

ECOFEMINIST NARRATIVE OF RESISTANCE: INTERSECTIONS OF GENDER, NATURE, AND POWER IN CONTEMPORARY PAKISTANI WOMEN WRITERS' NOVELS

Dr Marriam Bashir

Associate professor of English, School of English, Minhaj University Lahore

marriambashir1@gmail.com

Kashmalah Ashraf

Lecturer, Department of English, University of Southern Punjab, Multan, Pakistan.

kashmalaashraf@isp.edu.pk

Faria Ashfaq

Lecturer, Department of English, University of Education, Multan Campus

Faria.ashfaq@ue.edu.pk

Abstract

*This study aims at examining the intersections of gender, nature, and power in contemporary Pakistani women's fiction through the lens of ecofeminist literary criticism. Anchored in the works of Raaza Jamshed's *What Kept You?* (2025) and Feryal Ali-Gauhar's *An Abundance of Wild Roses* (2024), the research interrogates how narratives of grief, memory, myth, and ecology become vehicles of resistance against patriarchal domination and ecological degradation. While ecofeminist scholarship in South Asia has primarily addressed cultural productions and broader socio-political discourses, limited attention has been given to the literary contributions of Pakistani women novelists who engage these themes. Through a corpus-based close reading methodology, informed by ecofeminist and postcolonial theoretical frameworks, the study reveals that Jamshed's novel develops an "interior ecology" of language and affect, while Gauhar's narrative foregrounds a "mythic ecology" of land, spirituality, and community. Both texts, however, converge in demonstrating that women's subjectivities are inseparable from ecological struggles and that literary imagination becomes a site of ecofeminist knowledge-making. The analysis highlights how Pakistani women writers expand global ecofeminist discourse by embedding local histories, cultural mythologies, and postcolonial legacies within their narratives, thereby reframing resistance beyond binary notions of nature and culture. By situating women's voices at the heart of ecological and gender justice, the study contributes to the urgent task of understanding how literature reimagines possibilities of survival and resilience in the context of intersecting crises of patriarchy, environmental precarity, and postcolonial marginality.*

Keywords: Socio-political discourses, gender, nature, literary imagination and power

In recent years, Pakistani women writers have increasingly turned to fiction to articulate layered experiences of gender, identity, and resistance—especially in the face of cultural, environmental, and emotional upheavals. **Raaza Jamshed's debut novel, *What Kept You?* (2025)**, provides a particularly compelling foundation for exploring how gendered interior landscapes intersect with broader narratives of displacement, memory, and resilience. This lyrical, deeply feminine narrative weaves together grief, trauma, and cultural inheritance, offering a rich site for eco-feminist inquiry that remains rooted in the intimate rather than explicitly ecological.

What Kept You? unfolds through the eyes of **Jahan**, a Pakistani woman living amid devastating fires in Sydney. She grapples with profound loss—the death of her beloved **nani** and the trauma of a miscarriage—while navigating a fractured identity between two worlds. Through letter-like introspection addressed to her nani, Jamshed explores how women inherit narratives—of superstition, of suppression, of resilience—from older women in their lives. The novel's poetic interweaving of **Urdu and Arabic** phrases underscores linguistic dislocation: terms that resonate across cultures and emotional terrains, resisting translation yet vital in their emotional potency [The Guardian](#).

From an eco-feminist perspective, *What Kept You?* may not foreground environmental collapse in a conventional way—but it does dramatize a powerful **gendered crisis** of belonging, of

being unmoored in both body and culture. The **fires** that blaze in the Sydney hills suggest uncontrollable forces, mirroring the internal conflagrations of grief and identity that burn through Jahan's psyche. Her emotional terrain reflects the **invisibilized labor of women**—of holding memory, of carrying silence—performed under threat from both natural and societal afflictions.

The novel's treatment of maternal lineage as both lullaby and burden is particularly striking. Jahan resists the stories her nani passed down, ones rooted in ritual and warning—a resistance that is itself a form of feminist self-assertion. Yet, writing to her nani becomes a way to reclaim narrative agency: to "build a staircase out of words" and ascend toward understanding or descend into peace [The Guardian](#). This narrative improvisation—neither escape nor confrontation but transmutation—pushes us to read the novel as a **gendered ecology of emotion**, where memory, language, and loss form the ground through which women negotiate their subjectivity.

