



The Postcolonial Reading of War Practices as Depicted by Kevin Powers' *The Yellow Birds*

Asset.Lect.Riyam Hasan Ali

riyamalkinani@gmail.com

University of Sumer – college of Basic education – department of Sciences

Abstract:-

This paper analyzes Kevin Power's *The Yellow Birds* (2021), where it focuses on the non-conventional readings based on the psychological trauma to engage with the structural violence in the post 9/11 Iraq war. Usually, the analysis focuses on the veteran's *psychological trauma* or the *hero trauma* which often leads to psychological reductionism. It reduces the impact of what soldiers are responsible for, this in turn relieves them of conflict's geopolitical context. The hero trauma is important; however, this allows the US public to forget the death and destruction these soldiers have caused. By focusing on the soldier's psychological struggle, the narrative sidelines the geopolitical context and the damage of the war itself. Power's work challenges this and presents the soldier not as a hero but a survivor caught between war and death. The novel deconstructs the conventional war narrative by analyzing US war practices through the lens of Achille's Mbembe's concept of Necropolitics to analyze violence. It highlights the cultural practice of domestic evasion through the yellow ribbon. This concept defines sovereignty through the power to dictate zones of death and control life. It also exposes private John Bartle's compromised position as a structural subaltern who receives orders. It moves beyond the diagnosing of his character with PTSD to understand his trauma. He is morally complicit participant within an imperial apparatus designed for systemic violence and disposability. The methodology used is a textual reading of Power's poetic, lyrical and fragmented prose, which is coupled with a systemic application of theoretical concepts including Edward Said's Orientalism and Gayatri Sivak's understanding of subaltern. Key findings show that Bartle's post war trauma and pervasive guilt are tied to his incapable role as an instrument of neo colonial policy. Furthermore, the novel's aesthetic form is characterized by its non-linear and fragmented structure, functions as a powerful rejection of the coherent, justified national narrative demanded by the imperial state.

Keywords: - The Postcolonial, Kevin Powers, psychological trauma, Necropolitics, Orientalism

قراءة مابعد الاستعمار لممارسات الحرب كما صورها كيفن باورز في روايته "الطيور الصفراء"

م.م.ريام حسن علي

riyamalkinani@gmail.com

جامعة سومر - كلية التربية الأساسية - قسم العلوم



الملخص:-

البحث تحليل لرواية الطيور الصفراء (2021) للكاتب كيفن باورز حيث قراءة غير تقليدية تركز على الصدمة النفسية لتتداخل مع العنف التنظيمي مابعد أحداث 9/11 وحرب العراق. عادةً التحليل يركز على الصدمة النفسية للمحارب أو صدمة البطل وهي غالباً تقود الى الاختزالية النفسية وتفسير الظواهر النفسية. حيث انه يظهر مدى تأثير مايتحمل الجنود المسؤولية وهذا تباعاً يخفف من صراع السياق الجيوسياسي . الصدمة أو الحالة النفسية للبطل مهمة جداً على أي حال بسببها يسمح للشعب الأمريكي ينسى موت ودمار الجنود. حيث بالتركيز على الصراع النفسي للجنود السرد النفسي السياق الجيوسياسي واضرار الحرب. تحديات عمل باورز قدمت الجندي ليس كبطل فقط وانما كناجي من الحرب والموت. تقوم الرواية بتفكيك سردية الحرب الحوارية من خلال تحليل الممارسات الأمريكية من خلال مفهوم اكيل ميمبي عن سياسة الموت لتحليل العنف. كما يركز على الممارسات الثقافية للتهرب من خلال الشريط الاصفر. هذا المفهوم يعرف السيادة من خلال قوة تحديد مناطق الموت وسيطرة الحياة. كما يكشف ذلك عن وضع الجندي جون بارتل المشكوك فيه كموظف ثانوي يتلقى الاوامر. حيث تم بتشخيصه باضطراب ما بعد الصدمة لفهم حالته النفسية. كما انه مشارك ذو طبيعة اخلاقية معقدة ضمن المنظومة الامبراطورية المصممة للعنف المنهجي والتخلص من الافراد. المنهجية المستخدمة هي قراءة نصية لأسلوب النثر المتقطع أو المتجزئ والشعري الغنائيلباورز حيث قورنت بالتطبيق المنهجي للمفاهيم النظرية بما في ذلك استشراق ادوارد سعيد وفهم غاياتري سبيفاك للفئات المهمشة المستبعدة. النتيجة النهائية تبين ان الصدمة ما بعد الحرب لبارتل وشعوره بالذنب ارتبط بدوره الغير كفؤ كأداة للسياسة الاستعمارية الجديدة. بالإضافة الى ذلك يتسم الشكل الجمالي للرواية ببنية سرد غير خطي والمتجزئ أو المتقطع, وهو ما يعد رفضاً قوياً للسردية المتناسكة والمبررة التي تفرزها الدولة الإمبراطورية نفسها.

الكلمات المفتاحية:- مابعد الاستعمار, كيفين باورز, الصدمة النفسية, سياسات الموت, الاستشراق

Introduction

The post war works focused on societal unease, the angry young men, the decline of empires, and themes of realism and existentialism. The writers were grappled with the new social and political landscape. Some writers were influenced by philosophy, they explored the themes of anxiety, alienation, social discontent and individual responsibility. Some of the prominent figures include, Samuel Beckett, Ernest Hemingway, John Osborne, Kingsley Amis, George Orwell, William Golding, and Graham Greene.

The postcolonial works explored the impacts of colonialism and struggle for cultural and political independence. It offered alternative perspective on history and challenged the simplistic or stereotypical views of the formerly colonized places. It also challenged the western narratives by focusing on the themes of identity, eurocentrism, displacement, resistance, racialism, cultural hybridity, reclaiming languages, linguistic appropriation after the colonizers left. Characters are often shown battling with identity crises as a result of migration, loss of cultural identity and cultural suppression. They yearn for belonging, and home. The text analyzes socio political effects of colonization that includes factors like political independence, and nation building. It was an effort to decolonize minds and confront

authority. The main personalities who discussed this included Edward Said, Franz Fanon and Gayatri Sivak.

