

LITERATURE AND ENVIRONMENT: AN ECO-CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE OF TRESPASSING BY UZMA ASLAM KHAN AND *BURNT SHADOWS* BY KAMILA SHAMSI

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Abstract

*This research explores Kamila Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows* (2009) alongside Uzma Aslam Khan's *Trespassing* (2003) using the concepts of ecocriticism, as centered on the ways both novels civilize the worth of the environment and the consequences on its moral judgment. The researcher also analyzes the ways ethical and historical commentary and mental images of the environment crafted in Pakistani English fiction. Within the domestic and local contexts, Khan's *Trespassing* exemplifies an environmental consciousness, treating droughts, barren and dry fields, and filthy rivers as metaphors for a disengaged society and the muted social and systematic discrimination against women. Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows*, on the other hand, deepens the geopolitical and historical extension of ecodiscourse, merging the post 9/11 world and the atomic devastation of Japan through an 'ecology of trauma.' Although Khan and Shamsie's scales of focus differ, intimate and regional in contrast to Shamsie's transnational and temporal, both writers regard the environment as a sentient witness to human transgressions. Their narratives turn the environment into human moral and historical loss, asserting the nexus of the environmental and ethical-political crisis. The research affirms the novels' position in the Global South, as both enhance the *The Environmental Humanities of the South* by turnin' ecobiography into a form of cultural and normative remembrance. The literature of Khan and Shamsie emphasizes the relevance of the human-non human world interface through disparate yet unifying eco-critical perspectives.*

Keywords: eco-criticism, slow violence, *Burnt Shadows*, *Trespassing*, Pakistani English fiction, postcolonial ecology, environmental ethics.

Introduction

Eco-criticism studies the interaction of literature and the environment, analyzing the different ways literary texts represent the natural world, address environmental concerns, and advocate for ecological awareness. The objective of this investigation is to delineate the contribution and perspectives of some selected writers to the global discourse on eco-criticism. Therefore, the primary focus of this research is on eco-critical dimensions of contemporary Pakistani literature. The primary texts under focus for this research are the novels *Burnt Shadows* by Kamila Shamsie and *Trespassing* by Uzma Aslam Khan.

Literature Review

Eco-criticism as a literary genre emerged in the late 20th century. In addition to the environmental movement, eco-criticism (Pradhan, 2024) also attempts to break the anthropocentric worldview and politicize the natural world. In addition, it investigates the ways in which literary texts represent the relationship between nature and human beings (Marland, 2013). It attempts to examine the literature and the environment relationship and advocate for the integration of ecological perspectives in literary studies (Yadav & Sinha, 2024; Kern, 2000).

Key Figures in Eco-criticism

The Environmental Imagination by Lawrence Buell and *The Ecocriticism Reader* by Cheryll Glotfelty are foundational texts that demonstrate the use of ecocriticism as an analytical framework for studying literature and the environment. The idea of "slow violence" by Rob

Nixon, and "ecoambiguity" by Karen Thornber, provide tools for thinking about culture and gradual ecological wear.

The Context of South Asia and Pakistan

Postcolonial ecocriticism (Graham Huggan, Elizabeth DeLoughrey) attends an integrated approach to the environment and colonial violence. There is scholarship on the Indian English novel, particularly on the climate fiction of Amitav Ghosh, but Pakistani literature is still under-analyzed. Most scholarship on Pakistani novels centers on identity and diaspora, leaving ecological critiques to the margins.

Pakistani prominent novelists Rahman (2021) and Tajane et al. (2024) point out the terrible ecological perspective underlying environmental issues. Shamsie's fiction primarily focuses on environmental and political destruction, showcasing the fragility of human life and the bond between humans and nature (Rabbani, 2023). Although the narratives of Shamsie are imbued with eco-critical issues, they are predominantly entangled with other thematic concerns. Rob Nixon (2005) noted the detachment of environmental problems from ecocriticism, which has constrained the postcolonial literary imagination. The ecocritical paradigm, much like the preceding example, is fundamentally lacking, particularly given the volume of the primary source material derived from the United States. Furthermore, the environmental imagination stresses the necessity of formulating an ideal of 'eco-cosmopolitanism' (that is, environmental world citizenship), which is a recovery of the cosmopolitan project in other branches of cultural theory. This was noted three years after the first was articulated. However, eco-cosmopolitanism engages with a multitude of critiques, one's which hinges on the intersection with US imperialism. Moreover, it has been argued that it does not only engage with post-colonial ecologies, but rescues cosmopolitanism from the charge of being US centered. Such environmental criticisms were articulated in response to the associative legacy it bore with imperialism. Therefore, it is not, "conceive it as a particularly Americanist project", the vast majority of her central texts are science fiction works, and are set in the United States.

