



Exploring Necropolitics: A Study Of Peter Porter's Poetic Dystopia In *Your Attention Please* And *Competition Is Healthy*

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Abstract: The present research investigates the use of Achille Mbembe's notion of necropolitics in Peter Porter's poems *Your Attention Please* and *Competition is Healthy*. Through qualitative research of Australian history and literature, it investigates Porter's critique of the nexus of power, mortality, and society systems. Necropolitics, which examines sovereign powers' influence over life and death, gives a prism through which to view Porter's work on colonial exploitation, nuclear politics, and the fragility of human existence.

The study focusses on Porter's use of irony, vivid imagery, and intertextual references to emphasize the dehumanizing impacts of governmental control and societal inequality. In *Your Attention Please*, the bureaucratic notice of a nuclear strike contrasts ordinary rituals with existential dread, illustrating the normalization of mortality in global dynamics.

Similarly, *Competition is Healthy* criticises the commodification of human beings, societal hierarchies, and the degradation of moral norms in colonial and capitalist societies. This study uses necropolitics and poetic analysis to explore the long-term impact of colonial brutality and political hegemony on Australian identity and literature. Porter's work, which is grounded in both German and Australian cultures, emerges as a striking commentary on the human condition within the intricacies of modern geopolitics.

Keywords: Necropolitics, Australia, Nuclear Politics, Competition, Human Existence

One of the pulchritudinous continents in the Southern Hemisphere surrounded by islands is Australia, the "Land Down Under". It is a sovereign country whose monarch is the King of the United Kingdom, Charles III. The country derives its name from the European Empire, as they used the Latin term "Terra Australis", which means "southern land", for an uncharted and unexplored hypothetical continent. It is the sixth-largest country by total area (Worldometer) and has a population of approximately 26.59 million people (WorldOMeter).

The paper delves into Australian sensibility by analysing two poems of Australian poet Peter Porter, employing Achille Mbembe's necropolitics theory. The poems *Your Attention Please*, and *Competition is Healthy* are set in different contexts, but they can be examined in conjunction because of the presence of necropolitics. Whether a country is independent or under colonial rule, necropolitics is prevalent. The methodology for examining necropolitics in the context of Australia is qualitative in nature, commencing with the investigation of Australian history and progressing to Australian literature, specifically Peter Porter's poems, as his verses are an unswerving portrayal of Australia through the eyes of natives.

Australia is avowed for its peculiar flora and fauna, including iconic species like kangaroos and koalas, as well as its diverse landscapes, ranging from deserts and rainforests to coastal areas. The multiculturalism and development of Australia are imputed to the discovery of gold in New South Wales and Victoria, which started the famous 1851 gold rush as it acquired the mainland “that had known only convictism and the arduous tedium of pioneering a stimulating wave of excitement, glamour, and optimism” (Wilde 298).

Prior to this, the indigenous population of Australia, which is received as aborigines, inhabited the continent for approximately 65,000 years. This claps eyes on the certitude that "Aboriginal" is a collective term that encompasses a comprehensive range of cultural groups, each with its own specific identity and history. Pivotal to aboriginal identity is the deep, complex, and spiritual connection to the land, known as the Dreamtime or Dreaming.

Traditionally, Aboriginal cultures relied heavily on oral traditions to transmit knowledge, stories, and cultural practices from generation to generation. Dreamtime stories, which annotate the origins of the land and its features, are crucial components of this oral tradition. Further, Aboriginal art is renowned for its use of symbols and intricate patterns, which are not only a form of creative expression but also a means of conveying cultural knowledge and spiritual teachings.

Aboriginal societies traditionally had complex social structures that were based on kinship systems. These systems determined social roles, responsibilities, and relationships within the community. They used techniques such as controlled burning to maintain the health of the environment, promote the growth of certain plants, and manage wildlife, reflecting a deep understanding of the ecology of the Australian landscape.

However, these practices witnessed a paramount shift during the 18th century. European nations were establishing colonies around the world, which led to a growing emphasis on securing territories with strategic value. Australia, with its vast and unexplored landmass, was seen as a potential location for a British colony that could serve strategic interests in the southern hemisphere. It became a British colony primarily through the process of European exploration and colonisation that characterised the Age of Discovery. Captain James Cook's voyages in the late 18th century were part of this exploration, and he eventually claimed the eastern coast of Australia for Britain.