The Yellow Birds is a remarkable piece in post 9/11 literature and puts it is the most notable works of the 20th century, and a reverberation of Ernest Hemingway and Tim O'Brien. He secured a position within these great writers who discuss the intricacies of the present-day conflict. His work was recognized and received critical appreciation in The Guardian First Book. He dared to capture and challenge the effects of the US wars in the foreign countries in guise of democracy presented in a fancy manner. The unwillingness to give into this myth shows the intellectual essence of the author. The novel openly talks about Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and survivor guilt. Bartle is going through PTSD post war back at home. This is due to the loss of his comrade Daniel Murphy and also the disorders that are not diagnosed and health issues not visible to the public.

The novel stands out as it does not typical and traditional storytelling in contrast to the earlier works in the same domain. It analyzes the war stories in the psychological context that represented traumatic memories and psychological battle of the war veterans. Kevin had served as a US war veteran in Iraq between 2004 and 2005 in Mosul and Tal Afar. His lived experience has made this piece more authentic and reality of the modern warfare in a poetic style. This strong element appealed to the other war veterans and has served to fill gaps between the civilian and military life. It was also seen in the early post 9/11 works. The story discusses the life of two soldiers John Bartle and Daniel Murphy (known as Murph) who were deployed in Iraq under Sergeant Sterling. It is a journey that shows the savage battlefield on one hand and the Bartle's return to his home in US.

This condition was known as shell shock or battle fatigue during and after World War I. The effects can be severe and long lasting affecting daily life and can even appear even after many years. The understanding of PTSD started after World War II and expanded more in 1980's. Many symptoms have been diagnosed lately that includes anxiety, nightmares, anger, difficulty maintain personal and professional relationships. Freud and other scholars in the similar domain have explored these psychological effects. The analysis doesn't discuss the geopolitical and the ethical violence that formed the basis of the conflict. The US veteran goes through the psychological injury known as Trauma Hero archetype. Scholar Roy Scranton considers such cultural preoccupation with the veteran trauma to be an opportunity to enable the US people to forget the death and destruction that these same soldiers inflict. This historical narrative keeps the cultural memory of the war clean, and the discourse of military deployment becomes politically manageable as an issue of



veteran supports as opposed to a required reflection on the ill practice and institutional brutality.

Powers is very direct in his critique of his glorification of war and traditional concept of heroism. Rather than heroics of the battlefield, the story reveals the messiness, anxiety and gray morality of the experience of the soldier, which makes it an anti-war book. He uses subtle narratives to question the political justifications and social lies of the global war on terror. The story introduces war as something ridiculous, devastating, that makes both citizens and soldiers victims, and its goal and good intention are not evident. The symbol in the title, which was defined by the symbol of hope and loss, highlights the frailty of human life and the naivety lost in the middle of the battle. The yellow birds are in a way, a deep way examination of the human price of such an action in the form of a modern warfare, which is presented through a poetic voice, and includes the themes of loss, guilt and lasting psychological wounds of the post 9/11 wars.

Another important aspect is discussed as the discussion of Bartle's psyche is narrowed down to the institutions and rhetorical processes as well the practice of war that constitute the very fabric of neocolonial intervention. These practices consist of the methods of linguistic dehumanization, the structural hierarchy systemically required to invoke an emotional inaction and the sovereign control of the life and death in the war zone. The symbolism of yellow ribbons culture eloquently brings out the criticism of the same in the novel. The fact that Bartle returned to US and found the public is put into perspective by this shallow and euphoric deference, the bartender insisting that he will pay his beer because of the yellow ribbon showcases how the civilian life knew nothing about the reality of the war that Bartle has to go through. This ritualized, spectacular act of solidarity is working to cover up the systemic necropolitical violence that Powers has been recording. This substitutes a sincere ethical obligation, a critical thinking with a simplistic patriotism and nationalistic evasion.

Literature Review

The Yellow Birds is a powerful postcolonial commentary on the US military intervention in Iraq by assuming a literary style that formally embodies the necropolitical logic of disposability. As the story unfolds, it has been shown that the war exercises that involved Oriental obliteration, institutional dissociation, and employing structural forcefulness, are innate to sustain the US neocolonial hold. He reveals the inevitability of the moral and psychological price the imperial intervention paid to the same instruments of its war by making Bartle the morally compromised active agent in that war.



Theoretical Framework

The study employs three-part theoretical framework based on the strong foundations on the post- colonial criticisms. Firstly, Edward Said's orientalism is used to concentrate on how Iraq is created by the US military as a location that land of opportunities. It is used for perpetual intervention thus making the invasion acceptable as an extension of imperialism hegemony over the Arab world. The rhetorical model of dehumanization is orientalism which is a pre requisite for the war practices. The second theory applied is Necropolitics that was developed by Achille Mbembe to the analysis of how sovereign states work by establishing and enforcing where life is considered as something dispensable and death is actively orchestrated. This reasoning can be used when conserving the low-ranking US soldier making Bartle a tool of the war machine. His enlistment is economically motivated, which puts him in a complicit position and renders his life expendables.

The final expression is the death of Murph, who is a witness to the cruel logic of Necropolitics of the system. This perspective plays a very important role in comprehending the perception of US intervention in Iraq as neocolonial. The carrying of the project was not entirely based on selfless gains but on national interests. It fundamentally trusted the administration of death to the population in general as well as the low-ranking soldiers. Lastly the study makes use of such a notion as subaltern proposed by Gayatri Spivak. This framework enables to examine the role of Bartle who is a soldier of low-rank and subordinate of the state, but it is an instrument of the imperial forces and an accomplice of violence. He is analyzed as a complicit subaltern yet morally liable due to his participation in an unjust war. His trauma is fundamentally a moral injury, stemming not just from fear but from the shame felt by the soldiers, caused by witnessing or failing to prevent atrocities. His guilt is an inescapable, structural outcome of his service.

American War Narrative

American war narrative in literature shifted from traditional heroism after WWI to the themes of disillusionment, moral ambiguity, anti-heroism, and the structural futility of conflict. This trend became prominent with the Vietnam War and continues in modern war literature.

Some of the characteristics of this includes disillusionment and loss of innocence, structural and existential futility, anti-heroism, psychological and physical trauma, metafiction and non-linear narratives. Narratives depict soldiers whose patriotic ideals are crushed by the brutal reality of war, leading to erosion of faith in traditional values and national exceptionalism. War is usually presented as an absurd, chaotic, and ultimately meaningless endeavor. The focus moves from grand strategic



objectives to the immediate experiences of the soldiers, that are often aimless. The traditional *war hero* is replaced by complex flawed individuals (anti-heroes) who are often cynical. Traumatized, or simply trying to survive the madness around the world. The works explore the long-term psychological effects of combat that includes PTSD, moral injury, difficulty in reintegration, etc., by challenging earlier narrative that might have minimized these impacts. The line between the *good* and *evil* or *just* and *unjust* causes becomes blurred.

