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Exploring Power Dynamics through Social Critique in Homeland Elegies: A Faircloughian Analysis

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A B S T R A C T

This article investigates the power dynamics and social critique in Ayad Akhtar's Homeland Elegies through the lens of Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis. By focusing on how language shapes and sustains social hierarchies, this study reveals the novel's commentary on identity, belonging, and societal perceptions in contemporary America. Through themes such as Islamophobia, capitalism, and the American Dream, Akhtar examines how discourse marginalizes certain groups while reinforcing dominant cultural narratives. Fairclough's framework uncovers the ways in which discourse not only reflects but actively perpetuates inequality, exposing the embedded power structures that govern everyday interactions. This analysis invites readers to critically engage with the language that sustains societal norms, encouraging a deeper understanding of how discourse both constructs and constrains social realities.

Keywords: Critical discourse analysis, Power dynamics, social critique.

INTRODUCTION

Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a comprehensive framework that examines language through the lenses of ideology, power dynamics, and social critique. In CDA, language is viewed not just as a way of communication, but as a powerful tool that mirrors and reinforces societal hierarchies and power relationships. Fairclough emphasizes that language is deeply intertwined with ideology, serving to both shape and perpetuate dominant beliefs and values within society. Through the analysis of discourse, CDA aims to uncover the underlying ideologies embedded in language use, revealing how language serves to maintain or challenge existing power structures (1995).

In "*Homeland Elegies*," Ayad Akhtar explores autofiction, blending personal experiences with fictionalized elements. Through an episodic structure, he navigates the complexities of being a Muslim writer in post-9/11 America, while also paying homage to his father, a renowned cardiologist. Historical events like 9/11 and the Trump era serve as backdrops for intimate family dramas and societal reflections. Akhtar examines the strained relationship with his father, who faces personal trials including grief, addiction, and a malpractice lawsuit. The novel exposes the pervasive Islamophobia encountered by Akhtar and his family, intensified by political shifts. Akhtar offers a critical examination of American capitalism's shortcomings in uplifting working-class communities and dispels the "model minority" myth, shedding light on systemic injustices faced by Black Americans. Amidst the somber narrative, moments of satire and humor punctuate the text, challenging stereotypes and exploring themes of identity and belonging in a fractured society.

"Akhtar is one of the most compelling voices on the American stage today. With intelligence, wit, and irony, he confronts the complexities and contradictions of our times" (Kushner).

This study employs Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a methodological framework to explore how language shapes and sustains social hierarchies through power dynamics. By examining specific passages and characters in *Homeland Elegies*, the analysis reveals how discourse functions both as a tool of oppression and

a means of challenging established power structures. Through this lens, the novel critiques dominant narratives and encourages readers to interrogate the societal norms that underpin issues of identity, belonging, and inequality in America.

Research Objectives

1. To analyze the ways social dynamics and power structures are constructed and negotiated in Ayad Akhtar's *Homeland Elegies* using Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis framework.
2. To explore the interplay between language, ideology, and identity in the novel, highlighting its critique of cultural hegemony and social hierarchies.

Research Questions

1. How do *Homeland Elegies* depict the relationship between power and social dynamics through its narrative and characters?
2. In what ways does the novel's use of discourse reflect and challenge dominant ideologies, as analyzed through Fairclough's CDA?

METHODOLOGY

The research methodology used in this research work is qualitative to traverse the novel *Homeland Elegies* through the perspective of Fairclough's theory of critical discourse analysis that is often referred to as "Critical discourse analysis" (CDA). This research is logical in aspects of how language, power dynamics, and social critique are interconnected. The primary source used is the novel *Homeland Elegies* by Akhtar. Further sources used in the research are through the journals, articles, previews and research in the field.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Fairclough defines Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a method that systematically investigates the often-hidden relationships between discursive practices, events, and texts, and the broader social and cultural structures, relations, and processes. CDA aims to understand how these practices, events, and texts are influenced by power dynamics and struggles overpower, and how the hidden nature of these relationships helps sustain power and hegemony (1995).

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a field that is concerned with studying and analyzing written and spoken texts to reveal the discursive sources of power, dominance, inequality and bias. It examines how these discursive sources are maintained and reproduced within specific social, political and historical contexts. CDA differs from other discourse analysis methods in that it includes not only a description and interpretation of discourse in context but also explains why and how discourses work.