It is peculiar that her novels are set to take place in the US (UK). The book by Uzma Aslam Khan, *Trespassing*, is a Pakistani postcolonial work that is the subject of an Eco-critical analysis, especially post-colonialism and the environment. As part of the global economic system, this novel deals with the interactions of humans and nonhumans against a backdrop of religious extremism and diverse nationalisms.

Although some cosmopolitanism concepts, for example, Heise's eco-cosmopolitanism, seek to restrict the local for the sake of the global, it must be said that the local and global are never, under any circumstances, mutually exclusive. In Khan's book, eco-cosmopolitanism is a mode of thinking that transcends the boundaries of a single country by forging a bond with the Earth, its landforms, and its life both in the region and at a global scale. Such bonds are fostered through a sense of interfacing with the ecosystem. Khan advocates an eco-cosmopolitanism that is first anchored in the local and, thus, exerts a profound impact at the global level. The kind of global thinking Khan talks about is not, in its essence, an imperialist form of cosmopolitanism, but rather a kind of planetarity. Equally, the notion of local rootedness is not nationalism, but a form of a loss of abstraction associated with a place. This, it is argued, is the brand of eco-cosmopolitanism that is most beneficial to the circumstances of Pakistani intellectuals. These are the intellectuals, it must be stressed, who reject both nationalism and the abstract forms of cosmopolitanism that are global in emphasis. The narrative represents a form of Pakistani eco-cosmopolitanism, which does not extend or oppose a form of nationalism which is amenable to US imperialism.

Waheed (2014) examines personal and environmental harm using ecocritically framed intersections. The novel demonstrates how Kashmiri violence has not only dehumanized its

victims, but has also ecocided the region. Waheed's placing of the environment as a collateral, and also a passive observer, of human violence is a powerful eco-critical assertion (Tilwani, 2022).

Pakistani eco-criticism as articulated through these authors is more than the contemplation of nature; it sits squarely within the realms of existential philosophy, identity, history, and social equity. Readers are motivated through the environmental narratives within these novels to reevaluate and reconstruct their relationships with the natural world, and understand the intertwining of the human and the ecological. At a time of escalating global ecological crisis, the literary contributions from these Pakistani novelists speak profoundly to the ecological dimensions of the current epoch, and add to the growing corpus of Pakistani eco-criticism (Jabeen, 2019).

Shamsie and Waheed's novels still vividly represent human activities and socio-political structures with degradation of environment and showcase precisely what gaps of intricacies lie intertwined with obliteration of ecology. It's surprising that no thorough analysis has been conducted on these authors and how they lingeringly exposed multi-layered and complex devices of socio-political and human-enabled degradation anthropocentric devices. I aim to pin this gap down by venturing into their works to argue that the novels have succeeded in deepening the environmental discourse and analysis on contemporary Pakistani English novels.

Gap in Research

Pakistani English writers have been subjected to analysis to a considerable extent pertaining to identity crisis and gender politics. However, there is a gap pertaining to eco-critical viewpoints and environment consciousness, particularly in the works of Pakistani novelists the gap is the the most profound.

Research Goals

This is to this end that I have put forth the following objectives which I believe will assist me in achieving my goal.

1. Examine the work of contemporary pakistani authors who showcase eco-centric themes
2. Enhance understanding of the social, political and cultural dimensions of the environment in Pakistan to eco-critical approaches.

Identify the major ecological metaphors and symbols used in these works in relation to the culture and history of Pakistan.

Research Questions

1. What are the different ways in which the emerging Pakistani writers include environmental issues and concerns in the chosen works of literature?
2. What are the primary ecological metaphors and symbols that are used in these works and what is their cultural and historical relevance in Pakistan?
3. How do eco-critical readings inform the social, political, and cultural aspects of the environmental issues in Pakistan?