It is difficult for the soldiers to understand the moral issues that always surround the very reason as to why the war was fought. Innovative and fragmented techniques of narrations are utilized by authors to express the disorienting and the chaotic nature of war experience, which demonstrates an opinion that linear narrative is insufficient to portray the truth of the modern conflict. The futility theme was first brought forward by the British poets. American Authors like Ernest Hemingway (*Farewell to Arms*), Norman Mailer (*The Naked and the Dead*), Joseph Heller (*Catch 22*) and Kurt Vonnegut (*Slaughterhouse -five*) pioneered in doubting the classic heroism and portraying the dynamics of power of the military organization. This change was locked in place by war in Vietnam. The war without any clear goals or a heroic epic, created an immense feeling of nationalism, individual trauma and crisis.

Tim O'Brien's work *The things they carried* after employs metafiction to address the subject of memory guilty and the contradictive and multifaceted nature of interconnection of truth and story telling in war. Michael Herr provided a surreal and dramatic, chaotic and drug filled spirit of war as experienced in the journalist account of the established power. *A rumor of War* by Philip Caputo is a memoir he wrote that reveals how the moral uncertainty of the modern changes and corrupts an idealistic young officer battles in Iraq and Afghanistan. These themes are still developed in the present literature in relation to war on terror, technological application, and the issues of continued wars. The collection of short stories by Phil Kay, *The Book Redeployment* is an unpolished and harsh glimpse into the world of soldiers and veterans who returned home after fighting in Iraq War, with its coral complications and the hardness of coming home. Anthony Swofford's *Jarhead* is a memoir about a US Marine during the first Gulf War, focusing on the boredom, hyper-masculinity, and the pervasive sense of being a cog in a large, often purposeless machine.

Postcolonialism, Orientalism, and Neocolonial Intervention

The US army was deployed in Iraq in 2003 with a rhetoric of *War on Terror* and nation building efforts was an act of neocolonial intervention. Postcolonial theory provides the essential tools to study the lasting effects of imperialism and cultural hegemony over the colonized population. Edward Said's *Orientalism* is very relevant



here, specifically the third definition, which describes the function as *a mean of asserting authority over and dominating the East through practices like **speaking, describing, teaching, ruling and authorizing views of the Orient***. The academic and imaginative dimensions of orientalism, which frames the Arab world as inherently chaotic or requiring intervention, serve to justify Western domination.

Orientalism refers to a system of representation that constructed that the *Orient* (The East) as primitive, exotic and inferior as compared to the superior and civilized other *The West*. Edward Said defines it as *not just a stereotype but a powerful discourse of knowledge and power used to justify European colonialism and create a distorted view of Eastern cultures*. It is a discursive structure that is built from a body of knowledge like literature, history and art that framed East in a negative way. West was portrayed as advanced and East as backward and irrational which always needed to be rescued by the West. This constructed image provided a self-serving rationale for colonial role, rather positioning it as to civilize the barbaric region. Orientalism was enabled by the European powers to study, record and disseminating knowledge influencing how the West portrays the East.

The geopolitical doctrines justifying the invasion often cited altruistic goals spreading democratic ideals to foster stability but were predominantly driven by a perceived need to *defeat terrorism and strengthen US national security interests*. This neocolonial approach results in an *intrusion into and subversion of domestic culture and political ideology* in the target state. When the US military challenges and ousts regimes, the resulting vacuum necessitates a prolonged and often violent nation building effort. The ensuing cultural infiltration where American culture struggled to integrate with the conservative Iraqi culture validates the interpretation of the conflict as a neocolonial endeavor that imposes foreign logic onto sovereign people.

Necropolitics: Sovereign Power, State Violence and the Death-World

Mbembe argues that biopower which manages life within the state's border is insufficient to account for the current political realities where populations are permanently exposed to the death-worlds. Sovereignty is defined through its capacity to control mortality and fundamentally its right to kill. Drawing on George Bataille, Mbembe frames sovereignty around the transgression of limits, making it synonymous with the power to murder when necessary.

Politics itself is interpreted as a death that lives a human life, meaning that the risk of death is inherent to the definition of absolute knowledge and sovereignty. Necropower achieves its aims by distributing death and creating a biological caesura between populations which is fundamentally enabled by racism. Racism functions

as a key technology that makes murder acceptable and rationalizes the sacrifice of a dominating society.

The concept was refined in *Historical Topographies of Necropolitics* (2003), where it was referring to these places as *death-worlds*. The slavery and plantation condition represented an early biopolitical experiment and an emblematic state of exception. The slave that are stripped of political status, rights suffer *social death* while being kept alive, reduced to a mere property and an instrument. The colonies presented as a testing ground where the sovereign right to kill was unfettered by legal or constitutional rule. Colonial powers decide which lives matter and which are disposable.

Necropolitics was discussed more in 2019. It explored how sovereignty is digitalized. Physical borders are translated into technological surveillance and governance tools that includes digital databases, drones and sensors. A country shifted from absolute freedom to controlling and governing the modes of arrival of people through technological identification and anticipation of potential problems. This digitalization allows for a vertical control of the population from the airspace, establishing fragmented territories and apartheid-like states through exclusive traffic networks.

Necropolitics extends the critique to the capitalism. This system dictates the organization and redistribution of power, defining those who are valueless and redundant, forcing them into a state of social death where they lose their face and name. The theory of Necropolitics also offers an insightful lens for understanding contemporary conflicts. It also shares that under the conditions of Necropower the distinctions between resistance and suicide, sacrifice and redemption, and martyrdom and freedom are blurred. For the subjugated, death often ceases to be a boundary and instead becomes a *release from terror and bondage*.

This theory observes a crucial duality in the duality in the application of Necropolitics within the novel. While the theory will be mainly applied to the colonized population, it also focuses on the US soldiers are subjected to the same structural logic of disposability. It also emphasizes on the depiction of the psychological and physical ravages of the war, demonstrating how the characters' lives are profoundly influenced by state-sanctioned violence and the constant proximity to death. The descriptions of physical decays reflect the structural decay of ethical and moral standards. The sovereign state has declared the territory a zone of death, which controls both the lives of the occupied and the low-ranking agents.