Discourse, for Foucault, is a system of representation that governs the way that knowledge is talked about and understood. It shapes and is shaped by power relations; it is not just about language but also about practices and institutions. van Dijk defines discourse as a text and talks in context, focusing on how the use of language functions as a form of social practice. Its analysis should consider cognitive, social, and cultural contexts to understand how discourse functions in society.

Discourse is a way of signifying experiences from a perspective. It refers to the use of language in social contexts, and it encompasses both the spoken and written words. It includes not only the linguistic elements but also the social practices and contexts in which language is used. Discourse constructs knowledge, social identities, and relationships, and it is a means by which power relations are produced and reproduced (Fairclough 1995).

CDA examines the intersection of language and social structure to uncover the imbalances of power, exploitation, manipulation, and structural inequalities (Blommaert and Bulcaen). Some discourse analyses reinforce existing power relations and maintain the status quo, while others use discourse as a tool to challenge and resist power (Willig).

Power is a complex strategic situation in society, where power is everywhere and comes from everywhere. It is not just repressive but also productive, as it produces knowledge, norms, and social practices (Foucault). Power is the ability to control and shape discourse and, through this control, to influence social relations and social structures. It is exercised and maintained through discourse. Those who control dominant discourses have the power to shape how reality is understood and to influence the behavior and thinking of others. Power is both coercive and consensual, meaning it can be enforced through authority and maintained through the consent of those subjected to it (Fairclough 1995).

Social critique involves analyzing and challenging the economic and social structures that underpin societal inequalities and exploitation (Marx). Social critique is the process of reflecting on and challenging social norms and structures to promote rational communication and

democracy. It emphasizes the importance of communicative action and the public sphere in achieving a more democratic society (Habermas 175). Social critique is the analysis of the ways in which discourse operates to sustain unequal power relations and social injustices. It involves examining how language contributes to the maintenance of power imbalances and how it can be used to challenge and change these structures (Fairclough 1995).

Mazaheri and Aghagolzadeh's study (2023), "Representation of Verbal Violence in *Afsoone Sabz*" A Critical discourse analysis," explores power dynamics in Takin Hamzeloo's novel *Afsoone Sabz*. The analysis reveals how social structures such as gender inequality, socioeconomic status, and class struggle drive verbal abuse in Persian society. The study argues that Hamzeloo aimed to raise awareness among Iranians, particularly women, about these social practices, advocating for gender equality and the elimination of socioeconomic disparities. The paper highlighted the use of othering as a rhetorical tool to depict the negative perceptions Iranian men have towards women, emphasizing the pervasive verbal abuse.

Rahimian et al.'s research (2022) Majid Gheisari's novel *Bagh Telo* (The Stumble Garden) to explore its portrayal of Iranian women in the post-war era. The study examines how the novel challenges gender stereotypes, especially regarding women's roles in war and resistance. Using Fairclough's framework, their research reveals that the discourses in the novel uphold existing power dynamics and social hierarchies, highlighting the dominance of patriarchal ideas. However, the novel also portrays women as central figures who challenge traditional beliefs and transform power dynamics, suggesting a shift in their social status influenced by new humanistic and transgender perspectives.

Mojavezi and Akbarzadeh's research (2022), *Shabhaye Bisetareh* explores how societal power structures influence discourse and vice versa. Using Fairclough's framework, the study analyzes linguistic structures, context, and power relations within the text. The novel highlighted how dominant discourses use gender biases to subordinate women, confining them to domestic roles and limiting their social independence. The narrative challenged these norms through characters who question and resist traditional values, illustrating the struggle for gender equality. The findings revealed that the language in the novel often reflects a harsh, degrading tone towards women, showcasing the deep-rooted patriarchal ideologies that persist in society. Through intertextual references and character portrayals, the novel encourages readers to critically engage with and question these oppressive structures**.**

Rahnama and Arian's research (2020) also utilize CDA to examine *Fish Sleep at Night* (2015). Their research reveals how language in the novel reflects societal power dynamics by using Fairclough's three dimensions theory. Analysis shows that men hold dominant positions over women, evidenced by the frequent use of taboo words by men, interruptions of women's speech, and the use of declarative moods to assert certainty. The novel's stylistic features include informal vocabulary, women's agency, and metaphorical language tied to religious and cultural identity. Virginia Woolf and Simone, de Beauvoir's influence on the 2015 novel's critique of women's status is highlighted, framing it within the context of patriarchy, men's pursuit of power, and women's suppression.