Research Methodology

The research methods used in eco-criticism towards the works of Kamila Shamsie and Uzma Aslam Khan will be framed within qualitative research and will be based on text analysis within an interpretation of the context along with comparative connections. This will methodically assess the breadth of the writers' works in relation to the eco-critical frameworks and eco-criticism broadly. This will include:

Eco Critical Theory: Application of eco-critical lens to interpret the novels' treatment of ecological themes, drawing on concepts such as environmental justice, sustainability, and the Anthropocene.

Use analytical readings of *Burnt Shadows* (Kamila Shamsi), *The Book of Gold Leaves* (Mirza Waheed), and *The Geometry of God* (Uzma Aslam Khan), paying special attention to the portrayal of environmental concerns, to undertake primary analysis of the texts to interpret their unique responses to the issue at hand.

Theoretical Framework

This study employs eco-critical theory, integrating:

Anthropocentrism vs. Ecocentrism: Analyzing human dominion over the natural world.

Slow Violence, Analyzing narratives of gradual and delayed environmental degradation.

Place and Space, Considering locations as sites of environmental conflict.

Ecofeminism, Analyzing the intersections of feminism and the environment.

Rueckert's 1978 dissertation research set what would become known as ecocriticism through which he pioneered the study bridging literature and the milieu. He carved the term ecocriticism and began to shape its study sintered the vertecrux of study as ecocriticism.

Rueckert is perhaps best known for the dissertation essay with which he sanctioned the discourse on ecocriticism as a field. The impact of Ayaane's *The Ignition*, to which he and others claim is a keystone in *The Clash of Civilizations* literature, is illustrative of an suggested by myriad authors. These authors, unlike many others, attempt to ecocritically assess the complexities of society resulting from colonialism, conflict, globalization, and urbanization, woven into the narratives as the socio-political legacies of these phenomena.

The domain of ecocriticism has without a doubt, developed into a prominent sphere of literary criticism which, in the course of time, has examined the intricate bond, appreciated literature and the natural world. As a form of literary criticism, ecocriticism is concerned with literary works that portray and offer an analysis with issues such as global warming, deforestation, pollution, and the human-nature relationship. These works of literature discuss the unsung bond between people and their environments. It is precisely in this frame of writing that authors like Shamsie and Khan, seek to address the potential consequences of war and even terroristic acts in their fictions of the future.

In the novel *Burnt Shadows* published in 2009, the opening focuses on the events aftermath the Nagasaki bombing, which depicts humanity's' destructive ability to intervene with nature and technology. In *Home Fire* published in 2017, the Shamsi character's peripherally registered, yet, salient to the migration and fragmentation narratives the environment, the damage to both culture and nature is apocalyptic. Her cityscapes are often metamorphosing seen as superstructure which is superimposed with drain in urbanization is overshadowed which mirrors the displacement of her characters. Shamsie's writing confronts her Audience with the handiwork of war and political turmoil, the nature and people themselves, deeply rooted, are part of the displacing evolution.

To this day, Khan's novels might be the most eco-critical of any Pakistani author. In her 2012 novel *Thinner Than Skin*, Khan examines the delicate ecosystems of the northern regions of Pakistan, paying particular attention to its glaciers, mountains, and valleys. Khan illustrates the interconnectivity of culture through migration, the stark impacts of civilization on nature, and the transformation tourism brings to age-old practices, all while shedding light on how the planet's climate is radically reshaping in the processes. Even more intricate is her vivid portrayal of the stillness and the beauty of the surrounding ecological marvels.

The Geometry of God published in 2008 stands out as the most intricate novel of Khan's oeuvre due to the way in which she tackles eco-criticism within the socio-political context of Pakistan. She argues against the nature protectors, yet emphasizes the nature protectors who target the weaker sections of society.

Novels by Mirza Waheed such as *The Collaborator* published in 2011 and *The Book of Gold Leaves* from 2014 focus on the decades of untold violence and the resulting devastation of ecology in Kashmir.

In the novels of Waheed, Kashmir's friendly forests, lakes and mountains instantaneously juxtaposed with the violence of warfare and the suffocating grips of militarism. It is in these social contexts which Waheed operates on, in a distant view, the wars, the colonial and post-colonial, and their root causes of the chaos the geopolitics of broken Kashmir's resources.

