phrase reveals that the resolution of conflict exists only as an imaginary hope. From a necropolitical perspective, this condition illustrates how civilian populations are sustained within a space of permanent crisis that renders the envisioning of a normal future nearly impossible. This situation intersects with the argument of Sanders concerning necropolitics in the refugee crisis, in which individuals exist in a liminal condition between life and death as a result of a system of power that perpetually maintains uncertainty.[53] Thus, *Lī Bilādī* represents war not merely as physical destruction, but as a necropolitical mechanism that dismantles social space, human relations, and society's capacity to envision a life beyond war. Ultimately, the representation of the destruction of social space in *Lī Bilādī* demonstrates that necropolitics in the Syrian conflict operates through the devastation of the everyday lives of civilian populations. This condition reinforces the argument of Alatrash and Alsamad that Syrian literature

[51]Fauziyah and Waningyun.

[52]Niʼmah.

[53]Sanders.

functions as a medium through which the human experiences of societies marginalized by dominant political narratives are brought to the fore.[54]

3. Dehumanization and the Commodification of the Body within the Necropolitical Space

The manifestation of necropolitics in *Lī Bilādī* reaches its most extreme form through the representation of the dehumanization and commodification of the human body as a consequence of war. This representation is evident in the line *ḥarbun bīʿa fīhā aṣ-ṣighāru wan-nisāʾu fī aswāq ar-riqq wal-ʿabīd* (a war in which children and women were sold in the markets of slavery and bondage). Unlike the preceding verses, which extensively employ metaphor and personification, this verse is delivered with stark literalism, devoid of any softening of meaning. This choice reveals that war has reached a point at which the human body is no longer regarded as a subject possessing dignity, but rather as an object that can be traded. The word *bīʿa* (sold) signals the erasure of the individual's human worth, while the phrase *aswāq ar-riqq wal-ʿabīd* (market of slavery and bondage) represents the resurgence of dehumanizing practices that appear to dissolve the boundary between modernity and barbarism. From a necropolitical perspective, this condition demonstrates that power operates not only through the production of death, but also through the control of human bodies reduced to commodities of war.[55]

This representation is closely connected to the various practices of human trafficking, sexual exploitation, and modern slavery that emerged during the Syrian conflict. Numerous international reports have documented that ISIS carried out the abduction, detention, and sale of women and children, particularly from the Yazidi community, as an integral part of their system of warfare.[56] The bodies of women were treated as symbols of ideological domination as well as economic objects that could be traded across ISIS-controlled territories such as Raqqa and Deir Ezzor. In this context, war does not merely produce physical death, but also creates mechanisms of power that strip human subjectivity from vulnerable bodies. The human body loses all autonomy over itself and falls entirely under the control of armed groups that determine its value, function, and even the continuation of its existence.

This dehumanization becomes further compounded when the practices of slavery and the trafficking of human bodies are legitimized through religious narratives. ISIS is known to have issued several fatwas and internal legal documents regulating the mechanisms of female slave ownership, practices of sexual exploitation, and the rules

[54]Alatrash and Abed Alsamad.

[55]Mbembe, 'Necropolitics'.

[56]Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, *"They Came to Destroy": ISIS Crimes Against the Yazidis*, 2016 <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/843515>.

governing the buying and selling of female prisoners of war.[57] Religion, which ought to function as a moral system for protecting human dignity, is instead reduced to an instrument for legitimizing violence. From a necropolitical perspective, this condition demonstrates that power operates not only through weapons and physical violence but also through the manipulation of moral and religious discourse to justify the destruction of humanity. However, such legitimization was not widely accepted. As many as 120 Muslim scholars from various countries signed an open letter to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi explicitly rejecting the practices of slavery, killing, and sexual exploitation carried out by ISIS in the name of religion.[58] This rejection demonstrates that the necropolitical practices of ISIS are not only incompatible with universal human values but are also repudiated within Islamic discourse itself.

This condition intersects with Da Costa's argument that necropolitics operates through the destruction of human subjectivity to the point where individuals are reduced to a condition of the living dead.[59] In Da Costa's study, this condition emerges through the misgendering of trans women of color, which results in the erasure of their social identity and humanity. In *Lī Bilādī*, an analogous mechanism is manifested through the commodification of the bodies of women and children as a consequence of war. The human body is no longer understood as an entity possessing rights and dignity, but is reduced to an object of transaction, domination, and sexual exploitation. Thus, war in the poetry does not merely produce biological death, but also generates social death, a condition in which human beings lose their social identity, bodily autonomy, and any recognition of their humanity.

This representation of dehumanization further reinforces Taleghani's finding that violence in Syrian literature operates through the destruction of human relations and individual dignity.[60] However, in *Lī Bilādī*, such destruction is not confined to the space of political imprisonment as discussed by Taleghani but extends into the open commodification of the human body within the space of war. The bodies of women and children are represented as the primary victims of a system of violence that sustains war through the exploitation of the most vulnerable groups. In this context, war no longer merely destroys human life, but also transforms human beings into tradeable instruments serving economic, military, and ideological interests.

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[57] Charlie Winter, 'Documenting the Virtual ' Caliphate '', *Quilliam*, 2015, 52 <http://www.quilliamfoundation.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/FINAL-documenting-the-virtual-caliphate.pdf>.

[58]120 Leading Religious Scholars and Academics, 'Open Letter to Dr. Ibrahim Awwad Al-Badri, Alias Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, and to the Fighters and Followers of the Self-Declared Islamic State – Part One', 2015 <https://www.newageislam.com/radical-islamism-jihad/120-leading-religious-scholars-academics/open-letter-dr-ibrahim-awwad-al-badri-alias-abu-bakr-al-baghdadi-fighters-followers-self-declared-islamic-state---part-one/d/104327> [accessed 6 June 2026].

[59]Da Costa.

[60]Taleghani.

The impact of this dehumanization subsequently extends to the destruction of emotional bonds and the social structures of society. This is evident in the line *ḥarbun abkat jamī' ummahāt al-waṭan wa anhakat rijālahu* (a war that made all the mothers of the homeland weep and exhausted its men). The weeping of mothers in this verse represents the loss of family members, the destruction of households, and the collective emotional trauma wrought by protracted war. Meanwhile, the phrase *anhakat rijālahu* (exhausted its men) demonstrates that war does not merely destroy the human body in a physical sense, but also depletes the psychological and social conditions of society to the point where the capacity to sustain a normal life is lost. Within the necropolitical framework, this condition reveals that war operates through the gradual destruction of the civilian population's will to live. Individuals may remain biologically alive, yet experience emotional exhaustion, prolonged trauma, and a loss of the meaning of life as a consequence of their sustained exposure to a space of permanent violence. This further reinforces the findings of Fauziyah and Waningyun, who emphasize that trauma in Syrian war literature emerges through the psychological pressures and moral dilemmas experienced by survivors of war.[61]

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the Syrian poetry segment in *Lī Bilādī* does not merely function as an artistic reflection on war, but also as a necropolitical representation that reveals how power operates through the production of death, fear, displacement, dehumanization, and the destruction of social space and human relations. Through the perspective of Achille Mbembe, the poetry portrays the Syrian conflict as a space in which human bodies are continuously positioned in a state of vulnerability and permanent proximity to death, whether through direct violence or through the collapse of social security and social death. These findings reinforce previous scholarship on Syrian literature as a representation of civilian suffering, while simultaneously expanding the study of necropolitics within contemporary Arab diasporic poetry that exists in multimedia and digital forms, where literature does not merely record war but also constructs collective memory and transnational experiences of conflict.

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[61]Fauziyah and Waningyun.

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