Lisa Armelia's study (2019), "Critical discourse analysis on *Spiderman*" examine power, ideologies, and traditional values in the film. Their research reveals that the movie reflects American ideologies, particularly liberalism, through its portrayal of humanity and heroism. The descriptive analysis, based on scenes, taglines, and dialogues, indicates that the film subtly promotes the idea of America as a dominant power and a source of great heroes, thus reinforcing American hegemony. The study highlighted how entertainment products can embed and propagate specific ideological beliefs.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) encompasses various approaches to the social analysis of discourse (Fairclough & Wodak, Pêcheux, Wodak & Meyer), each differing in theory, methodology, and focus. CDA seeks to clarify the connections between discourse practices, social practices, and social structures connections that might not be immediately apparent to the public.

Ayad Akhtar's *Homeland Elegies* remains underexplored from the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), despite its rich potential for such study. Using Fairclough's framework, CDA can uncover the intricate power dynamics within the novel, reflecting broader societal hierarchies and inequalities. The narrative critically engages with themes of race, identity, and belonging in contemporary America, offering a profound social critique. By analyzing the linguistic and discursive structures, CDA highlights how language shapes characters' identities, relationships, and experiences of

cultural integration and exclusion, revealing the ideological tensions that underpin the text.

Moreover, CDA allows for an exploration of the underlying ideologies embedded in the discourse of *Homeland Elegies*. It scrutinizes how narratives of American exceptionalism, cultural assimilation, and societal norms are constructed and reinforced through linguistic and narrative strategies. In analyzing the novel through Fairclough's framework, several literature gaps become apparent. These include gaps in representation and the marginalization of certain identities within the narrative framework, as well as the intersectionality of identities and how they influence power dynamics within the story. Considering historical context which reveals potential biases or omissions in the portrayal of historical events or social realities within Akhtar's narrative landscape.

CONCEPT OF POWER DYNAMICS

Critical Discourse Analysis involves a three-step process: textual analysis, which examines the text itself; interaction analysis, which looks at the production, consumption, and distribution of the text; and contextual analysis, which interprets the text within its social context. During this process, the discourse under examination is analyzed broadly to address key questions. (Fairclough 1995). Micro, Meso and Macro level analysis are utilized to reveal different levels of connectivity from the same set of questions.

In the first phase of analysis, known as the description stage (micro analysis level), the stylistic and formal features of the text are examined through micro analysis. In the interpretation stage (meso analysis level), the same set of questions and clues regarding intertextual relations and situational contextualization are used to uncover explicit and implicit references within the discourse (Gölbaşı 2017).

The third phase of Fairclough's critical discourse analysis, known as macro-level analysis or the Explanation process, encompasses two key aspects: power struggles (process) and power relations (structure). This phase views discourse as an integral part of social struggles, framing them within the context of broader conflicts and their impact on societal structures. This analysis emphasizes the creative potential of discourse and its future social effects. It focuses on the social significance of discourse, considering its historical context and the outcomes of past struggles. While social structures reflect power relations, social progress and practices illustrate power struggles. Discourses are embedded in the processes of social struggle within the matrix of power relations (Fairclough 1989).

Power in discourse refers to how language is used within specific contexts to exert control, while power behind discourse looks at how institutional practices and societal structures shape language use. The dual aspects of power in discourse (interactional power) and power behind discourse (institutional power) (Fairclough 1989). It involves control over the context of discourse, including who can speak, what can be said, how it can be said and how elite groups control public discourse to maintain their dominance (van Dijk).

Power can be understood as the ability to control and influence the environment around us. This involves not only shaping physical spaces but also influencing social dynamics and cultural norms. A person with power can affect changes in their surroundings by aligning with their desires and objectives, thereby exerting control over their life and the lives of others. This can be manifested in various ways, such as political authority, managerial control in a workplace, or social influence within a community. Furthermore, power often enables individuals to carry out their own will despite opposition or resistance, highlighting its role in overcoming barriers and challenges (Fairclough 1995).

Fairclough categorizes social organization into three levels situational, institutional, and societal and suggests that any discourse can be part of struggles at all these levels simultaneously, including class struggles. In terms of power and discourse, situational struggles aim to gain power within discourse, whereas institutional and societal struggles relate to power behind discourse (1995).

The connection between power and financial resources is particularly significant; wealth often translates into power because it provides the means to exert influence and achieve goals. Economic power can lead to political and social power, as financial resources allow individuals to fund campaigns, support causes, and gain access to influential networks (1995).