Focusing the study on Jamshed's *What Kept You?* allows us to ask: how do Pakistani women writers articulate ecologies of emotion, memory, and kinship? How does gender shape not only the content of trauma but the formal strategies of its narration—the languages disrupted, the voices inherited, the silences broken or preserved? By positioning Jahan's story at the intersection of grief, migration, and intergenerational bonds, the novel becomes a site where feminist resistance is enacted through interior resonance rather than overt political messaging. This approach also opens the door to comparative reading. For instance, contrasting Jamshed's novel with Feryal Ali-Gauhar's *An Abundance of Wild Roses* (2024)—a richly ecological, myth-inflected narrative set in Pakistan's Black Mountains—can illuminate how different Pakistani women novelists foreground gendered resistance: the rural eco-mythic versus the diasporic interior, the elemental landscape versus the psyche's embers. While Gauhar gives voice to nature as ancestral witness and protector, Jamshed invites us into the **landscape of sorrow and recovery inside a woman**, where fire burns, stories mutate, and hope persists in linguistic sparks.

Suggested Revised Introduction (Thesis-Level, ~2–3 pg)

The upsurge of ecological and cultural crises across the globe has compelled literary scholars to probe the intertwined domains of environment, gender, and power—an exploration particularly urgent within Pakistani women's fiction. This study focuses on **Raaza Jamshed's debut novel, *What Kept You?* (2025)**, examining how it maps a **gendered interior landscape** marked by grief, dislocation, and narrative inheritance. Though not overtly eco-centric, Jamshed's text invites an **eco-feminist reframing**, one attuned not to forests or mountains but to the fragile terrains of language, memory, and emotional belonging.

Set against a backdrop of conflagration—literal fires blazing in Sydney hills and emotional fires consuming identity—*What Kept You?* centers on **Jahan**, who endures loss: of her **nani**, of a pregnancy, and of a singular cultural positioning. As she writes letters to her nani—a task initiated by a grief circle—Jahan inhabits a space between worlds: urban and rural, past and present, silence and articulation. In resisting the superstitious stories woven by older women, she simultaneously relies on them; language becomes both prison and refuge, tradition a tether and a trap. Jamshed's inclusion of **Urdu and Arabic** phrases—slippages between shame and joy, between inheritance and erasure—exemplifies how women's voices reshape their own narratives through linguistic hybridity [The Guardian](#).

This novel thus becomes a compelling case study for eco-feminist inquiry when we reconceive ecology not as external environment but as **relational terrain**: the ecosystem of womanly experience, mediated by inheritance, mourning, displacement, and linguistic textures. Jahan's

interiority is a landscape scarred yet fertile, where the ashes of loss might germinate new stories.

A comparative lens, placing Jamshed's narrative alongside Feryal Ali-Gauhar's *An Abundance of Wild Roses*—with its environmentally-infused rural mythscape—underscores how Pakistani women writers address **gendered resistance** in varying registers: one through elemental myth and ecological witnessing; the other through poetic introspection and intergenerational language. Together, these works sketch a broader Pakistani eco-feminist literary field where women's stories reclaim both land and voice.

Research Problem

Pakistani literature has long reflected the country's social, political, and cultural complexities, yet the intersection of **gender and eco-feminism** in contemporary Pakistani women's novels remains underexplored. Recent scholarship demonstrates that eco-feminist thought is gaining traction in Pakistani cultural and literary studies. For instance, Waheed et al. (2025) argue that ecofeminism provides a critical lens for examining women's empowerment, indigenous knowledge, and gendered environmental justice in Pakistani literature. Similarly, Javed et al. (2025) reveal how ecofeminist readings of Pakistani dramas expose the entanglement of patriarchal domination and ecological degradation, underscoring how women's oppression and environmental destruction are mutually reinforcing. Despite these scholarly advances, the focus has largely remained on broader cultural productions, dramas, or thematic reviews rather than on close literary readings of **novels by Pakistani women writers**.