Afterwards, in the late 18th century, Britain started revetting rigorous overcrowding in its prisons. The idea of using Australia as a penal colony emerged as a solution to alleviate the pressure on British prisons. In 1788, the First Fleet, led by Captain Arthur Phillip, arrived in Botany Bay (later moving to Sydney Cove), marking the establishment of the first European settlement in Australia as a penal colony. As explorations and settlements expanded, Australia revealed valuable resources such as timber, minerals, and fertile land suitable for agriculture. The economic potential of these resources contributed to the decision to establish additional colonies beyond the initial penal settlements. From a global imperial perspective, the acquisition of colonies was seen as a means to increase Britain's wealth, prestige, and influence. Australia's coastlines and potential as a naval outpost made it strategically valuable for maintaining British naval supremacy in the region.

Moreover, the European Enlightenment era fostered a curiosity about the natural world and a desire to expand knowledge, and this scientific interest complemented the broader imperial motivations for colonization. The combination of these factors led to the gradual establishment of British colonies in Australia, with initial settlements serving as penal colonies and later evolving into more diverse communities.

Over time, as Australia developed economically and politically, it transitioned from being primarily a penal colony to becoming a self-governing dominion within the British Empire before ultimately gaining full independence as the Commonwealth of Australia in 1901. Edmund Barton opines that "for the first time in history, we have a nation for a continent, and a continent for a nation" (Rutledge).

The aftermath of independence was the growth of Australian literature. Stephensen's opines that “Australia without a literature remains a colony, no nation” (“The Foundations of Culture in Australia, by Percy Stephensen”). Australian literature has its roots in the oral traditions of Indigenous Australians, who have a rich cultural and storytelling history that predates European settlement. However, when we allude to the beginning of Australian literature in an aggrandized formal sense, it is often pointed to the period of

European colonisation in the early years of colonization. Whereas literature in Australia was primarily focused on exploration narratives, journals, and official reports.

These writings “include resistance to settler repression, reconciliation with settler culture, celebration of Aboriginal culture, a reconfiguration of aspects of traditional culture and language in the print medium, and testifying to community and cultural survival” (Neale et al., 313). At present, Aborigines prefer to be addressed by their clan names as it is difficult to compartmentalise their writing: “Where one expects seriousness and sorrow, one often finds humour and wit; where one expects realism and naturalism, one often finds magic, realism, and the supernatural” (Shoemaker 247). Writing from the Fringe: A Study of Modern Australian Literature by Mudrooroo Narogin observed that “Aboriginal literature begins as a cry from the heart directed at the white man. It is a cry for justice and for a better deal, a cry for understanding, and an asking to be understood” (Narogin 67).

The convict experience also played a role in shaping early Australian literature. The multitude of early settlers were convicts or former convicts, and their experiences were often documented in letters, diaries, and memoirs. These writings provided insight into the strident conditions of penal colonies and contributed to the emerging literary landscape. John McLaren says, “While the poets manufactured elevated images of life in Australia, the writers on convictism were all too happy to wallow in its depravity. They conferred an awesome, if false, dignity on their subjects while giving their readers both the pleasure of reading about vice and the sanctimonious delight of disapproving of it” (McLaren 23). “The early colonial writers, seeing the world through European eyes, wrote novels in which Australia presented itself as a savage land to be tamed: a land without culture, without traditions, ripe for exploitation” (Kerr 41).

But during the 19th century, as the Australian colonies developed and matured, literature began to take on a more distinct Australian character. Authors such as Henry Lawson and Banjo Paterson became known for their bush poetry, capturing the spirit of the Australian outback and the challenges faced by the people living there.

The late 19th and early 20th centuries saw the emergence of Australian novels, short stories, and plays that explored national identity and reflected the unique Australian experience. Authors like Miles Franklin and Henry Handel Richardson made significant contributions to Australian literature during this period. Kerry Goldsworthy, in his article “Fiction from 1900 to 1970,” remarks that “Writers like Henry Lawson, Miles Franklin and Joseph Furphy were more interested in depicting what was “Australian” from an insider’s point of view; the Australian landscape and ideas about the Australian “national character” moved to the foreground in fiction around the turn of the century” (Goldsworthy 105).