Additionally, power in language highlights the impact of communication on others. The way individuals use language can assert dominance, persuade, or inspire, thereby shaping power dynamics within interactions. Language and power are deeply intertwined because power relations are often established, maintained, and

challenged through communication. The ability to articulate ideas effectively and assertively can lead to greater influence over others, demonstrating how linguistic skills are a critical component of power (Fairclough 1995).

According to Fairclough, power actively shapes discourse in two ways: through its presence in discourse and its influence behind discourse. "Power in discourse" refers to how those in power control and limit the contributions of less powerful participants during social interactions, such as in doctor-patient relationships (1989). "Power behind discourse" describes how the effects of power in discourse, over time, become ingrained in society, leading to unequal relationships that are accepted as normal or natural (1989).

Overall, power encompasses a broad range of abilities and resources that enable individuals to struggle, shape their environment, achieve their objectives, and influence others. Whether through economic means, social influence, or effective communication, power plays a crucial role in determining the dynamics of personal and collective interactions and efforts as "power relations are always relations of struggle" (Fairclough 1989).

In *Homeland Elegies*, Akhtar deftly employs Norman Fairclough's concept of power to explore socio-political dynamics in contemporary America. Fairclough's framework for analyzing discourse focuses on the ways language can perpetuate power structures, and Akhtar uses this approach to examine the intersection of identity, politics, and culture in his semi-autobiographical novel. He highlights how language shapes perceptions and reinforces societal norms. Akhtar also reveals the intricate power relations that define personal and collective experiences, challenging dominant narratives and exposing underlying inequalities. “The gap between us- poor rural driver in front, wealthy urban American expatriates in back-was not a gulf easily bridged” (Akhtar 2020).

As in the beginning of novel *Homeland Elegies*, Akhtar describes an event where Professor Mary Moroni critiques early American capitalism, framing it as driven by “plunder and self-interest rather than civil order” (2020). This critique aligns with Norman Fairclough’s critical discourse analysis (CDA) by exposing underlying power structures. By positioning early America as a colony perpetuating exploitation, Moroni challenges dominant narratives of the American Dream. Her assertion that the Reagan years amplified these characteristics underscores Fairclough’s idea of interdiscursivity, where political and economic discourses intersect to reinforce existing power imbalances. This analysis reveals how historical and economic discourses maintain social inequalities, questioning the legitimacy of neoliberal capitalism's promises of universal benefit. Moroni’s controversial stance on American hegemony, particularly post-Desert Storm, and the backlash she faced from some students, exemplify Fairclough’s concept of power as contested and resisted through discourse (2020).

Her willingness to critique dominant ideologies within the academic setting highlights the role of intellectuals in challenging power structures. This resistance is significant in Fairclough’s framework, where discourse is a site of struggle. The backlash from students indicates how power relations are negotiated within educational institutions, reflecting broader societal resistance to critiques of dominant ideologies (2020). This dynamic demonstrates how discourse within academia both shapes and is shaped by societal power structures. The language Moroni uses, such as "plunder" and "self-interest," serves as a critical tool in challenging sanitized narratives of American history and capitalism, reflecting Fairclough’s idea of language as a tool of power (2020). By choosing provocative terms, Moroni disrupts the status quo and provokes critical thinking among her audience. This use of language aligns with Fairclough’s CDA, which emphasizes how discourse can both maintain and challenge power structures. Moroni’s framing of early American capitalism contrasts sharply with positive portrayals of entrepreneurial spirit, highlighting the exploitative nature of the system. Her discourse not only reveals but also contests the ideological underpinnings of American socio-economic realities, embodying the transformative potential of critical discourse. “Worship of desire. Tumescent self-regard. A colony for pillage. The power of a great negation, a corrective to a tradition of endless American self-congratulations” (Akhtar 2020).

One of the clearest applications of Fairclough’s ideas in *Homeland Elegies* is through the protagonist's father, a Pakistani immigrant and cardiologist, who embodies the American Dream yet faces a persistent sense of un belongingness Despite his professional success, he is subject to the power dynamics of a post-9/11 America where Muslims are often viewed with suspicion. This is poignantly highlighted in a scene where the protagonist reflects on his father's experiences. “Yet for all his

acclaim, for all his success, there was always a sense that he was an interloper, a guest whose welcome could be rescinded at any moment" (Akhtar 2020). This underscores how discourse within American society positions Muslims as perpetual outsiders, regardless of their achievements. It also highlights that the societal power dynamics deny full acceptance and belonging to Muslims, reinforcing their marginalization through everyday language and societal narratives.