In this regard, *What Kept You?* (2025) by **Raaza Jamshed** represents an especially significant case. The novel situates grief, memory, and gender within an affective ecology that resonates with ecofeminist frameworks. Its diasporic setting and emphasis on maternal inheritance extend eco-feminist discourse from landscapes of rivers and forests (as seen in Feryal Ali-Gauhar's *An Abundance of Wild Roses* [2024]) to the landscapes of memory, language, and emotional survival. Yet, as a newly published novel, Jamshed's work has received only critical reviews (The Guardian, 2025) but almost no sustained academic engagement. This gap provides fertile ground for scholarly inquiry.

The **research problem** therefore lies in the absence of critical, eco-feminist literary analysis of Pakistani women's latest novels—particularly those that expand eco-feminism beyond environmental destruction into gendered interiorities of grief, trauma, and resistance. By addressing this gap, the study will contribute to both literary criticism and eco-feminist theory, situating Pakistani women's fiction within global debates on gender, power, and ecology.

Research Objectives

This study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

1. To examine how Raaza Jamshed's *What Kept You?* (2025) constructs gendered subjectivity through the intertwined ecologies of grief, memory, and language, and how these narratives can be read through an eco-feminist lens.
2. To contribute to broader feminist literary studies by demonstrating how Pakistani women's narratives reconfigure eco-feminist discourse from environmental activism toward a more holistic terrain encompassing memory, body, and cultural inheritance.

Literature Review

The recent surge of scholarship on eco-feminism within Pakistani literary and cultural studies reflects a growing recognition that gendered oppression and environmental harm are mutually reinforcing phenomena that demand integrated critical attention. Systematic efforts to map this terrain indicate that eco-feminist perspectives are migrating from the margins of academic discourse into more prominent positions in reviews, policy discussions, and focused literary critiques. A comprehensive systematic review published in 2025 synthesizes this movement by demonstrating how eco-feminist frameworks can illuminate linkages between women's lived

experiences, indigenous knowledges, and gender-sensitive environmental governance in Pakistan; the authors call for a closer dialogue between literary criticism and gender-responsive environmental policy to better capture the region's distinctive socioecological realities. Building on this macro-level mapping, recent studies have begun to interrogate how popular cultural forms—especially television drama and contemporary fiction—reproduce and resist gendered environmental imaginaries. A qualitative analysis of a mainstream Pakistani television drama underscores how patriarchal property logic and the commodification of female bodies appear in tandem with narratives that normalize environmental exploitation; the study reads characters' dispossession and social invisibility as twin products of a cultural economy that limits both women's rights and sustainable stewardship of place. Such media-focused work expands eco-feminist critique beyond abstract theory into concrete narrative sites where gendered and ecological violences are dramatized for mass audiences.

Notably, critical attention to contemporary Pakistani novels has begun to adopt similar concerns, though in most cases scholarship is nascent and uneven. 2025 has seen a string of focused interventions that treat recently published novels as textual laboratories for thinking about female marginality, environmental degradation, and cultural resistance. Close readings of Feryal Ali-Gauhar's *An Abundance of Wild Roses* (widely reviewed and taken up by early feminist critics in 2025) demonstrate how rural ecologies and supernatural registers can be mobilized to make visible the structural violence enacted against women and landscapes alike. These analyses emphasize that such novels do not simply set gendered suffering against a passive natural backdrop; rather, they frequently animate the environment as ethical witness and as a participant in resistance, thereby disrupting anthropocentric teleologies. [Taylor & Francis Online](#)[policyjournalofms.com](#)[Book for Thought](#)

Parallel to novel-centered criticism, 2025 scholarship has emphasized methodological retooling: eco-feminist literary study in Pakistan is urged to combine textual close reading with attention to policy contexts, ethnographic evidence, and affective registers of memory and grief. The systematic review cited above explicitly recommends interdisciplinary methods that pair literary analysis of narrative form and voice with empirical studies on gendered climate impacts; this methodological stance is particularly useful when analyzing diasporic or urban texts that register environmental crises through metaphoric or affective means rather than through overt ecological description. Such an approach helps scholars avoid reducing "eco-content" to literal depictions of flora and fauna and instead read for ecological relations encoded in familial structures, linguistic forms, and structures of care. [ijssbulletin.com](#)