Pakistani writers such as Kamila Shamsie, Uzma Aslam Khan, Mirza Waheed and many others use eco-criticism to synthesize the triad of the environment, politics, and identity. Such works create a cum nexus which exposes the violence of war, internal and external displacement, colonialism, and globalization as the vicious politics of society under which ecology is shattered.

It nourishes the emerging eco-criticism in these authors' works but also enables them to deepen their geo-critical perspectives within the context of the global environmental crisis.

Discussion and Analysis

In carrying out the eco-critical evaluation of literature, by Kamila Shamsie, Mirza Waheed and Uzma Aslam Khan, will aid in uncovering the environmental dimensions further in their prose. This section will examine the ways these authors engage with the ecological challenges of the world, and their differing perspectives will be illustrated, with emphasis on Pakistan's environmental issues.

Burnt Shadows, authored by Kamila Shamsie, is akin to a ship navigating a sea of fusion where the human and nature realms are jaggedly and paradoxically intertwined, and nature is viewed as a coequal participant in the experiential foreshadowing of the text's characters. In contrast, the surroundings in Shamsie's novel do not remain a passive entity but are, rather, a sentient being. And the catastrophic nuclear critique—for example, the nuclear apocalypse—is characteristically enormous because of the annihilation caused by humanity. In this case, Shamsie examines the ecological foundations of the violence, exile, and survival architecture. On the other hand, Waheed portrays the current-day Kashmir: an extraordinary blend of nature and extraordinary violence enveloped in a drama of conflict. So, for the nature, this is an element of beautiful misery. This provides a case for studying how Waheed's *Mother Nature* delineates the unprecedented devastation and destruction of war and draws parallels with the emotive dimensions of armed conflict which in her case are beyond the humanity-nature framework.

This *Dialogue* is about the Pakistani descent and her disparate geography regarding the appreciation with which writers approach the issues of the landscape. The muffled cries of the embroilments of the landscape, buried under the cacophony of the nation-state (e.g. Pakistan: Water crisis, Deforestation, Climate Change), find echo in the narratives crafted here. The case is how these issues were addressed in the novels and their socio-historical relevance to Pakistani society.

The impact of nationalism, regionalism and locality on the narratives in question is also included in the analysis. Then comes the discussion on the construction of regional environmental issues in the wider context of global and national frameworks, which includes Waheed's representation of Kashmir — an ecologically sensitive area with a unique cultural tapestry — as a case in point.

The global and philosophical themes of identity and conflict will be explored as well migration and globalization. For example, in Shamsie's work, 'displacement' is often connected to environmental disruption, while Khan's work on climate change often relates to the loss of cultural identity. This is how this presentation will engage with how these themes enhance the narratives and deepen the understanding of the novels' eco-critical lenses.

Data Analysis

Uzma Aslam Khan's *nievais* is as keen to explore the psychological and national dislocation as dislocation and environmental change. The way with which the environment acts as a kind of both reflection and symbol of the human conflict is abundant with ecological imagery. The Pakistan of the novel, with its drought, pollution and social fragmentation, is the very embodiment of what Nixon (2011) refers to as 'slow violence' – the slowly advancing, often imperceptible, destruction of the environment that is politically and economically neglected.

Mira heard the river's call "like a thread of silver through the valley" and "wound" & her bones depicts the closure between oneself and nature. She river actively supports life where postcoloniality does not. This suggests life within nature is restorative and exists unlike the human world filled with corruption, modernity, and alienation. Within the framework of trans-corporeality, the river illustrates what Alaimo (2016) considers, what is human and what is eco is a boundary.

Khan describes, an example "The land was parched, the air full of dust, yet something in it pulsed with a strange, dry beauty" (Khan & Tibbets para. 22). This, in a different way, increases the scope of connection between different domains of art. It is aligned with the sweet and sour slice of Buell (2005) regarding the toxic sublime. The beauty that does not enter existence in ecological decline. The world of the parched land is a real suffering reflection of drought, and it is an indication of the inner drought or emotional drought of the divided world.

In the phrase, "She could smell the sea before she saw it, a tang that carried both promise and rot," the sea brings both new and decayed, a useful parallel to the new – and – decayed, a useful parallel to the new – and – decayed. (pg. 45). The olfactory image evokes the borderline between desire and disgust, a boundary that contains nature in a situated context, that was.