Subalternity, Economic Coercion and Complicit Liability



Spivak's subaltern refers to the marginalized and oppressed groups like colonized people and women that are excluded from the power structures. The oppressed group can be defined as *illiterate peasantry, the tribals, lower strata of the urban proletariat*. Some of the key aspects of the theory include the subaltern, can the subaltern speak, critique of the western theory, and, gender and subalternity. It argues that they cannot represent themselves rather the dominant ones tend to define their identity, silencing their true voices and culture.

Spivak criticizes the western thinkers like Foucault and Deleuze for assuming agency and highlighting power structures create as the *other*; whose speech is mediated and distorted. This makes the genuine expression almost non-existent and invisible. It is better to *listen to these other voices rather than speaking for them*. The western texts tend to perpetuate Orientalism and subaltern invisibility. Some of the examples can be seen in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, where Caliban is a subaltern and shown as primitive and secondary whereas Prospero represents the colonizer imposing civilization and exercising authority. Likewise, Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* depicts Friday as uncivilized and submissive subaltern whereas Crusoe imposes his language and religion. E. M. Foster's *A Passage to India* depicts Dr. Aziz as stereotypical subaltern who is charged with rape and silenced whereas Mrs. Moore reflects the superior attitude.

Spivak borrowed the term subaltern from Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci, which refers conventionally to those of lower military rank and more generally to those *who don't give orders; they only receive orders*. The character's enlistment is motivated by the desire to access college education which reveals a crucial war practice. The US system leverages existing socioeconomic structural inequality to procure bodies for imperial purposes. The economic responsibility on the young soldiers is imperative to the state economics thus enlisting them to be as a disposable resource for the war and their interests. The disparity in the power structures of the army ranks makes it difficult to determine the agency of the morals of the young soldiers. Discussion on the moral injury of the young soldiers show that they will be killed and will be held accountable no matter if their contributions is minimal. The soldier is placed as a willing subaltern in the neocolonial game that he was playing, structurally inferior to his own state, but morally mired is ordered to carry out. This complicit liability idea that offers a requisite framework knowing his struggle of soul. His guilt, shame and anger which are pervasive after the war are direct impacts of sailing through this moral liability proving that the moral harm is an inevitable, institutional consequence of being the means of participation in an unjust war.

The structural inequalities brought out by the association between economical compulsion and sub altern inherent in global systems. Economic coercion is an

instrument of a system of capitalist imperialism by strong nations and international financing institutions to continue to control and extract wealth out of the undeveloped countries. The end result of this is profound structural inequality. Economic coercion often exploits the available economic vulnerabilities and dependencies. Target nations, which are most frequently, already occupying the subaltern status in the world order experience the serious impacts of economic shocks and loss of jobs in case of sanctions or other actions. International coercion may economically disrupt the lives of the subaltern in a disproportional way.

The target country classes that are forcing more activities into informal sector and growing crime and corruption which might have political advantages to the leadership in question. The absence of a definite international legal agreement concerning the illegality of the majority of economic coercions mean that the vigorous states of sender tend to act with impunity which enhances the subaltern position of weaker target states and populations.

Analysis

The Neocolonial Gaze, Orientalist Practices and Emotional Detachment

The novel by Power tends to refer to the postcolonial theory to bring out the ways in which the book implicitly criticizes the neocolonial gaze and the colonial intentions of the US in the Iraq war. Instead of a glorious mission in the novel, the war is depicted as a dehumanizing experience that was brutal and with a false political agenda. Power challenges the neocolonial gaze. The novel is interpreted as the criticism of how the US government exploited the discourse of the propagation of democracy as a disguise of its political and economic agendas and Iraq strategy in terms of the colony. The noble aims mentioned are contrasted with the anarchy and chaos. The violent reality shows how the soldiers like Murph and Bartle are exposed to. The US soldiers are not presented as the heroes that came to rescue the Iraqi people. But as young men, they can be caught in bad positions fighting the psychological trauma.

This questions the classic heroic story which was commonly linked to colonial wars and the exemplary perceptions of the US military interventions. The novel implicitly rebels against the colonial myth of Iraq as desert or a primitive place that requires intervention by the west. The destruction caused by the foreigners is emphasized by inflicting the place with a rich history. By focusing on the physical and mental cost on the soldiers (PTSD, guilt, and moral injury), the novel changes the emphasis on political or civilizing mission to common individual human price of the war which serves as a lesson to US on the effects of war. While primarily as the story of US soldier, the emphasis is still terribly personal to the trauma of Bartle, which is



personal. Postcolonial criticism focused on the western experience. However, the raw, unvarnished depiction of the results of the war on the landscape and bodies challenges any sanitized, distant gaze of the conflict. His novel is widely analyzed as an antiwar text that uses a visceral, ground level perspective to subvert and deconstruct the justifications and perspectives that underpin a neocolonial worldview.

Power's novel uses lyrical descriptions for Mosul and Tal Afar, giving weightage to the geography. These descriptions depict the landscape that are characterized by the profound decay, absence of normal life and fundamental political incoherence. This has transformed Iraq into necropolitical terrain that is defined by the pervasive violence. Orientalism dictates that the target region should mentally constructed as inherently chaotic, backward or fundamentally *other* so that it can be justified for external intervention and the destruction.

The war practice that facilitates the Orientalist intervention is the emotional detachment. Bartle maintains an intense and emotional detachment, which reflects the soldier's desensitization to perform acts of violence. Soldiers view the Iraqi landscape not as a sovereign nation but a canvas and a ground for US military action. The visual and emotional language used reinforces the pre-existing Orientalist assumptions about the region as unstable and a failing state. This can be seen in the manifestation as detachment in Bartle's observation of *bodies lay bloating in the sun, their decay, an echo of some morbid geometry*. The use of the term *morbid geometry* is significant here as it suggests an impersonal, mathematical and dehumanizing perspective on causalities. The dead are to be respected, not to be described in a such disgusted manner. This reduction of life to statistics is institutionalized, as demonstrated by the casual assertion, '*People are going to die,*' he said, '*its statistics.*' This represents the ultimate expression of necropolitical practice by reducing human deaths, whether they are American or Iraqi to statistics, figures or abstract patterns devoid of individual ethical weight. This detachment and detached language help to survive the emotionality in combat but on the other hand it carries moral and psychological devastation. It leads to the realization that '*There was no center to the world. The curves of all our bells are cracked.*'

Powers novel explores emotional detachment as a core coping mechanism and symptom of PTSD in protagonist Bartle during and after the Iraq War, showing how soldiers numb themselves to survive horrors, only to find that detachment shatters upon return, replaced by overwhelming guilt, trauma, and alienation from civilians who can't comprehend their experiences, making connection impossible. The indifference is part of fighting and in defense as his partner Murph is killed. He pays

the psychological price of the war and it is emphasized through poetic words and discontinuous memory.