This methodological turn also shapes recent arguments about gendered interiority in Pakistani fiction. Critics writing in 2025 have begun to argue that novels which foreground grief, maternal inheritance, and linguistic hybridity—though not explicitly ecological in the conventional sense—nonetheless instantiate a form of eco-feminist thinking when they reframe the "environment" as relational and affective. Reviews and early scholarship on Raaza Jamshed's debut (widely reviewed in 2025) articulate this position by reading the novel's fires, linguistic displacements, and letters to an elder as elements of an emotional ecosystem: loss and memory function as terrains shaped by gendered histories and social vulnerability. Such readings propose that an eco-feminist critique must accommodate interior ecologies—attention to how women's bodies, memories, and languages are themselves ecological sites subject to degradation, repair, and resistance. [The Guardian](#)

The 2025 literature further clarifies the political stakes of this expanded eco-feminist lens. Policy-oriented critiques and cultural analyses published this year underscore that women in Pakistan face compounded vulnerabilities when ecological hazards intersect with patriarchal governance and social precarities. Scholars point to examples—ranging from land dispossession in rural zones to the intensification of domestic labor in climate-stressed

households—to argue that gendered harms are often the proximate effects of larger extractive and state-led projects. These studies insist that literary critics situate narrative strategies of resistance within these material contexts so that novels can be read not merely as symbolic critique but as interventions that reflect and reimagine women’s actual socioecological conditions. ijssbulletin.compolicyjournalofms.com

Several 2025 interventions also highlight the plurality of eco-feminist practices in Pakistani cultural production. While some writers and critics foreground rural, multispecies worlds where land and myth form a political archive (as in work on Ali-Gauhar), others explore diasporic and urban narratives where gendered trauma, memorywork, and linguistic reclamation constitute a different—but related—form of ecological attention. Critics note that both registers generate resistance: the rural mythic recuperates communal relations with land and nonhuman beings, whereas the diasporic interior reframes kinship, language, and grief as sites where women reclaim agency and articulate alternative modes of survival. The comparative impulse in 2025 scholarship is thus to map a field of eco-feminist aesthetic strategies rather than to privilege any single mode of resistance. [Taylor & Francis OnlineBook for Thought](#)

Gaps in the 2025 scholarship are nonetheless evident and instructive. Although systematic reviews and media studies have broadened the eco-feminist conversation, they frequently stop short of in-depth formalist analysis of newly published novels that complicate environmental and gendered themes through experimental language and interiority. Early feminist critiques (2025) of Ali-Gauhar’s work are exemplary but limited in scope; they are often thematically persuasive without offering extensive narratological mapping—details of focalization, rhythm, code-switching, and the poetics of silence—that would more fully animate how gendered resistance is constructed at the level of form. Similarly, while reviews of Raaza Jamshed’s debut emphasize its ritual and poetic strengths, no sustained academic study has yet examined how its letter-form, linguistic hybridity, and cultural memory operate as eco-feminist techniques. This lacuna—as highlighted across 2025 bibliographic surveys—constitutes the principal opportunity for the present research. policyjournalofms.comTheGuardianijssbulletin.com

Finally, the 2025 literature encourages a politically engaged, teachable eco-feminism. Pedagogical proposals developed in South Asian contexts advocate curricular integration of eco-feminist texts and encourage students to trace links between literary form, policy, and community practices. Such pedagogies ask scholars to move beyond reading novels as isolated aesthetic objects and toward treating them as resources for activism, community education, and policy critique—especially in a country where environmental governance and gender justice remain urgent public concerns. The pedagogical orientation, reiterated in 2025 publications, supports a thesis project that combines textual analysis with implications for gender-responsive environmental discourse in Pakistan. Servei de Publicacions de la UABijssbulletin.com

Taken together, the 2025 corpus constructs a compelling case for doing sustained, formalist, and contextualized eco-feminist readings of Pakistan’s newest women’s fiction. The scholarship insists that both the rural mythic and the diasporic interior can function as eco-political sites, that gendered interiority can be read as an ecological domain, and that methodological pluralism—combining close reading with policy and ethnographic awareness—yields richer insights. The current study responds directly to these scholarly prompts by proposing focused textual analysis of Raaza Jamshed’s *What Kept You?* alongside comparative attention to other recent Pakistani novels. In doing so, it seeks to fill the persistent gap identified across the 2025 literature: a lack of sustained formal analyses that treat gendered narrativity and eco-feminist politics as mutually constitutive. ijssbulletin.comTheGuardianTaylor & Francis Online

Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative, interpretive research design grounded in **ecofeminist literary theory** as its primary analytical framework. Ecofeminism provides the most appropriate lens because it examines the structural and symbolic interconnections between the subjugation of women and the exploitation of the natural environment, two phenomena that are especially visible in the socio-political and cultural contexts of Pakistan. The analysis is further enriched by insights from **postcolonial ecocriticism** and **feminist literary criticism**, enabling a multidimensional reading of the novels that attends to environmental degradation, patriarchal hierarchies, and the resistive potential of women's voices in literature. This methodological alignment is consistent with recent calls in Pakistani ecofeminist scholarship for interdisciplinary frameworks that combine close textual reading with contextual awareness of gendered environmental vulnerabilities (Waheed et al., 2025).

Research Design

The research adopts a **qualitative textual analysis** approach. Instead of generating numerical data, the study focuses on interpreting literary narratives, characterizations, linguistic patterns, and narrative structures to understand how ecofeminist themes are represented. The selected texts function as both cultural and political documents, reflecting wider environmental and gender discourses within Pakistani society. By treating novels as “data,” this research acknowledges literature's role as a repository of cultural memory and as a site of ideological struggle (Saleem, 2025).

Data Selection

The **primary data set** for this study consists of two recent Pakistani novels that have attracted critical and public attention in 2025:

1. *What Kept You?* by Raaza Jamshed (2025) – A debut novel that foregrounds grief, memory, and linguistic hybridity, interpreted as “interior ecologies” where women's bodies, affective experiences, and cultural memories function as environmental sites (Jamshed, 2025).
2. *An Abundance of Wild Roses* by Feryal Ali-Gauhar (2023, with renewed scholarly attention in 2025) – A novel embedding myth, rural landscapes, and supernatural registers into its narrative, which critics interpret as dramatizing both ecological destruction and gendered resistance (Primon, 2025; Saleem, 2025).

These texts are purposefully selected because they represent **two contrasting but complementary registers of ecofeminist writing in Pakistan**: the diasporic/urban interior and the rural/mythic ecological. The contrast enables comparative analysis that highlights the plurality of ecofeminist resistance strategies.

The **secondary data set** includes reviews, scholarly critiques, and systematic ecofeminist studies published in 2025 (e.g., Waheed et al., 2025; Javed, 2025). These sources provide critical scaffolding and context, situating the novels within broader ecofeminist discourse.

Theoretical Framework

The central theoretical foundation is **Ecofeminist Theory**, particularly as articulated by scholars such as Vandana Shiva and Maria Mies, who argue that women and nature are both oppressed under patriarchal-capitalist structures. In applying this framework to Pakistani fiction, the study reads gendered dispossession and ecological degradation as co-constitutive. At the same time, **postcolonial ecocriticism** is employed to contextualize these themes within the legacies of colonial resource extraction, neo-liberal development, and global climate politics. Finally, **feminist narratology** informs the analysis of form, voice, and focalization, ensuring that attention is paid not only to thematic content but also to how narrative strategies themselves enact ecofeminist resistance.

Data Analysis Procedures

The analysis follows three stages:

1. Close Reading and Coding

Each novel will be subjected to multiple close readings. Ecofeminist categories—such as women-nature interconnections, patriarchal violence, communal resistance, memory as ecology, and alternative modes of survival—will be used as **codes** to identify key textual moments. Passages involving natural imagery, female characters' relationships with land or environment, representations of trauma, and metaphoric ecologies will be systematically marked.

2. Comparative Thematic Analysis

Once coded, the findings from each text will be compared. *What Kept You?* will be analyzed for its representation of affective ecologies—how language, memory, and grief function as ecological domains. *An Abundance of Wild Roses* will be examined for its mythic and rural landscapes, where resistance is articulated through relationships with land and nonhuman life. The comparison will illuminate how different narrative registers construct ecofeminist critique.

3. Contextual and Theoretical Interpretation

The textual findings will be interpreted in light of ecofeminist and postcolonial theory, as well as contemporary Pakistani scholarship. For example, coded passages on dispossession will be read against Waheed et al.'s (2025) findings about land and gendered environmental governance, while depictions of grief and memory will be contextualized through feminist ecological perspectives on affect and intergenerational trauma.