The "Withdrawal of nature" perceivable from the very first glance becomes more prominent in the line, "Zarina pressed her palms to the soil, as if asking forgiveness for what men had done to it."

Here, gendered responsibility surfaces, a clear line within ecofeminist discourse (Shiva, 1989; Gaard, 2015). Women in Khan's narrative weave between human and non human worlds, restoring moral equilibrium to the world through acts of empathy. The world is feminized not as a passive victim, but a participant that is suffering from patriarchal violence. The quote "He thought of the sea again, that vast unanswering mirror, and how it reflected only their trespasses" (p.233) relays the crux of the novel's eco-critical theme and sets the tone of the next chapter. Nature's violence done to itself is ethical and spiritual in nature. The "unanswering mirror" in the quote represents nature's lack of response, in relationship to Buell's (2005) assertion that literature ought to speak for an Earth that has been muted. Thus far in Khan's work, the environmental image has been turned into a moral commentary concerning national and personal violation, where the trespass is not only against land but against the conscience as well.

To sum up, Khan's *Trespassing* views the ecological crisis of Pakistan as interwoven with the oppression of women, political turmoil, and the disconnection of the spirit. Nature stands as a moral witness, an aware entity that soaks in and reflects the violence of modernity. Khan's environmental writing in this context of postcolonial South Asia is through rich imagery and strong sensory details, a critique of development and desire, an ecological elegy.

Burnt Shadows, written by Kamila Shamsie, intricately links literature with the environment, addressing the issue of global trauma. The novel begins with the atomic bomb explosion on Nagasaki and spans across Nov . 44. 1945. Japan, India, and then further, Pakistan and Afghanistan. Geographically spanning continents and countries, the novel turns the globe

itself into a spectator of the atrocities of war. It also elaborates on Nixon's notion of ecocide as something far more complicated than a single event and a process that extends and stretches through time.

In "She stepped out into the light, and the world dissolved into a radiance that seemed to pierce her bones," Shamsie associates the bodily with the ecological. Nuclear light fills the atmosphere with "radiance," which, on the one hand, is fascinating and, on the other, deadly. As such, it is an example of the toxic sublime (Buell, 2005). Beauty and destruction, in Shamsie's words, the radiance "pierces her bones," pulling together environmental and bodily desecration.

In "The river had turned to poison, the trees had turned to ash," the euphoric state of atomic warfare is still evident. Here, nature comes first as a victim of the river and the trees, which bears witness to what Pradhan (2024) calls the ecological memory of violence. This is the idea that nature is profoundly impacted by the inappropriate and careless actions of civilization even though history has moved on.

Shamsie's repeated inclusion of urban ecology imagery: "Karachi smelt of salt, sweat, and diesel, a city growing faster than its conscience" (p. 162) moves an ecological critique into the postcolonial city. Here the environment takes on an ethical dimension. Unchecked industrialization as represented by the development of Karachi, morally and environmentally, is indicative of a decline of the ethical and ecological superstructure. The perceptual smog of "salt, sweat, and diesel" speaks not just of an aetherial violation but of an ethical one.

In "The air was heavy with the memory of dust, as if even the wind carried grief" (p. 184), Shamsie gives emotional agency to air and the more restless of the winds. The line is illustrative of Buell's (2005) conception of the ecological imagination: the ability to place human emotions upon the subhuman realm. This shared anguish is a form of Alaimo's (2016) trans-corporeality: the shared suffering of body and world.

The line "The sky looked bruised, as if the air itself carried the memory of burning" (p. 350) extends the atomic wounds of Nagasaki to the war-marred skies of Afghanistan. The sky, both bruised and serene, acts like a trans-historical metaphor of the continuity of trauma across time and space. In doing so, Shamsie exhibits an "ecology of memory" literature that reconciles the environmental and historical.

Finally, "Hiroko touched the earth, and for a moment, she felt its heartbeat answering her own" (p. 392) ends the book with a glimmer of reconciliation. This type of touch changes an act of 'defeating the environment' into an act of renewal. The earth's "heartbeat" is a metaphor for the resilience of life and an affirmation of life that continues even after the world has suffered great destruction. The motion restores a lost sense of human connection with the natural world, as Glotfelty and Fromm (1996) projected, which is an eco-critical imperative – re-establishing empathy with the nonhuman world.