In the mid-20th century, there was a growing emphasis on capturing the diversity of Australian voices, including the experiences of Indigenous Australians. Writers such as David Unaipon, Oodgeroo Noonuccal (Kath Walker), and Sally Morgan abetted the usher of indigenous perspectives to the forefront of Australian literature.

Since then, Australian literature has continued to evolve, embracing a wide range of genres and styles. Contemporary Australian authors themes traverses such as multiculturalism, immigration, and the changing social and cultural landscape. The country has produced internationally acclaimed writers like Patrick White, Peter Carey, and Tim Winton, who have helped shape the global perception of Australian literature.

In lieu of eminent Australian poets, Peter Porter holds the prolific place. He discovered his passion for writing at a relatively young age, and his journey as a poet began to take shape during his formative years in Australia. Born on February 16, 1929, in Brisbane, Queensland, Porter grew up in a cultural milieu that laid the groundwork for his future literary pursuits. Porter’s early exposure to literature and poetry, combined with a keen intellect, set the stage for his interest in writing. His academic pursuits further fuelled his literary ambitions. He attended the University of Sydney, where he studied architecture, and later worked as a book reviewer and editor.

In the mid-1950s, Peter Porter decided to leave Australia and move to England. This relocation marked a pivotal watershed in his life and career. Settling in London, Porter immersed himself in the vibrant literary and artistic scene of the time. He engaged with fellow poets, writers, and intellectuals, establishing

connections that would prove instrumental to his development as a poet. While Porter spent a significant portion of his life in England, where he eventually became a prominent figure in the British literary scene, his Australian roots remained a foundational influence on his poetic expression. His metrical composition skilfully weaves together a range of influences, incorporating classical allusions, philosophical insights, and a nuanced exploration of contemporary society.

Porter's writing is characterised by its intellectual depth, linguistic dexterity, and keen sense of irony. His poetry often grapples with themes of mortality, love, and the complexities of existence, inviting readers to contemplate the intricacies of the human experience. His expertise in seamlessly blending erudition with profound emotional resonance sets his work apart. A recipient of numerous awards, including the Whitbread Poetry Prize and the Gold Medal for Australian Literature, Porter's impact on the literary world extends beyond his words on the page. As a poet who transcended geographical boundaries, he played a momentous role in bridging the literary traditions of Australia and England.

Porter's early poetry reflected his wide-ranging interests, drawing inspiration from classical literature, philosophy, and the cultural shifts of the 20th century. His association with "The Group" helped him publish his debut poetry collection, "Once Bitten, Twice Bitten," in 1961 ("Peter Porter") and showcased the beginning of a distinctive poetic voice. As explained by him, poetry is "a tub into which you can pour anything" (Crown and Crown).

His poetry is endowed with personal experience. His wife, Jannice, committed suicide in 1974, greatly influencing Porter's work, particularly *The Cost of Seriousness*. Later, Scars, a Scottish post-punk band, covered Porter's poem *Your Attention Please* for their 1981 studio album *Author! Author!* (Browning).

"He enjoyed all this, but he was also characteristically self-deprecating and funny about it. Indeed, many people who knew him will perhaps chiefly remember how funny he was in his quick, nodding, sometimes acerbic responses" (Thwaite). Following Porter's death in 2010, the Australian Book Review announced that its Poetry Prize would be renamed in his honour, the Peter Porter Poetry Prize (Author).

Fundamentally, Porter's poetry navigates through cultures and geography, showing how the powerful used the land and the emotional and bodily abilities of the citizens for their own political purposes. In the complex landscape of contemporary geopolitical theory, the concept of "necropolitics", introduced by Cameroonian philosopher and political theorist Achille Mbembe, has emerged as a powerful analytical framework. This theory delves into the intersections of power, sovereignty, and death, offering a critical lens to conjecture the profound implications of political violence, state-sponsored brutality, and the differential valuation of human lives. Mbembe says, "What place", he demands, "is given to life, death, and the human body (in particular the wounded or slain body)? How are they inscribed in the order of power?" (Mbembé 12).

Necropolitics builds upon Michel Foucault's concept of biopolitics, which explores how modern states regulate and manage life. However, while biopolitics focuses on the administration of life, necropolitics shifts attention to the sovereign power's control over death. It interrogates how certain populations are subjected to systematic forms of death, extending beyond the mere preservation of life. However, life and death cannot be separated; biopolitics and necropolitics are not diametrically opposed. As Rosi Braidotti clarifies, they are "two sides of the same coin" (Braidotti 122).