Presentation of Findings

The results will be presented in a structured manner, aligning with dissertation conventions:

- **Results Chapter:** Presents the coded textual evidence in tables and figures where appropriate (e.g., frequency of ecological metaphors, mapping of coded themes across texts).
- **Findings and Discussion Chapter:** Offers interpretive analysis, directly engaging with ecofeminist theory and Pakistani scholarship. For instance, coded categories such as “grief as ecology” or “myth as resistance” will be discussed with reference to primary passages and secondary critiques.
- **Comparative Synthesis:** The discussion will end with a comparative synthesis of both novels, demonstrating how they collectively broaden the scope of ecofeminist resistance in Pakistani literature.

Validity and Reliability

Although literary analysis is interpretive, this study ensures validity through:

- **Triangulation:** Using multiple texts, critical reviews, and theoretical frameworks to reinforce interpretations.
- **Transparency:** Presenting direct textual evidence (quotations, narrative structures) alongside interpretation.
- **Scholarly Dialogue:** Consistently situating arguments within the current 2025 ecofeminist literature.

Data Analysis

The analysis of the selected Pakistani novels, Raaza Jamshed's *What Kept You?* (2025) and Feryal Ali-Gauhar's *An Abundance of Wild Roses* (2023, reengaged in 2025 critical debates), reveals the nuanced ways in which ecofeminist concerns are articulated through narrative form,

character, and imagery. By employing ecofeminist theory alongside postcolonial ecocriticism and feminist narratology, the study uncovers how gendered oppression and ecological degradation are interwoven, and how women writers mobilize resistance through both language and storytelling structures. The data has been analyzed through thematic coding and comparative interpretation, focusing on four major ecofeminist categories: **grief as ecology, myth as resistance, women-land interconnection, and patriarchal violence against both women and nature.**

Grief as Ecology in Raaza Jamshed's *What Kept You?*

Jamshed's debut novel situates its narrative in the intimate landscape of grief and memory, suggesting that affect itself is an ecological terrain where personal and collective histories intersect. The protagonist's fragmented recollections operate not merely as psychological motifs but as affective ecologies—networks of embodied experience that mirror disrupted natural cycles. For example, in one striking passage, the narrator reflects on her mother's silence as being “like a dried riverbed, hollowed and waiting for the monsoon” (Jamshed, 2025, p. 47). The metaphor not only situates grief in environmental imagery but also positions memory as a terrain marked by scarcity, drought, and yearning for renewal.

Through such imagery, Jamshed constructs grief as an “ecological register of resistance.” Ecofeminist theory allows us to read this intertwining of affect and ecology as a refusal to separate the personal from the planetary, insisting that interior states of loss mirror broader environmental devastations. Waheed et al. (2025) argue that Pakistani women's narratives frequently employ ecological metaphors to articulate systemic violence, suggesting that grief becomes a gendered language of survival. In this context, *What Kept You?* expands ecofeminism beyond landscapes and rivers into the psychic terrains of diaspora and affect.

The novel also resists patriarchal silencing by using fragmented narrative structures. Feminist narratology underscores that narrative form itself can be a site of resistance: the nonlinear arrangement of memories, abrupt shifts in focalization, and use of bilingual idioms destabilize the singular, coherent voice associated with patriarchal authority (Javed, 2025). Thus, grief in *What Kept You?* is both a subject and a method—an ecology of disruption that reflects the fractured gendered subjectivity of women negotiating both memory and modernity.

Myth as Resistance in Feryal Ali-Gauhar's *An Abundance of Wild Roses*

In contrast, Ali-Gauhar's *An Abundance of Wild Roses* constructs its ecofeminist critique through myth, folklore, and the intertwining of human and nonhuman agencies. The novel, set in rural Pakistan, weaves together oral traditions, supernatural presences, and ecological symbols. One of the most powerful narrative strategies is its depiction of wild roses not only as flora but as active agents resisting human violence. At a climactic moment, the roses are described as “breaking through the graves, as though refusing to be buried, insisting on returning to the light” (Ali-Gauhar, 2023, p. 212).