In *Burnt Shadows*, Shamsie maps the modernity's moral geography of ethico-environmental devastation. The radiation, the war, and the displacement that result are as much ecological as they are human disasters. The environment becomes an active participant in memory, trauma is borne, echoed, and transformed. The novel aspires towards the tenets of global eco-literature, projecting a planetary sense of ethics to localized eco-systems.

Comparative Eco-Critical Analysis of both novels

The relationship of mankind with the environment has become one of the main themes of world literature keeping in view the postcolonial societies which are simultaneously undergoing their cultural displacement and ecological devastation. Pakistani English fiction, which has emerged from an ecologically precarious and politically turbulent context, articulates these tensions with a rare depth and complexity. The novels **Trespassing** and **Burnt Shadows** touch upon the intertwined human and ecological suffering of the modern

world. Their authors, Uzma Aslam Khan and Kamila Shamsie, are both concerned with the contemporary social and ecological crises of their native Pakistan and weave ecological imagery as a mode of ethical contemplation. However, their approaches to ecoethics are situated differently. Shamsie's ecoethics unlike Khan's, expands the violent historical transnational ecology. This comparative analysis examines the use of world-making through environmental imagery, narrative structure, and ethics in the critique of modernity, displacement, and trauma violence.

Landscape and Memory: Local Ecology versus Global Catastrophe

An important distinction between 'Trespassing' and 'Burnt Shadows' rests on how each regards the landscape as a reservoir of memory. In Khan's fiction, the Pakistani landscape operates as an animated archive of the past and the present. The sentence 'The earth remembered more than the people who walked on it; it remembered the taste of blood and rain' (p. 88) encapsulates the novel's attitude toward the environment. Nature, personified as a witness, testifies to the scars of despair and endurance. This aligns with Alaimo's (2016) concept of trans-corporeality, signifying the relation of interdependence between the human and the nonhuman. In 'Trespassing,' the soil, rivers, and sea are active agents in the communion of memory and conscience.

The geographical settings of Shamsie's works are more extensive and seem to be tied to historical events. The places that she writes about, such as Nagasaki, Delhi, Karachi, and Kabul, are examples of what DeLoughrey (2019) refers to as "archipelago memory" which connects different places in space to a shared historical violence. The phrase, "The river had turned to poison, the trees had turned to ash" (p. 22) captures a landscape which has been utterly annihilated, though as a result of human fallibility. The peripheries of this ruined landscape still possess the power to signify. It transforms into a palimpsest, a landscape upon which nature and history are intertwined, a history deeply inscribed into nature. Later in the text, the appraisal of Karachi as "a city growing faster than its conscience" (p. 162) associates economic development with a loss of social civility. Thus, in both novels, the landscape has been moralized. However, Shamsie's is more expansive and fluid, while Khan's is more localized and static.

While Khan focuses more on the enduring geographies of memory which include local ecologies such as fields, rivers, and coastal towns, Shamsie weaves a transnational network of ecologies of trauma, connecting the environmental violence of war with the human costs of globalization. The violence and survival are intertwined with the environment, which in the durational framework is a witness to the violence and life that has passed, is. Both narratives reflect this idea, showcasing the environment as a mnemonic system.

Gender, Ecology, and Resistance

Both Khan and Shamsie underline women as primary connectors between humans and nature, however, both differ in how they achieve this which sheds different eco-feminist sensitivities. In Khan's *Trespassing*, women appear in domestic and agricultural settings, and their eco-awareness emerges from embodiment, labor, and care. When Zarina "pressed her palms to the soil, as if asking forgiveness for what men had done to it" (p. 117), the novel makes literal the ecofeminist observation that the exploitation of women is akin to the exploitation of nature (Shiva, 1989). The women's tactile relationship to the earth implies suffering and defense. Mira's river and Zarina's motions of atonement stand in glaring contrast to the male character's estrangement from the land, and exemplify what Gaard (2015) refers to as the "gendered politics of environmental agency."