Bartle and his other soldiers dissociate and this forms an emotional distance between the realities of the warfare brutality in Al Tafari to be able to merely exist and survive. This dullness yields to after the war feelings of being, especially because of his promise to the Murph's mother which he broke is unworthy of civilian compliment. Bartle is alienated as he cannot feel connected with family and family describe his inner pain having developed a circle of alienation and humiliation when he shares not. The very structure of the story is indicative of this detachment wherein memories of Iraq into his current existence demonstrating how trauma interrupts the coherent sense of identity. War is not only depicted in the novel physically yet as a wreaking mental process with the detachment as a major route to severe. The artificially induced emotional deafening takes soldiers away from their youth and their capacity to relate. Yellow birds is a touching coming of age novel of lost innocence. He employs beautiful accurate as well as language to communicate the unspeakable, leaving the readers with the psychological mess in its aftermath by war, a truth rarely told.

It demonstrates that the emotional disengagement that soldiers are affected by in order to endure war eventually turns into a jail, dividing them even against the very world that they were defending.

Civilian Erasure and Linguistic Dehumanization

Linguistic dehumanization is one of the main components of the greater theme of war in the novel. Dehumanizing effects which can be used to deprive soldiers and the people of Iraq of their individuality and agency. The novel explores the impact of war and military training that subjects people to the tools of conflicts, eroding their humanity. The soldiers are addressed by their rank and surname or they are just called the soldiers making their own histories and individual minimal. Training is focused upon efficiency educates soldiers that they have no space or time to care. This conscious emotional indifference complicates the attempts to carry out violent actions but results in a severe psychological trauma and a serious psychological trauma reduced ability in normal human emotions. The killing is desensitizing the soldiers suffering. According to one of the veterans in the related research, seeing dead bodies did not actually become much after being trained influence him or anyone which he is acquainted with putting emphasis upon the power of language and place normalized the abnormal.

The story also points out the insensitivity towards the Iraqi nation, which is frequently displayed objectified or rejected by words and perception. A war zone



speech is frequently the language forms a radical contrast between the US soldiers and Iraqi people. This othering process enables soldiers to perceive the locals in a category /group versus individuals, exposing them to attacks by normal social norms. The novel and related analysis provides examples of brutality and taunting of the Iraqi people by a US soldier action enhanced by the fact that the victims had previously been dehumanized linguistically and psychological, making them less important in the soldier's eyes. The brutal reality of the novel is described in lyrical and poetic prose. War is a great counterpoint to this dehumanizing language by providing intimate details. The novel criticizes the idealized approach through fragmented descriptions of characters such as Bartle and Murph of war and questions the cold military language which makes one forget the actual human price of the conflict.

The novel is a quest to provide human faces to the victims that the systems is trying to transform into a mere instrument of violence. Linguistic dehumanization is discussed by Powers by using abstract and sterile language encircling war which is the polar opposite to visceral and personal reality of trauma of soldiers and loss. This language barrier adds to some derealization of loss and complicates the soldier to convey their experiences or to make the people understand the full picture of the human cost of the war. The language of war generated by authorities or by the media tends to employ abstract and ambiguous language that hides the reality, death and physical violence involved. The narration of Power is in the first person of to counter this Bartle, resorts to disjointed syntax and vivid imagery, which is often gruesome, to emphasizes the point real sensory and emotional hysteria of war.

As of western media frames of the war on terror, it can be observed through analysis that they create a deprivation of reality of loss by making the lives of Iraqis (and the US soldier sufferings) appear as such not much worthy of mourning. That is, Powers counters this by being extremely specific making the lack and human cost unresolvable grief at the death of the friend of Bartle and Murph almost too real and personal to the reader. Instead of portraying a struggle of human groups, Powers tends to make the war seem like a evil, near monstrous being having its own life. This linguistic decision alienates the actions of the soldiers, which makes them not in a personal agency. So as victims of a general abstract power, and thus transferring the moral load and emphasizing the dehumanizing state of the whole system. Soldiers in a military environment are components of a greater whole.

The novel is an indication of how institutional language and the mere magnitude of the war make people a number or replaceable units, it can be somehow imagined that these figures were an indication of our own importance. This linguistic reduction is one of the main elements of the loss of personal identity and agency by the



character. Ultimately, Bartle has a hard time trying to compose something to explain his experiences and fulfill the promise that he had made to the mother of Murph. The novel implies that traditional language is not sufficient in the process of bridging the tremendous military-civilian gap and revealing the psychological and moral wastage of the war in all its extent. The silence and the gap created by the murder of Murph is transformed into the most powerful linguistic manifestation of dehumanization. By comparing the brutality of the soldiers, Kevin criticizes the fact that people have forgotten about civilian casualties, experiences, including killing civilians and their deaths, the pro-war being sanitized narratives back home. According to the novel, the attention of the US people is usually reduced to the single purpose. The US soldier experiences thereby reducing the colossal cost to the Iraqi people.

Bartle is pained with the frustrations of the disconnect between the abstract perspective of the war in the general opinion and the hideous reality he was subjected to and experiences. The people consider the war to be a noble endeavor of self-sacrifice and this is represented by yellow ribbons. He is aware of the truth, which is a selfless fight to survive with the loss of lives of innocent people. Even the war zone is not defined as such inhabited by people, but as a beautiful abstraction that is complete of dangers, in which the towns and orchards are booby-trapped, mortar-fired and sniped. This environment leads to a state of mind in which the Iraqi locals are considered as primarily, militants, or civilians' threats instead of individuals with life and past. There is a contrast of descriptions in the novel that momentarily compel the reader to be reminded of the human nature of the victims.