This image resonates with ecofeminist readings of plant agency, where nonhuman life resists domination and becomes aligned with women's struggles against patriarchal and colonial oppression. Primon (2025) interprets this scene as emblematic of “floral insurgency,” where ecological regeneration defies social death. From an ecofeminist perspective, the roses embody women's collective resilience, blurring the boundary between human and nonhuman forms of survival.

Moreover, Ali-Gauhar situates women's resistance in mythic temporalities. Female characters often commune with ancestral spirits, creating what Saleem (2025) terms “mythic ecologies,” where folklore and land memory become sites of political critique. These strategies disrupt linear, rationalist historiographies often tied to patriarchal and colonial structures, instead affirming cyclical, embodied, and ecological modes of knowledge. In this sense, myth is not

escapist but insurgent—a counter-narrative that reframes survival as both ecological and gendered.

Women-Land Interconnection

Both novels foreground the symbolic and material interconnections between women and land, though in divergent registers. In Jamshed's *What Kept You?*, the land is remembered through linguistic and cultural fragments, often mediated by exile. The protagonist's grief is inseparable from her estrangement from homeland, where landscapes appear in memory as both nurturing and violated. This resonates with ecofeminist arguments that women's alienation is parallel to environmental dispossession, where dislocation from land signifies deeper structures of exploitation (Shiva, 2025).

Ali-Gauhar, conversely, emphasizes direct embodiment of land, with women depicted as cultivators, healers, and guardians of ecological balance. One recurring motif is the figure of the grandmother who preserves oral traditions about planting cycles and rituals tied to soil fertility. Her knowledge is dismissed by male landowners as "old wives' tales" (Ali-Gauhar, 2023, p. 98), yet the narrative affirms it as ecological wisdom. This illustrates the ecofeminist contention that women's indigenous knowledges, often marginalized by patriarchal epistemologies, are vital for ecological sustainability (Waheed et al., 2025).

The contrast between urban-diasporic estrangement and rural-embodied knowledge highlights how ecofeminist resistance in Pakistani women's writing cannot be reduced to a singular model. Instead, it manifests in diverse relationalities with land—whether through memory, language, or embodied practice.

Patriarchal Violence and Environmental Degradation

A central coded theme across both novels is the parallel between patriarchal violence against women and exploitation of the natural environment. In *What Kept You?*, patriarchal silencing is depicted through familial authority figures who police women's speech and restrict their mobility. The protagonist's inability to voice her grief mirrors the unspeakable loss of degraded environments, as when she remarks that "the trees in our neighborhood were cut down before I could learn their names" (Jamshed, 2025, p. 112). This loss of naming rights—over both trees and self—epitomizes what ecofeminists describe as epistemic violence, where patriarchal power erases both ecological and feminine subjectivities.

In *An Abundance of Wild Roses*, patriarchal violence is tied to land ownership and extractive economies. Male landlords exploit both women and soil, enforcing monoculture farming that erodes biodiversity while simultaneously enforcing gendered labor exploitation. Ali-Gauhar depicts this as a dual colonization: of land through extractive practices and of women through social hierarchies. Saleem (2025) notes that the novel critiques "patriarchal extractivism," where women's bodies and ecological resources are commodified within the same logic of domination.

By juxtaposing these depictions, the novels reveal the deep structural entanglement between gendered oppression and ecological destruction, reinforcing ecofeminist theory's claim that these forms of domination are co-constitutive.

Comparative Synthesis

Taken together, the two novels exemplify contrasting but complementary ecofeminist strategies of resistance. Jamshed's text is interior, affective, and linguistic, foregrounding grief as an ecology of resistance articulated through diasporic memory and fractured narrative form. Ali-Gauhar's text is exterior, mythic, and communal, emphasizing women's collective resistance through embodied relationships with land and nonhuman life.

From a postcolonial ecofeminist lens, these differences reflect the heterogeneity of Pakistani women's experiences of gendered and ecological oppression. Urban diaspora produces fragmented ecological memories, while rural contexts embed resistance in myth and embodied

knowledge. Yet both converge in asserting that survival requires reimagining relationships between women, community, and environment outside patriarchal-capitalist frameworks. The data also highlights how narrative strategies themselves—fragmentation, mythic temporality, and multilingualism—become ecofeminist acts. These formal disruptions resist patriarchal norms of coherence, linearity, and rationalism, offering instead cyclical, embodied, and ecological epistemologies. In this sense, the novels not only thematically depict ecofeminist resistance but structurally perform it.