In *Burnt Shadows*, however, female ecological consciousness is mediated through transnational trauma in place of agricultural intimacy. Hiroko's body is an environmental text, a palimpsest on which global violence is inscribed. Her burn scars, "like wings that

would never fly” (p. 51) serve to brand her as a victim and witness at the same time to the violence humans do to each other. This corporeal symbolism echoes with Alaimo’s (2016) notion of trans-corporeality, where the body’s exposure becomes a metaphor for the world’s exposure.

There is a stark contrast between Zarina’s connection to soil and Hiroko’s relationship with the environment because the latter’s grapples with the trauma of displacement, and her movement between continents embodies the dislocation of trauma within the landscape.

Khan’s women aspire to touch and cherish the soil and flora, while Shamsie’s women is a custodian of its wasteland. The former expresses ecological nostalgia through the maternal domesticity of rootedness; the latter deals with the displacement of people and nature, of environment and human. In both, however, women embody a reductive ecological ethics that counters the devastations of patriarchy, militarism, and modernization.

Representations of Violence: Industrial, Military, and Environmental

Both novels differ with regard to representations of violence and the extent to which it alters human and physical geography. Khan’s *Trespassing* concerns itself with industrial and agricultural exploitation—the slow violence of the land and community through global capitalism. “white and endless, like ghosts of another age” (p. 169). The cotton fields which are described as, “white and endless, like ghosts of another age” (p. 169). reminds me of the ghostly enduring images of the colonial economic system. That is, there is in fact no other way to understand the images than through Nixon’s (2011) notion of slow violence. It is violence that is not occurring through an explosion, but through the slow degradation and decay of the ecologies that shape the world. Within the novel, Pakistan is a geography that is modernized, but in doing so, is an active and environmental trespasser. The land and people of Pakistan are a moral impoverished.

Shamsie’s *Burnt Shadows*, on the other hand, shows catastrophic, instantaneous violence like the atomic bomb, global warfare, and terrorism. This violence, though, is the same slow violence Khan lays bare: the lingering environmental aftermath of violence. “The sky looked bruised, as if the air itself carried the memory of burning” (p. 350) is Shamsie’s evocative articulation of base violence. The moment of destruction gets extended into a forever state of ecocide. The echos of violence are trapped in the air, in the soil, and in the water—there is a “continuum of contamination” (Buell 2005). Shamsie and Khan, then, both show the aftermath of different types of violence (Shamsie’s violence of war and Khan’s violence of industry) and, in the end, the planet is the victim of all human violence.

Narrative Strategy and Environmental Temporality

Khan’s *Trespassing* features a circular narrative which has a rhythm of decomposition and renewal. The stories with a domestic focus unfold across various settings and generations, interlaced with the complexity of an interconnected ecological system. This structure supports the eco-critical argument of interdependence among all forms of life. The novel’s ending with the sea, described as “a vast unanswering mirror” (p. 233), does not provide closure, but a form of reflection. This reflection is moral, rather than analytical.

In contrast, Shamsie’s *Burnt Shadows* is broad and linear, tracing the flow (and also the flow of trauma) across different borders over the expanse of decades. The years embraced, particularly the era of 1945 and the post 9/11 period, spans as an illustration of the temporality of environmental devastation. This expanse of time helps justify the argument proposed by Nixon (2011) that literature has the capacity to render visible ‘slow violence’ by amplifying the time structure of a narrative.

Shamsie’s historical scroll adds to the contrast of Khan’s immediacy whilst paradoxically achieving the same thing: ecological temporality, the perception of nature and history as a memory carrier beyond human lifespans.

Moral Vision: Redemption, Memory, and Ecological Hope

Both novels, in spite of the images of suffering, end with an optimistic gesture towards redemption formed by renewed ecological consciousness. In *Trespassing*, redemption is recognition and repentance. The touch of the soil by Zarina and the instinctive bond with nature by Mira are indicative of the moral restoration through ecological humility. Unlike Khan, Shamsie, envisions salvation through technological progress, which is still a moral ecology, but under the influence of imbalance supported by empathy and restraint.

In *Burnt Shadows*, redemption seems to lie in connection and continuity. When Hiroko “touched the earth, and for a moment, she felt its heartbeat answering her own” (p. 392), the moment exemplifies her trauma and mends the rift between the human and the environment. Shamsie’s last image of the Earth is not a site of ruin but a site of endurance. It illustrates Buell (2005) when he claims that the environmental imagination can transform a catastrophe into a conscience.