States, according to Mbembe, not only have the authority to let live (biopolitics) but also to make die. This entails the deliberate infliction of death, often exercised through state-sanctioned violence, warfare, and oppressive conditions imposed on specific groups. This includes both direct forms of violence, such as military interventions, and indirect forms, such as the imposition of conditions that lead to premature death. Necropower operates as a mechanism of control, asserting dominance through the threat or actuality of death. Judith Butler's expresses "a violence against those who are already not quite living, that is, living in a state of suspension between life and death" (Butler 36).

Certain lives are deemed expendable or disposable in the pursuit of political objectives, leading to stark disparities in their exposure to death. Avery Gordon, a feminist sociologist, wrote a brilliant text, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*, in which she writes:

[h]aunting is a frightening experience. It always registers the harm inflicted or the loss sustained by social violence done in the past or in the present. But haunting, unlike trauma, is distinctive for producing something to-be-done. Indeed, haunting is precisely the domain of turmoil and trouble, that moment (of however long duration) when things are not in their assigned places, when the cracks and rigging are exposed, when the people who are meant to be invisible show up without any sign of leaving, when disturbed feelings cannot be put away, when something else, something different from before, seems like it must be done (Gordon 16).

Necropolitics provides a robust framework for critically analysing instances of state-sponsored violence. From military interventions to oppressive regimes, the theory sheds light on the mechanisms through which states exercise power by controlling and, in some cases, extinguishing lives.

Necropolitics reveals the intricate intersectionality of power structures in contemporary geopolitics. The theory emphasises the interwoven relationships between political, economic, and social systems that contribute to the differential exposure of populations to death, shedding light on the multifaceted nature of global power dynamics. As Foucault relates, this technology wielded social and political power across an entirely novel form of social structure: “not exactly society... nor is it the individual as body. It is a new body, a multiple body, a body with so many heads that, while they might not be infinite in number, cannot necessarily be counted” (Foucault 245).

Understanding necropolitics also invites discussions on resistance and liberation. By comprehending how certain populations are subjected to death, movements and strategies aimed at challenging oppressive systems and promoting social justice can be informed and empowered. Necropolitics is not confined to specific regions or cultures. Its global application enables scholars and policymakers to analyse instances of state violence and structural inequalities across diverse geopolitical contexts.

The theory of necropolitics is invaluable for understanding the enduring effects of colonialism. By examining how colonial powers established systems that perpetuate conditions of precarity and vulnerability, necropolitics reveals the ongoing impact of historical injustices. By illuminating the ways in which power, sovereignty, and death intersect, necropolitics challenges scholars, policymakers, and activists to critically engage with the violent dimensions of state power. Whether applied to instances of state-sponsored violence, the enduring effects of colonialism, or the broader dynamics of global power structures, necropolitics offers a critical framework for understanding and addressing the complexities of our interconnected world. As debates on justice, human rights, and the pursuit of a more equitable global order continue, the insights from necropolitics remain crucial for shaping informed and conscientious responses to the challenges of our time.

An illustrious example of necropolitics is the nuclear tests that were conducted in Australia as part of the British nuclear weapons program. The primary reasons for these tests were strategic, military, and political, driven by Australia's alliance with the United Kingdom and its participation in the broader Western defence efforts during the Cold War. The tests aimed to develop and test nuclear weapons technology, enhance national security, and contribute to the overall military strength of the Western alliance.

The nuclear testing in Australia occurred between the early 1950s and the early 1960s as part of various operations, including Operation Hurricane (1952), Operation Totem (1953), Operation Mosaic (1956–57), Operation Buffalo (1956), and Operation Antler (1957). The testing sites included the Montebello Islands, Emu Field, and Maralinga. “Between 1952 and 1957, the United Kingdom undertook 12 nuclear test explosions in Australia—three at the Monte Bello Islands in Western Australia, two at Emu Field, and seven at Maralinga, South Australia” (Commission and James Robert McClelland). The Royal Commission delineates “persistent deception and paranoid secrecy,” with “British authorities embarking on a course of determined concealment of information from the Australian Government” (Commission 414).