Akhtar also brings to light the experiences of his mother, who never feels at ease living in America. She sees Americans as overly materialistic, and the thought of growing old here fills her with apprehension. She envisions a future where she might end up in a nursing home that bears no resemblance to what she knows or finds comforting. "It's not our home. No matter how many years we spend here, it won't ever be our home. And maybe this brings out things in us that were never meant to be brought out" (Akhtar 2020).

Akhtar also explores how internalized power dynamics influence self-perception and interpersonal relationships within the Muslim community. The protagonist's relationship with his parents is strained by differing responses to their social reality. His father's staunch belief in the American Dream contrasts with the protagonist's growing disillusionment, illustrating a generational divide shaped by the evolving discourse on American identity and power. "My father's faith in America was unshakeable, almost naive. He couldn't see the fissures, the cracks that were becoming increasingly apparent to me."

His father's faith in America and Donald was unshakeable, almost naive. He couldn't see the fissures, the cracks that were becoming increasingly apparent to Akhtar and his mother too (2020). This captures the tension between two perspectives shaped by their respective experiences and the discursive environments they navigate. The father's unwavering belief in the promise of America and Donald is contrasted with the protagonist's critical awareness of the limitations and exclusions embedded in the national narrative.

This research also explores the concept of self and others as perceived by Americans. Akhtar delves into how Americans treat Blacks and Muslims as outsiders, failing to recognize their identities, as Latif has also articulated. Despite ongoing efforts to marginalize Blacks and deny them recognition, prejudice and racism persist. Americans categorize anyone who is not American born as an outsider, irrespective of how long they have resided in the country. This perpetuates a sense of unfamiliarity and estrangement for those who cannot call America their homeland. Whites continue to benefit from privileges while treating Blacks as inferior and regarding Muslims with suspicion as potential terrorists. "I see how the blacks are treated here. I see what they must go through. It gives you a different picture of this place" (Akhtar 2020).

Fairclough's concept of power dynamics is evident in these dynamics. Language and discourse shape societal perceptions, reinforcing power imbalances where certain groups are marginalized and discriminated against. The labeling of Blacks and Muslims as 'others' underscores how discourse can perpetuate and normalize these divisions. Fairclough's framework emphasizes that power is not just about overt control but also operates subtly through language and discourse to maintain existing hierarchies. Akhtar's portrayal in *Homeland Elegies* illustrates how this power dynamics manifest in everyday interactions and societal structures, influencing how individuals are perceived and treated based on race and religion. "In this country, the white majority is basically blind to the worst in themselves. They see themselves in the image of their best, and they see us in the image of our worst" (Akhtar 2020).

Furthermore, Akhtar delves into the impact of political discourse on individual lives. In his theory Fairclough identifies the educational system and other social institutions, along with their current powerholders, as crucial for perpetuating these access differentials, rooted in societal class relations. However, the concept of 'social struggle' implies that these relations are not static, particularly in power relations within discourse (2020). Fairclough argues that those in power must constantly reaffirm their authority, while those without power continuously strive to challenge it.

This research explores that Fairclough also examines why power is increasingly exercised covertly in discourse. He dismisses notions of decreasing inequality or an intentional conspiracy to conceal power for manipulative purposes. Akhtar in his novel explains this through his own personal experiences and from the perspective of his mother. "She feels America as a foreign place, a place she didn't recognize, didn't like. She wrote in bitterness, even rage…." (Akhtar 2020).

This research highlights the social prejudice faced by Muslims in America, as exemplified by Akhtar's personal

experience recounted in *Homeland Elegies*. Nearly a decade after 9/11, an American-born character with Muslim heritage admits to an unexpected and troubling sense of pride a "blush" realizing that, despite his devotion to being American, he still feels connected to a mindset he despises and describes as Muslim (2020).

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) offers a lens through which to analyze this narrative. Fairclough argues that discourse is not only a reflection of power dynamics but also a means through which power is maintained and contested within society. In Akhtar's portrayal, the aggressive questioning and verbal assault by the man with muttonchops demonstrate how language and discourse are used to reinforce hierarchies and marginalize minority groups. The man's insistence on associating the narrator with terrorism reflects societal narratives that perpetuate fear and suspicion towards Muslims post-9/11. Furthermore, the reactions of bystanders some defending the narrator while others support the aggressor underscores that discourse shapes social perceptions and divisions. This incident exemplifies that discriminatory discourse not only reflects but also perpetuates power imbalances, influencing societal attitudes and behaviors towards marginalized communities like Muslims in America. After the 9/11 attacks, the Pakistani individual is diminished to the status of a colonial subject, subjected to a conscious colonial discourse that influences and drives discursive and political practices of racial and cultural hierarchy (Bhabha 2012).