One scene is powerful with its dehumanizing brutal death of an old woman stressing that war does not spare anybody, not even the old their old cars, and their old blood. This scene reminds of the arbitrary and unfortunate character of civilian deaths. While Powers aims to reveal the *humanitarian side of the soldier* and elicit sympathy for their trauma, critics note that this approach makes US soldiers the most visible and innocent casualty, which by its nature can contribute to the general public's erasure of Iraqi voices and suffering. Powers uses novel to fill the gaps in the public's understanding of war, challenging readers to confront the moral ambiguity and the devastating often forgetting, impact on the civilian population.

The military practice of civilian erasure is central to maintaining the neocolonial operation by mitigating the moral accountability of the colonizers. Rhetorically and physically the narrative works to minimize the presence and humanity of the Iraqi people. They are often positioned as an indistinct, externalized threat or the ambiguous *other*. This absence is not accidental, but requires linguistic practice of dehumanization. This is normally applied during wartimes to support and protect the

soldiers against moral. Powers point out a conflict that this practice causes with the struggle of Bartle. It is noted that the military system promotes discussion of war such as it is in neutral language depriving the political conflict or hatred of the effect. But this detachment is constantly destroyed by the harsh truth of war. The narrative reveals the psychological cost of being witness to needless killings of the innocent people is enormous. The opposition between the personal and the chaos of the military practice of erasure these contravene the necessities of the military conscience implies that the soldiers are unable to completely get rid of the ethical burden of his work. This tension is one of the immediate causes of the deep shame of the soldiers returning home. The text recognizes the omission of factoring in the miseries and condemnation of and protest of war by the Iraqi people as one of the major ethical mistakes. This validates that the institutional detachment requires a mindless and violent repression of the human price of the neocolonial project in which the Iraqi subaltern is made voiceless and invisible.

Domestic Evasion and Yellow Ribbon Syndrome as Complicity

One of the main themes that are used is Domestic Evasion which is a concept that talks of how the soldiers come home. This avoidance comes in various forms and it is mainly done by the inner conflicts of the characters and their engagement with the civilized world. When Bartle comes back to Richmond, Virginia after the war, he is alienated in the world. The home life is full of banality and unrealistic when compared to the life and death ethos in Iraq. He views his world, through the lens as coping mechanism for himself of painful memories and a world he is no longer connected. Bartle has a hard time expressing himself in words as to the other people. The civilian world on their turn do not appear to know or want to know the horrors of the war not to mention its randomness and often pose just simple questions or platitudes that sound empty to Bartle. This communication barrier causes the veterans to avoid discussing their trauma in order to reintegrate into the normal society.

One of the main causes of evasion is the commitment that Bartle gave to them Murph's mother to take her son safely. He writes letter to her under the name Murph after the death of Murph and in this letter, he devises a fictitious peaceful account of his last moments, so that he does not give her the ugly reality of his mutilated body. This is a strong yet eventually destructive act of evading, which a mother is meant to safeguard her against the influence of the society.

The novel suggests that the public at home engages in its own form of evasion by not fully acknowledging the reality of the war being fought in their name. by focusing on abstract concepts like glory or patriotism, they avoid confronting the unvarnished cruelty, random death and psychological damage that soldiers like



Bartle endure. Bartle's eventual retreat to an isolated cabin by the Blue Ridge Mountains is a physical evasion of society and a way to create an environment where he has control and can process his memories on his own terms. This physical distance from the domestic world helps him find eventual place. Ultimately, domestic evasion highlights the novels core theme that the war does not end when a soldier leaves the battlefield, the psychological war continues at home, where both the veteran and society evade the painful truths of the conflicts.

In Power's novel, the yellow ribbons of the title represent this great disengagement of the life of the soldiers with what the US population is being sanitized to believe about the war. This is a symbol employed by civilians to express abstract support to the troops as it frequently helps the public to feel good about itself without necessarily facing the actual human and moral costs of the war. Such an attitude is usually condemned as a type of passive complacency in the political choice that results in war and the violence that exists within it. Critics maintain that such kind of support enables civilians to uphold a comforting but illusory account of a novel are effort and a heroic military and military and protect themselves against the horror and moral ambiguity of war.

The analysis of the ritualistic practices of the Yellow Ribbon Syndrome gives the novel a stinging critique of domestic US complicity. In the case of Bartle coming back into US after his fleeting experience with the bartender at the airport, the experience is full of shallowness and misconception. When the bartender insists on being paid in lieu of a yellow ribbon, as a sign of blind obedience to his service, Bartle finds it irritating. This encounter makes a difference in that it reveals the contrast divide between the disinfectant discourse of the US metropole and the savage reality of the Necropolitical war zone.

The civilian support has its basis in a product of heroic, sanitized understanding of the war, which requires a consistent story of a righteous fight. Powers' novel, through Bartle's shattered perspective documents the chaos, moral emptiness and systemic destruction inherent in the neocolonial operation. Bartle's notes, *'the noise, the sound, they existed just to make up space. My muscles flexed into the emptiness I still called home.'* The public practice of displaying the yellow ribbon and offering unquestioning deference actively obscures the necropolitical violence Bartle experienced, replacing ethical responsibility and critical reflection with facile patriotism. This ritualistic evasion perpetuates the myth of US exceptionalism and denies Bartle the moral context required to process his experience, thereby tangling the US public in the ethical evasion.

Bartle and Murph as the Disposable Instruments of Sovereignty



Disposable instruments of Sovereignty in *The Yellow Birds* are a powerful statement. This can be defined as how young, enlisted soldiers are treated and viewed the life and death of Private Daniel Murphy (Murph) serve as the primary textual demonstration of the necropolitical sovereignty exercised over a low-ranking soldier. This novel implies that the US army having established its authority to define zones of death, exercises this power indiscriminately, treating its low-ranking soldiers as expendable resources. The service of Bartle which was a result of the economic necessity of funding his studies in college, shows a structural inequality in the system. The US military system of volunteers exploits the socioeconomic aspects to acquire bodies to feed its imperialistic needs. This is an economic blackmail that makes the young soldier structurally inferior, a real subaltern, the physical life of which the state machine has discredited. Bartle goes on to affirm this structural motivation and shame, “We had led little lives, filled with desires of something bigger than dirt roads and small dreams. So here we would go, and life required no explanation and there would be other people who would tell us who to be.