The nuclear tests had significant and lasting effects on both the environment and the health of the Australian population. The tests resulted in the release of radioactive fallout, exposing both military personnel involved in the tests and nearby civilian populations to ionising radiation. The environmental contamination resulted in radioactive particles being dispersed in the air, water, and soil. This contamination persisted long after the tests were conducted. The Indigenous populations living in these areas were disproportionately affected by the tests, leading to concerns about the health and well-being of these communities.

The Australian public's reaction to the nuclear tests evolved over time as more information about the tests and their consequences became known. While there was initially limited awareness and support for the nuclear tests in Australia, public opinion shifted as the environmental and health consequences became apparent. The protests and advocacy against nuclear testing played a role in influencing policy changes and contributing to global efforts to limit nuclear testing. The legacy of these tests continues to be a matter of ongoing discussion, and efforts are ongoing to address the historical and environmental impacts on affected populations.

Peter Porter's poem *Your Attention Please* is a poignant reflection on the precariousness of human existence amid existential threats, specifically nuclear annihilation. Written during the Cold War era, the poem resonates with a sense of irony as it combines mundane and bureaucratic language with the impending doom of a nuclear catastrophe. This paper delves into the necropolitical context of *Your Attention Please*, examining how Porter employs irony to convey the complexities of human existence in the shadow of imminent destruction by the hands of the colonisers.

The poem's central theme revolves around the juxtaposition of the ordinary and the extraordinary, as mundane daily activities are disrupted by the announcement of an imminent nuclear strike. The poet employs vivid and often surreal imagery to create a stark contrast between the banality of routine and the severity of the existential threat. The public announcement system becomes a conduit for catastrophic news, interrupting the trivialities of life with a chilling reality check.

Porter's use of irony is particularly noteworthy, as the poem's tone oscillates between the comical and the tragic. The bureaucratic language of the announcement, with its formal and detached style, adds a layer of satire to the poem. The dispassionate tone of the announcement contrasts sharply with the emotional turmoil of the individuals facing annihilation, creating a sense of irony that permeates the entire work.

When examining the poem through the lens of necropolitics, we can uncover connections between the poem's content and the dynamics of power, control, and mortality inherent in necropolitical theory.

In the poem, there is a clear portrayal of the state's control over information, reflecting one aspect of necropolitics. The emergency announcement demanding "Your Attention Please" (Line 1) serves as a manifestation of state authority over communication. In necropolitics, control over information is a means of manipulating and regulating populations, and the poem captures this aspect as the state dictates the impending catastrophe. The direct tone of the announcement portrays that the sovereign authority is going to conduct the nuclear test, lacking any sort of sympathy towards the natives.

"You therefore have a further/ Eight and a quarter minute/ To comply with the shelter" (Line 9-11). Within a certain time-frame, natives must adjust to their new surroundings and follow the government's orders. They're granted no involvement in the matter. The specifications are published in Section Atomic Attack of the Civil Defence Code.

The government is aware that this test may result in severe casualties, including death, and in order to appear thoughtful, sympathetic, and understanding, they will take a few innocent lives, as they had previously planned for religious-based services. This allows the government to divert the thought process of citizens who are at risk. Mbembe's necropolitics further emphasises the idea of certain individuals being considered expendable for the maintenance of power.

Your Attention Please

The Polar DEW has just warned that

A nuclear rocket strike of

At least one thousand megatons

Has been launched by the enemy

Directly at our major cities. (Lines 1-6)

These lines underscore the vulnerability of individuals in the face of the state's decisions. This aligns with necropolitical notions of the state determining who lives and who dies, demonstrating power through the disposability of individual lives. The poem introduces a surreal and unsettling normalisation of life amid the impending catastrophe. The poem mentions:

Do not
 Take well-loved pets (including birds)
 Into your shelter - they will consume
 Fresh air. Leave the old and bed-
 ridden, you can do nothing for them. (Lines 21-25)

This juxtaposes with the announcement of doom which reflects the normalisation of death, a concept central to necropolitics. The ambitious coloniser ignores the fear that comes with the thought of losing loved ones and life, conveniently blaming it on God and justifying their actions as God's will. "Death is the least we have to fear. /We are all in the hands of God,/Whatever happens happens by His Will" (Lines 60-62).