This research also investigates Akhtar's personal journey of confronting internalized biases and prejudices. Through relationships like his affair with Asha, Akhtar gradually becomes aware of deep-seated societal prejudices within himself. His close friend Mike Jacob, a Black man, provides further insight into systemic biases affecting various communities in America (2020: 226). Concurrently, Sikander, Akhtar's father, undergoes a transformative experience that challenges his view of the American Dream. His realization highlights the stark contrast between idealized notions of America and its harsh realities. Although Sikander supports Trump and his policies, even those targeting Muslims, he begins to question his place in America when Trump introduces harsh measures against Muslims in 2016. The turning point comes when he loses his license in a lawsuit, prompting him to reassess his situation. After losing everything and returning to Pakistan, he calls his son and says "I had a good life there—so many good years. I'm grateful to America. It gave me you! But I'm glad to be back in Pakistan, beta. I'm glad to be home (Akhtar 2020). In *Homeland Elegies*, Akhtar illuminates the complexities of identity, privilege, and societal prejudices. Akhtar's journey reflects Fairclough's concept of Internalized discourse, where societal norms shape individual perceptions and biases. Meanwhile, Sikander's disillusionment with the American Dream reveals how societal discourse can create false ideals that diverge from actual live experiences. This exploration challenges to critically examine assumptions about race, culture, and belonging, revealing how discourse shapes both societal attitudes and personal identities in profound ways. It also emphasizes the role of discourse in shaping social realities and maintaining power imbalances that also focuses on the pervasive influence of capitalism and Islamophobia. Akhtar's novel reflects this by exploring how language and societal narratives affect Muslim Americans' lives.

This research also puts emphasis on understanding who possesses the ability to wield power over others in any society or in any social institutions. This focus directs our attention to the dynamics of social struggle and the intricacies surrounding access to discourse, which encompass various constraints. To support his theory on how power discourse perpetuates the unequal class system, Fairclough draws on Pierre Bourdieu's concept of 'cultural capital,' comparing it metaphorically to economic capital. Cultural capital, which is gained through access to and possession of various 'cultural goods' like education, language skills, entry to elite social institutions, and prestigious job positions, is unevenly distributed in society. Fairclough argues that the dominant class holds significantly more cultural capital than the working class, thereby reinforcing these inequalities (1989).

Furthermore, this research finds the economic dimensions of power through his critique of capitalism, illustrating how economic discourse intertwines with issues of identity and belonging. The protagonist's reflections on the economic realities of contemporary America reveal the insidious nature of capitalist discourse, which perpetuates inequality and marginalization. He laments the commodification of identity. "Capitalism had sold us the illusion of inclusivity while ensuring that the structures of power remained unchallenged. The American Dream had become a tool of

exclusion rather than opportunity" (Akhtar 2020). This critique highlights how capitalist discourse perpetuates social hierarchies, using the illusion of inclusivity to maintain existing power structures. Akhtar's analysis aligns with Fairclough's CDA, which seeks to uncover the ways in which language and ideology sustain social inequalities.

Akhtar also uses personal anecdotes to critique the cultural and religious biases embedded in American society. His depiction of the protagonist's encounters with Islamophobia, both subtle and overt, underscores the pervasive nature of these prejudices. For instance, the protagonist's discomfort during a casual conversation about terrorism highlights the everyday challenges faced by Muslim Americans. Every mention of terrorism felt like a pointed reminder of otherness. "You a Moslem?" he asked. aren't you?.....you fucking terrorist. 'We don't need your Arab blood! Nobody wants your fucking Arab blood!" (Akhtar 2020).

This reflection illustrates how societal discourse on terrorism serves to otherize Muslim Americans, reinforcing their marginalization. Akhtar's use of personal narrative to expose these biases aligns with Fairclough's approach, which emphasizes the role of discourse in perpetuating social hierarchies.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to examine how Ayad Akhtar, in *Homeland Elegies*, employed Norman Fairclough's concept of power to unravel the complex dynamics of discourse shaping the Muslim American experience. Through his characters' interactions and introspections, Akhtar demonstrates how language both constructs and confines identities, highlighting the pervasive influence of societal narratives on individual lives. This analysis exposes the underlying power structures embedded in the text, encouraging readers to rethink dominant discourses surrounding national identity and belonging. By critically engaging with these narratives, the study invites readers to question and reimagine the power and inequality structures that define contemporary society.

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