The psychological and physiological trauma imposed on both Bartle and Murph proves that they are the subject of the violence and disposability approved by the state. Their positions as instruments and not as independent agents of the neocolonial projects are highlighted by the very fact of sending these people to a death world under the circumstances of random and unpredictable violence. Such a burden of being a resource, constantly falling to pieces under stress, is reflected in the inner monologue of Bartle, “I do not want to be Incharge of him (Murph)... I was falling to pieces, as well. What was I to do to retain us both intact? Murph being killed as he inevitably and tragically is given his due despite Bartles promising to the mother, serves as the final literary commentary upon the adverse logic of Necropolitics. The imperialism swallows its own agents with pompousness and no explanation at all. This paper argues that the reasoning behind disposability to the lowest levels of the imperial force itself. This also proves that at the same time, the soldier is a representative of an empire and also a victim of its mechanical brutality.

Moral Injury and the Burden of Complicitous Liability

Moral injury is the recurring theme throughout the story, revealing the character Bartle who feels extremely guilty, disenchanted, and completely cut-off from the civilian life due to witnessing brutal violence in Iraq. This guilt comes from his unintentional involvement in the brutality of the war, his not being able to come to terms with his actions and his past self, and the overpowering trauma that dismantles his humanity and purpose. This leads to PTSD and a desperate memory struggle. Bartle’s deep inner post war conflict is marked by the big guilt, and rage against his role in the war plus the anger at himself for what he did even though he was fighting,



leading to the belief that he is the one who killed his friend. The psychological trauma goes beyond just having a hard time mentally, as it is even more connected to the fact that he feels he has been a part of something very destructive and useless, a war that he ultimately sees as a mistake. The soldiers' shame but rather a confirmation that they have realized internally the existence of the moral violations that are inescapably intertwined with the war. This shame reminds us of the fact that the behavior that was regulated by the traditional rules of *jus in bello* (rights in fighting) was compromised by the liability of *jus ad bellum* (rights of war) to justify the neocolonial invasion through the means of an ethically hollow and structurally unjust war.

The brutal war machine had pulled Bartle down to such a level that he could no longer feel anybody else's suffering or even the coral of human beings. He became one of the very few of the emotionally crushed and disconnected human. Powers depicts the moral quagmire the soldiers had to cope with, where a continuum of violence stretches as well as the distinction between victim and perpetrators disappears leading Bartle to doubt the ethical nature of everything. Bartle seeks meaning through desperate moves such as writing a letter to Murph's letter. It emphasizes his necessity to discover meaning in the meaningless and to deal with his shattered conscience. Bartle's PTSD must be scrutinized through the lens of the embodied critique of the neocolonialism rationale. His trauma roots back to the awareness that among the many atrocities he saw, none had a basic meaning. The absence of the meaning is the critical neocolonial discourse. It is the recognition that the imperial purposes were not benevolent but rather selfish, driven by economic or geopolitical interests and thus, psychological consequences, the inability to handle a chaotic tragic series of events he was not just the observer of but was also the victim are the physical manifestation of knowledge in an unjust means. The trauma is the physical blowback of serving the necropolitical state, a structural injury resulting from moral compromise. Moral injury is not merely a wound to the soul, this being the case where soldiers are fundamentally changed by the impossible choices and brutal realities they endure, leaving them feeling irrevocably broken and alone in a world that does not understand.

Sergeant Sterling as an Institution of Necropolitical Survival

The two main characteristics that make Sergeant Sterling stand out among the common soldiers are heroism and altruism. He has the courage to give up his life for the sake of the military and the grim necessity of war. He is fully dedicated to the men he commands and takes his position very seriously. In the heat of battle, he may seem heartless and too aggressive, but he is also very much concerned with the lives of his soldiers and the success of their mission. His personality is emblematic of the



necessary institutional changes that are needed to survive and rule in a necropolitical zone. The story of Sterling's fierce determination and ability to use violence is not depicted as an uncontrolled brutalization, but rather as a carefully planned approach to securing one's survival in a place where death comes unannounced and unequally. He is still fighting even after the battle, when he gets into a conflict with a German bartender, which indicates his unhealthy ways of dealing with the physical and mental stress of war. On the other hand, he exposes his sensitive side through acts like his suicide, which shows that he is more fragile than he made it look.

In today's world, the military's focus, brutality and emotional detachment are practices that have been designed to enforce tactical survival, often at the cost of ethical norms. The military necessity for extremely aggressive behavior shows that the so-called ethical norms of war (*jus in bello*) have not only been sidelined but are completely useless when it comes to justifying a necropolitical war. The very existence of these norms proves that the whole setting is beyond the reach of the of the usual ethical frameworks. The institutionalized brutality is a hallmark of the death-world as characterized by Mbembe. The military settings require disconnection and the ability to follow blindly violent instincts, and Sterling is the perfect representation of this practice and thus a very unsettling but nonetheless structurally necessary character in the plot. His role is to guarantee tactical effectiveness by giving priority to the survival of the institution over the moral integrity of the individual.

The Poetics of Fragmentation and the Challenge to Imperial Coherence

among the many characteristics of *The Yellow Birds*, the most important one is its non-linear and fragmented narrative structure. The story jumps back and forth all the time between Bartle's service in Iraq and his troubled life in post-war Virginia. This is not just a stylistic device; it is a considerable formal argument that denies the imperial state's demand for a coherent, justified war narrative. The disjointed timeline effectively illustrates the shattered nature of Bartle's mind, depicting both the long psychological aftermath of combat and the confusion that goes along with trauma. This structure is furthered by the use of unreliable narration. Bartle's traumatic memories, all-consuming guilt, and consequent PTSD make him a less than trustworthy narrator. The exact spot of memory is debatable, and Bartle reflects, '... what it had indexed to was only an idea of a place, an abstraction formed from memories too brief and passing to accurate recollection.'

Using the principles of cognitive narratology, Bartle's unreliability compels the reader to be critically involved with the text rather just passively accepting a singular, authoritative version of history. The ultimate futility of the conflicts is formalized in the recurring thought, '... the war came to me in my dreams and showed me its sole



purpose: to go on, only to go on.’ This literary mechanism ensures no one goes along with the expurgated official history of the war and puts the burden of interpretation on the reader. The withholding of narrative resolution serves as a formal decolonization of the war story, with the Imperial power refusing the coherent conclusion that would retroactively assign meaning or validation to the conflict. The fragmented form does not simplify the chaos nor does it justify the necropolitical violence.