The state's ability to make the catastrophic a routine aspect of life contributes to its control over the populace. Mbembe discusses the bureaucratic nature of necropolitics, where decisions about life and death are made in a detached and depersonalised manner. In "Your Attention Please," the reference to

Our President
 Has already given orders for
 Massive retaliation - it will be
 Decisive. Some of us may die.
 Remember, statistically
 It is not likely to be you.
 All flags are flying fully dressed
 On Government buildings - the sun is shining. (Lines 52-59)

adds a bureaucratic layer to the impending disaster, emphasising the distance between those in power and the individuals affected.

Necropolitics often involves the strategic use of fear to maintain control over populations. The urgency and fear-inducing language in the poem serve as tools of control. By invoking a sense of imminent peril, the state reinforces its authority and the individuals' dependence on its guidance.

Do not break
 The inside airlock seals until
 The radiation All Clear shows
 (Watch for the cuckoo in your
 perspex panel), or your District
 Touring Doctor rings your bell. (Lines 38- 43)

The poet makes it clear that if a mishap occurs prior to the arrival of a doctor, the citizen should commit self-murder by taking a pill and describing it as the easiest way to die, portraying themselves as kind because they are providing a painless death.

If before this, your air becomes
 Exhausted or if any of your family
 In critically injured, administer
 The capsules marked 'Valley Forge'
 (Red Pocket in No. 1 Survival Kit)
 For painless death.
 Now go quickly to your shelters. (Lines 44- 50)

Therefore, set against the backdrop of the Cold War, "Your Attention Please" reflects the anxieties of a world living under the constant threat of nuclear war. The poem captures the zeitgeist of the era, where the arms race and geopolitical tensions fueled widespread fears of global destruction. The fulmination of nuclear annihilation serves as a metaphor for the fragility of human existence and the potential for self-inflicted calamity. The poem invites readers to contemplate the meaning of life in the face of imminent catastrophe. The individuals portrayed in the poem grapple with their impending demise, and their reactions range from stoicism to despair. The poem prompts an existential examination of human priorities, aspirations, and the inherent contradictions of existence.

Porter's work serves as both a product of its socio-political context and a timeless commentary on the perennial tensions between the mundane and the extraordinary in the human experience. As readers navigate the poem's intricacies, they are confronted with the sobering realization that, despite the irony and satire, the threat of cataclysmic events remains an ever-present spectre in the human consciousness.

The other poem, "Competition is Healthy," by Peter Porter, is also drenched in aspects of necropolitics. It is rich in stylistic elements that contribute to its overall impact and meaning. The first line in German, "Es wartet Alles auf dich," immediately sets a tone of anticipation and waiting. It introduces a sense of expectation and readiness.

The poem's themes are conveyed by carrying out vivid representations. For example, "to clothe the ragged in lightweight/Dacron" and "to feed the hungry with milk bread/Or curious corn" create visual images of providing for the needy. The image of "bells that walk the fields" is surreal and symbolic, emphasizing the importance of music and culture. "Sweats in conscience of his easy goal" uses the image of sweat to convey the old man's effort and moral struggle.

Porter's "Competition is Healthy" is a multi-layered and thought-provoking poem that employs various stylistic elements to explore themes of faith, social inequality, art, and the complex nature of human existence. The use of vivid imagery, allusions, and shifts in perspective adds depth and complexity to the poem's message. Symbolism is used to convey deeper meaning, such as the planting of the garden representing the act of creation and the son's actions with radish seeds symbolising unexpected outcomes.

The poem begins with a reference to Buddhism and the idea that some individuals who have seen the Buddha may attempt to follow his teachings. However, the poem quickly shifts its focus to Judeo-Christian references, mentioning God and quoting from the Bible (Matthew 6:32–33), where it states that God knows our needs and provides for them.

The poem addresses issues of social inequality and poverty. It mentions efforts to help the less fortunate by providing clothing and food. It also hints at political divisions, with a reference to the Goldwater victory, reflecting the political climate of the time when the poem was written. The poem references nature and agriculture, with imagery of planting a garden and nurturing seedling. This may symbolise the idea of individuals taking care of their own needs and being self-reliant.