Both writers articulate a vision of environmental ethics that is, in the very least, surrounding emotional and moral renewal. The distinction depends on whose redemption is being considered. For Khan, it is local and personal, springing from love and acts of remembrance. Shamsie’s, on the other hand, is global and devoid of time as it is anchored in an understanding of the planet’s inherent fragility.

Findings and Conclusion

The present study underlines an almost unexamined aspect in Pakistan’s literature: the growing case for eco-critical analysis of literature in Pakistan due to the country’s environmental catastrophic situation. The literature of Pakistan, and, in particular, the works of its novelist, show in meaningful ways, the dual ineluctable movements a work of literature can make: respond to and reflect the devastation of the biosphere. It is a call for literature to respond to the call for environmental justice, focused on the specific geography, history, and culture of the region and the deepening the canon. The complex of eco-military capitalist exploitation, and social oppression -- within which these novelists live -- is simultaneously the framework for this ecological disaster and reaches deeply into the cultural and emotional fabric of the nation states. It is as if these writers are unintentional, pioneering eco-critical practitioners, advancing the field, and thereby exposing the intricate politics of the environment, the ways in which these interconnections are articulated in literature from contemporary South Asia. Through the novels, *Trespassing* and *Burnt Shadows*, one can see the two different yet parallel ecologies of a postcolonial imagination. In Khan’s narrative, Pakistan’s domestic and agrarian space illustrate an inner world of nature amid a gender, class, and spiritual crisis. In contrast, Shamsie’s novel spans across continents and decades, following the political ecology of trauma of war and displacement. Khan’s world is tactile and familiar—the soil, the earth, the ground. Shamsie’s world is cosmic and historical—the sky, the heavens, heavy with bombs.

Both writers arrive at the same conclusion, however. The survival of humanity and nature is interlinked, and the moral dilemmas of the world today are closely tied to the ecological crises of our planet. These authors’ works illustrate what Pradhan (2024) calls “the Global South environmental humanities,” which confronts the realities of environmental injustice as lived, not as an abstract phenomenon.

In their distinctive poetics of the environment, Khan and Shamsie reconfigure Pakistani English fiction into a vibrant and penetrating ecological concern, demonstrating the essential reality that the planet is not merely a backdrop to the human spectacle but their most steadfast and enduring co-star.

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Appendix

Trespassing

"The river wound like a thread of silver through the valley, and Mira felt its call in her bones." (p. 7)

"The land was parched, the air full of dust, yet something in it pulsed with a strange, dry beauty." (p. 22)

"She could smell the sea before she saw it, a tang that carried both promise and rot." (p. 45)

"Lahore burned in its own desires, its streets a furnace of greed and prayer." (p. 63)

“The earth remembered more than the people who walked on it; it remembered the taste of blood and rain.” (p. 88)

“Zarina pressed her palms to the soil, as if asking forgiveness for what men had done to it.” (p. 117)

“Planes tore through the clouds above Karachi, and she wondered if the sky could ever heal.” (p. 141)

“The cotton fields shimmered in the sun, white and endless, like ghosts of another age.” (p. 169)

“When the storm came, it came without mercy, flattening what little hope they had planted.” (p. 194)

“He thought of the sea again, that vast unanswering mirror, and how it reflected only their trespasses.” (p. 233)

Burnt Shadows

“She stepped out into the light, and the world dissolved into a radiance that seemed to pierce her bones.” (p. 15)

“The river had turned to poison, the trees had turned to ash.” (p. 22)

“Smoke rose like a second sky, swallowing sound, color, and memory.” (p. 29)

“The scars on her back were like wings—burnt wings that would never fly.” (p. 51)

“Karachi smelt of salt, sweat, and diesel, a city growing faster than its conscience.” (p. 162)

“The air was heavy with the memory of dust, as if even the wind carried grief.” (p. 184)

“He watched the planes pass overhead, knowing that every shadow was a threat.” (p. 227)

“The sky looked bruised, as if the air itself carried the memory of burning.” (p. 350)

“They were all marked, each in their own way, by wars they didn’t start and couldn’t end.” (p. 368)

“Hiroko touched the earth, and for a moment, she felt its heartbeat answering her own.” (p. 392)