The Lyrical Sublime and Affective Truth

Kevin Powers applies Lyrical sublime and affective truth as a literary tool to connect the invisible war trauma of the past with the comprehension of the reader. Kevin was a soldier, and he applied these tactics to bring forth a truth that is a feeling more than just a thought. He is a poet, and his prose is characteristically musical and lyrical just like a poet’s. he resorts to high language to portray the dreadful or great events that are otherwise not easily expressed. He adopts the poetic sensibility to deepen the emotional impact of the story, the story employing broken syntax and colorful images to represent the confusion and separation usually linked with traumatic experiences. He employs shiny phrases and vivid metaphors to illustrate the severe truth of the Iraq war such as while the war rubbed its thousand ribs against the ground in prayer. This artistic choice allows the book to go beyond merely journalistic reportage and assure the particular occurrence is a reflection of a universally significant pattern of moral and structural decay.

This style creates a dual vision where striking images are contrastively placed next to graphic brutality, so the readers cannot help but face the poetry and the suffering of war at the same time. This use of lyricism has an important role. It helps the novel to express the emotional and ethical truth of the war, the archive of the feeling, which is difficult to grasp through the usual and straight reporting. The disjointed, lyrical discourse discloses a profound moral uncertainty regarding the wartime leadership and measures. Power uses language to evoke strong emotions; he made the psychological ruins of the complicit subaltern a tangible experience for the reader and thereby turned the novel into an ethical meditation on the moral vacuity of the neocolonial project instead of merely a chronicle of events. Affective truth in the novel is the emotional or felt reality that is above and beyond the historical facts. The novel places such a heavy emphasis on Bartles’ internal psychological state that it almost becomes a narrative of the events coming from a linear objective perspective. This broken narrative structure is a reflection of the confusion of PTSD and gives an affective truth of what memory and trauma are like. Power focuses on the anguish truths of the individual suffering and guilt, thus subverting the yellow ribbon culture of patriotic solidarity, which he presents as a superficial abstraction



that disregards the actual emotional cost to the soldiers. The power of the novel resides in the fact that it can convey the emotional heaviness of a broken promise, Bartle's failure to return Murph home, and thus, more effectively capture the affective impact of survivor's guilt than a literal memoir could.

The Contamination of Metropole and Internalized Necropolitical Violence

The prolonged impact of necropolitical wartime methods shows its greatest evidence through Bartle's efforts to return to normal life in US. His recollection of Iraq serves as a filter that distorts his views of the US. He experiences war-related memoirs because his mind projects them onto known locations. This includes his thoughts about finding a hiding place during attack in a quiet field and his experience of preparing for shell explosions after hearing a crow sound in his backyard. The soldiers from neocolonial wars who serve abroad permanent military presence in their minds because they cannot escape the ongoing combat environment.

The psychological burden, expressed through the hyper-vigilance and post traumatic intrusive memories, confirms that the costs of maintaining imperial hegemony are not merely externalized onto the occupied nation. Instead, they are internalized and manifested as enduring psychological damage within the very agents of the metropole. Bartle describes this pervasive, debilitating feeling of being trapped by the experience: *'you want to fall, that's all. You think it can't go on like that... So you want to fall, let go, give up, but you can't. And every breath you takes reminds you of that fact. So it goes.'* This dynamic affirms that necropolitical state, by exploiting its own soldiers, ensures that the war's physical and moral destruction is brought back to the homeland via the bodies and minds of its veterans, becoming the embodied blowback of the imperial project.

Conclusion

This paper demonstrates Kevin Powers must be read as a rigorous postcolonial critique shifting focus from the individual soldier's trauma to the systemic, necropolitical practices during Iraq war. The novel uses the narrative of John Bartle to expose the neocolonial foundation of the US military intervention, where the geopolitical intervention necessitates both the Orientalist erasure of the occupied population and necropolitical disposability of the low-ranking combatant. The war practices analyzed like institutional detachment, rhetorical dehumanization, economic coercion of enlistment, and the demand for morally ambiguous survival are shown to be integral components of imperial management. By refusing the heroic narrative and utilizing a fragmented, lyrical aesthetic, the novel formally resists the possibility of a coherent, national justification for the conflict. The ethical and psychological catastrophe experienced by Bartle such as guilt, shame, PTSD is

revealed as the direct and necessary consequence of his position as a complicit subaltern within a structure that exploits his life and demands his moral compromise.

This paper offers a critical coercive to existing narrative that often overemphasizes the purely psychological dimensions of veteran experience as identified by scholars critiquing the ‘trauma hero’ archetype. By applying a robust theoretical structure centered on Mbembe’s Necropolitics, the analysis reframes common diagnosis like PTSD and moral injury not as isolated medical or individual ethical failures but as direct ad structural outcomes of the US state’s neocolonial practices abroad. The *Yellow Birds* disapproves of the common Trauma Hero mentality because it shows that soldiers have complex personalities. Bartle exists as a soldier who suffers from cultural problems which make unto a discarded subaltern but he also shares responsibility for his role in the wrongful military mission. The novel maintains its essential value because it demonstrates how neocolonial warfare creates moral vacuum which leads to deep-seated traumatic experiences.

References

- Bazargan, S. (2014). Complicitous liability in war. *Philosophical Studies*, 169(2), 349–363.
- Enenkel, E. (2019). *Young yellow blood birds: Invisible wounds of war, guilt, and healing in The Yellow Birds and Youngblood* [Unpublished diploma thesis]. Universität Wien.
- Gharib, S. S., & Abdullah, Y. M. (2025). Necropolitical power of War in Kevin Powers's *The Yellow Birds*. *Journal of Al-Farabi for Humanity Sciences*, 7(1), 507–512.
- Mbembe, A. (2003). Necropolitics. *Public Culture*, 15(1), 11–40.
- Mbembe, A. (2019). *Necropolitics*. Duke University Press.
- Said, E. W. (1978). *Orientalism*. Vintage Books.
- Scranton, R. (2015, November 13). The trauma hero. *The New York Times Magazine*.
- Spivak, G. C. (1988). Can the subaltern speak? In C. Nelson & L. Grossberg (Eds.), *Marxism and the interpretation of culture* (pp. 271–313). University of Illinois Press.
- Viscusi, W. K., & Aldy, J. E. (2011). The financial legacy of the Iraq War: How much has the war cost in dollars and cents? In D. L. Braddon & K. Hartley (Eds.), *The handbook on the economics of conflict*. Edward Elgar Publishing.