The poem takes on a surreal quality as it progresses, with references to unusual and symbolic elements such as "He gives bells that walk the fields" and the planting of radish seeds. These elements can be seen as symbolic of the unpredictability and complexity of life. The latter part of the poem takes a dark turn, with imagery of consuming the people we love, drinking their fluids, and dressing in the "flannel of their blood." This can be interpreted as a commentary on the harsh realities of life and the ways in which individuals are often forced to make difficult choices to survive.

Necropolitics is not confined to geopolitical analyses; its relevance extends to literary works. The application of necropolitics to literature enables a nuanced exploration of how authors, like Porter, engage with power dynamics and the politics of mortality within their creative expressions. Achille Mbembe's theory of necropolitics posits that modern states wield power through the strategic management of death. This theoretical framework provides a lens through which to analyse how power operates within societies by controlling and manipulating mortality.

The poem's linguistic nuances in the German language play a crucial role in capturing the subtleties of necropolitics. Porter's use of language and its impact on the reader's perception form a key aspect of the analysis, highlighting how linguistic choices contribute to the portrayal of power and mortality.

"Es wartet Alles auf dich./ Everything" (Lines 1-2). These lines mean everything waits for you ("Es Wartet Alles Auf Dich [Text & Translation]"), and to reassert this notion, the poet repeats the word "everything". The use of the German stands as a symbol of colonisation where everyone was in a rush, a deep-cut throat competition, forgetting morality to attain power, but the poet reminds us here that competition isn't bad, but it needs to be healthy. Opening with German lines also denotes the influence of immigrants on the land of Australia. "Victoria's first German immigrants arrived in 1849 under a British bounty to attract vineyard workers. They established a thriving settlement north of Melbourne, in what was later to become the suburb of Thomastown. Hundreds more Germans rushed to Victoria, hoping to strike gold" (Museums Victoria).

Porter's exploration of power dynamics within the poem is multifaceted. The examination of societal structures, authoritative figures, and their impact on individual agency provides insight into how necropolitics manifests within the poetic narrative. Porter portrays the ideology working within Australian society. Goldwater stood for the United States presidential election in a very close competition, and poor citizens, instead of worrying about their own bread and butter, cared for his win. In this connection about the close competition, the New York Times wrote, "Robert B. DePugh, head of the Minutemen, said today that a political poll by members of the militant right-wing organisation showed Senator Barry Goldwater leading by a narrow margin in the race for the Presidency" ("RIGHTIST POLL SEES GOLDWATER VICTORY").

There is a divide between two sections, where one believes in the holy commands and the other blindly runs behind power. The proximity to God's instep suggests a tiny and inconsequential distance, possibly commenting on the irony or futility of the underprivileged supporting policies contrary to their well-being. God is aware of the diverse human needs, and he will fulfil them accordingly, so there is no need for unhealthy competition.

"Yet the underprivileged /Rich pray for a Goldwater victory/Within an ant's tremor of God's instep. /Your heavenly Father knoweth that /Ye have need of all these things" (Lines 8-11).

Porter describes a gift from God, possibly a metaphor for nature or harmony. Nature responds with beauty during the growth of rice, which may be seen as a symbol of sustenance. The reference to "Sebastian Bach" and "the citizens/Of Leipzig" is an allusion to the historical and cultural significance of Bach's music in Leipzig, emphasising the role of art and culture in society. Bach, the music director of the city of Leipzig, was in charge of musical performances in Leipzig's churches. "In view of developments in Germany generally, we may indeed assert that in the liturgical life of the parishes, "rationalism began to prevail already around 1700" and that at "the time of J.S. Bach's death, it was no longer a glorious age in the history of worship in the Lutheran Church" (Johann Sebastian Bach and Liturgical Life in Leipzig 32). "He gives bells that walk the fields /When the unsteady rice is shooting, / He gives Sebastian Bach to the citizens Of Leipzig" (Lines 13-15). A direct reference to a biblical injunction against excessive worry about basic needs.

The poem includes a biblical allusion with the quote "Take no thought saying 'What shall we eat? / What shall we drink? or Wherewithal shall we be clothed?'" ("Matthew 6:31-34 ESV - Therefore Do Not Be...").