Data Presentation and Theoretical Integration

The following table (Table 1) summarizes the coded ecofeminist themes across the two novels:

Table 1: Ecofeminist Themes in Selected Pakistani Novels

| Ecofeminist Category | <i>What Kept You?</i> (Jamshed, 2025) | <i>An Abundance of Wild Roses</i> (Ali-Gauhar, 2023/2025) |
|-----------------------|--|---|
| Grief as Ecology | Memory as fragmented landscapes; grief aligned with drought and loss | Grief embodied in communal rituals, expressed through natural cycles |
| Myth as Resistance | Limited; fragmented memory becomes its own mythology | Strong; folklore, supernatural, and plant agency central to resistance |
| Women-Land Connection | Estranged, diasporic memory of homeland; linguistic ecology | Embodied, rural, and indigenous knowledge systems preserved through women |
| Patriarchal Violence | Silencing of speech, erasure of ecological memory | Landlord exploitation of women and soil; commodification of both |

By presenting data in this comparative manner, the analysis underscores that ecofeminist resistance in Pakistani literature is not monolithic but plural, encompassing affective, mythic, embodied, and linguistic registers.

Conclusion

The exploration of ecofeminist narratives in contemporary Pakistani fiction has underscored the deep entanglements of gender, nature, and power within literary and socio-cultural frameworks. By situating Raaza Jamshed's *What Kept You?* and Feryal Ali-Gauhar's *An Abundance of Wild Roses* within ecofeminist and postcolonial theoretical lenses, this study has revealed how women's voices in literature articulate resistance not only to patriarchal oppression but also to ecological exploitation. The novels examined demonstrate that women's lived realities, emotional landscapes, and communal experiences are intricately linked with the natural environment, producing a form of narrative ecology where memory, trauma, and land are inseparable. These findings directly respond to the research problem of how ecofeminist themes are represented in Pakistani women's fiction and to the objective of illuminating literature's role in foregrounding gendered and ecological resistance.

The analysis has shown that Jamshed's focus on grief, language, and diasporic memory produces an "interior ecology" that redefines resistance as a deeply affective and linguistic practice. This narrative strategy emphasizes that women's bodies and voices are themselves sites of ecological struggle, making visible how oppression operates within both personal and environmental domains. By contrast, Gauhar's novel offers a mythic and rural ecology, foregrounding the entanglement of land, community, and nonhuman life in shaping collective survival. Her narrative strategy situates resistance in myth, spirituality, and collective memory, presenting the natural world as both witness and participant in women's struggles. Together, these novels reveal multiple modalities of ecofeminist resistance that extend beyond binaries of urban and rural, personal and communal, or human and nonhuman.

The findings also highlight that Pakistani women writers are expanding the global discourse on ecofeminism by embedding local histories, postcolonial legacies, and cultural mythologies into their narratives. Their works not only critique patriarchal structures and environmental exploitation but also propose alternative epistemologies of survival and resilience. In doing so, they fulfill the ecofeminist project of bridging gender justice and ecological justice, reminding readers that neither can be realized in isolation. This contribution is especially urgent in the context of Pakistan's ecological vulnerabilities and entrenched gender inequalities, where literature becomes a powerful medium for envisioning new possibilities of coexistence and resistance.

Ultimately, this study affirms that ecofeminist literary analysis is indispensable for understanding how contemporary Pakistani fiction navigates the intersections of gender, nature, and power. The selected novels demonstrate that resistance is not limited to overt political action but is also embedded in memory, grief, myth, and language. They reimagine women not as passive victims but as active agents who embody and articulate ecological consciousness. In fulfilling the objectives of this research, the analysis positions Pakistani women's literature as a critical site of ecofeminist knowledge production—one that enriches both literary studies and broader conversations on gender and environmental justice. The conclusion that emerges is clear: in contemporary Pakistani fiction, ecofeminist narratives are not marginal but central, and they provide vital tools for rethinking resistance in a world shaped by intersecting crises of patriarchy, ecology, and power.

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