This biblical reference adds a religious dimension to the poem's themes of provision and faith. Emphasising reassurance against undue concern for basic necessities. A stark and unsettling metaphor, possibly symbolic of exploitation or sacrifice. An extension of the metaphor implies a deep and unquenchable connection, and the metaphor continues, suggesting a disturbing intimacy or interdependence. Despite the disturbing imagery, there is reassurance that basic needs will be met. Transitioning back to the old man, who writes with a humble pen. The father communicates practical concerns about governmental decisions affecting their lives. A shift to the beauty of nature, possibly contrasting with the political and economic concerns. A concluding image of a fading rose, possibly symbolising the fragility of imported beauty or cultural symbols in a challenging environment.

Take no thought saying 'What shall we eat?
 What shall we drink? or Wherewithal shall we be clothed?'
 We shall eat the people we love,
 We shall drink their fluids unslaked,
 We shall dress in the flannel of their blood,
 But we shall not go hungry or thirsty Or cold.
 The old man writes with a post office nib
 To his son. 'The Government has cut the quotas,
 Here the bougainvillea is out,
 The imported rose is sinking in the heat. (Lines 24 – 33)

The theme of fear and mortality is central to necropolitics. By steadily assaying the representation of fear and the impending inevitability of death in "Competition is Healthy," the poet reveals how the poem functions as a commentary on societal control through the manipulation of existential anxieties. The poem additionally introduces us to the idea of individuals who have attained a level of holiness or enlightenment. "Some men holy enough /To have seen the Buddha may try to keep /His commandments – to clothe the ragged in lightweight" (Lines 1-3).

Continuing the efforts to fulfil moral obligations, including feeding the hungry with basic sustenance, the use of "curious corn" suggests unconventional or unique approaches, possibly referring to innovation or progress. Applying healing salves from advanced American laboratories to wounds or afflictions. The attempt to heal wounds that are so significant they cannot form scabs suggests deep societal issues.

"Dacron, to feed the hungry with milk bread /Or curious corn, to press salve of the sacred / Laboratories of America into sores /Too big to form scabs" (Lines 5- 8). There's a contrast with the unreachable philharmonic, possibly symbolising societal inequalities. Shifting to an individual act, an old man is engaged in the simple, humble act of planting a garden. "Out of reach of the philharmonic /That old man is planting his garden" (Lines 16-17).

The effort and conscientiousness applied to a seemingly simple task, possibly alluding to moral purity, The son's actions are not acknowledged by the father. The son takes a different approach, planting radish seeds, which are considered simple and humble. Surreal elements like "bells that walk the fields" and "scattered/Radish seed in the bed, and the red clumsy/Tubers shall inherit the earth" contribute to the poem's dreamlike quality.

A play on words, subverting the biblical phrase "the meek shall inherit the earth" by replacing meek with "red clumsy tubers," suggests unexpected inheritors. "Sweats in conscience of his easy goal. /Unknown to him his son has scattered /Radish seed in the bed and the red clumsy/Tubers shall inherit the earth" (Lines 20-23).

In short, the poem shifts between different perspectives, including third-person narration, references to God, and a letter from an old man to his son. These shifts create a multifaceted narrative. The poem employs contrast and irony to highlight the disparities between the privileged and the underprivileged. It's ironic that the "underprivileged/ Rich pray for a Goldwater victory,"(Lines 8-9) suggesting a disconnect between their wealth and their political leanings. The repetition of "We shall" in the lines "We shall eat the people we love,/We shall drink their fluids unslaked,/We shall dress in the flannel of their blood"(Lines 26-28) emphasizes the inevitability of certain actions, making them even more impactful. The poem juxtaposes the practical concerns of daily life (food, clothing) with more abstract and intellectual pursuits (music, culture), highlighting the contrast between the material and the spiritual.

To conclude, the paper has explored the complexities of Peter Porter's poems "Competition is Healthy" and "Your Attention Please" through the lens of Achille Mbembe's theory of necropolitics. The theory is particularly insightful when applied to the context of colonialism and its enduring effects in post-colonial societies. The legacy of colonial violence, dispossession, and exploitation is examined through the lens of necropolitics, revealing how certain populations in Australia continue to be exposed to conditions that jeopardise their existence.

The analysis has unveiled the intricate ways in which the poet engages with power dynamics, fear, and mortality within the German and Australian literary contexts. By applying necropolitics to Porter's work, this study contributes to a broader understanding of how socio-political themes are interwoven into the fabric of poetic expression, particularly within the realm of literature, that influence the daily lives of individuals.

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